

# Linguistic Identity and Social Cohesion in three Western Cape Schools

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## **Declaration**

I, Tarryn Gabi de Kock, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation/thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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## **Abstract**

Language is foundational to issues of belonging in contemporary South Africa. The country's colonial and apartheid history facilitated the differential development and privileging of particular languages alongside the project of racial capitalism (Alexander, 1989). Educational arrangements were affected by these developments because of how black South Africans were economically and socially limited by rudimentary exposure to the primary languages of access (English and Afrikaans). This study argues that this history is what currently influences the movement of black South Africans into the schools they were historically excluded from in former coloured, Indian and white areas, and further that this movement is also encouraged by the promise of greater access to and development in the English language (Fataar, 2015). It suggests that the persisting status of English as *lingua franca* across state, educational and cultural communications and products requires teaching that is sensitive to the historical relationship of the language to the underdevelopment and undervaluation of local linguistic forms. Moreover, the subject English and its embedded values and norms (included in the compulsory texts and textbook) is a critical area of enquiry for thinking through issues of social cohesion and belonging. Through case studies of three Cape Town teachers, this study argues that a range of influences affect how language and meaning are constructed in English classrooms, and that learners experience these influences to their own identities in different and often conflicting ways.

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## **Dedication**

*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Lauren Gina Kieser – an indescribable being who taught us all so many incredible lessons, in such an incredibly short space of time.*

*‘Smile, you celestial maniac.’*

### **List of Acronyms**

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
MOC	Medium of Communication
MOI	Medium of Instruction
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides the background and context to the study, beginning with a brief outline of the historical context shaping current language arrangements in South Africa before turning to specific issues of language in education at present. The linguistic arrangements of the colonial and apartheid state privileged the languages of English and Afrikaans alongside the underdevelopment and ghettoization of indigenous languages, offering black South Africans limited opportunities for educational and economic mobility. How the post-apartheid state has sought to remedy the structural and symbolic inequalities between languages is critical to developing positive attitudes to inclusive social arrangements, and the redistributive and representative mechanisms that are intended to foster them. This chapter will further justify the purpose of research and present objectives of the study. It will clarify key concepts and provide an outline of the respective chapters that follow.

#### **1.1 Language and education in South Africa**

Language has been central to issues of belonging in South Africa since first colonial contact (Alexander, 1989). Early settlers were not systematically concerned with teaching indigenous people colonial languages, and largely relied on rudimentary translations in their exchanges. This changed when the demand for skilled labour increased, and the need to culturally align colonial subjects to a particular authority became politically urgent to both British and Dutch interests (Alexander, 1989). Schools thus became important official spaces in which linguistic identities were negotiated and the hegemony of particular languages affirmed.

Alexander writes that language differences came to be a key factor influencing the division of the population into particular ethnic groups (1989; 2013). The European concept of the nation-state – founded as it was on shared language, ethnicity, national culture and geographic location (Rattansi, 2007) – was deployed in the

South African context to the ends of dividing the indigenous and slave-descendant population for the purposes of separate, 'cultural' development (Mamdani, 1996). This had the effect of fostering and deepening divisions between and different racial groups by disaggregating these further into particular ethnic categories and 'nations'. The formalisation of apartheid and its racist social and economic policies created a context in which the idea of the nation as ethnically and linguistically homogenous impacted on language-in-education arrangements for different groups. Mother-tongue instruction became a critical tool in the separation and marginalisation of black South Africans (Banda, 2000).

Because many schools followed the mother-tongue policy, many black learners were unable to gain a professional proficiency in English or Afrikaans, affecting their employment possibilities. The relationship between language, education and the labour market will be further discussed in this study, but it is necessary to note Alexander's (1989) assessment that future language in education arrangements would need to grapple with the symbolic status of English as a gatekeeper of access to economic and social mobility. He relates this back to a critical moment of rupture in South Africa's political history: the 1976 Soweto student protests, which was in part a protest against the imposition of Afrikaans as a compulsory medium of instruction that would further limit the aspirational possibilities of black learners (Alexander, 1989; Soudien, 2012). Resistant to the divide-and-rule tactics inherent in apartheid mother-tongue policy, and antagonistic to Afrikaans's relationship to the ruling Afrikaner nationalist government, black South African learners and their families started to view English as both an emancipatory and pragmatic alternative (Granville et al, 1997; Mesthrie, 2004). Its use within the liberation movement, and its wider relevance to navigating a globalising world centred the language as a form of both resistance and opportunity.

Post-apartheid language policy had to reconcile the symbolic inequalities between languages in South Africa while still enabling democratic, efficient and pragmatic language use. The Constitution (1996) provided official parity of esteem to nine indigenous languages alongside the former official languages of English and Afrikaans. It enshrined multilingualism as a social good and offered recognition to speakers of historically marginalised languages, including the opportunity to access education in the languages of their choice. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

(Department of Education, 1996) set out the principles underpinning schools' right to decide their language policies, casting these within values of respect for diversity, equity and efficiency. In reality, the dual damages of the bifurcated apartheid education system and mother-tongue policy affected schooling in critical ways. Firstly, many black learners opted to leave under-resourced, impoverished township schools to attend better schools in historically coloured, Indian and white areas (Soudien, 2012; Fataar, 2015; Sayed et al, 2015). They were particularly attracted to English-medium schools, indicating that school choice was significantly impacted by the opportunity to learn English as a means of accessing social and economic mobility (Banda, 2000; Alexander, 2013).

In effect, the Constitution and LiEP were constrained in their implementation by the choices made by black learners and parents to pragmatically pursue education that they recognised would best position them to maximise the opportunities presented in the post-1994 context (Granville et al, 1997; Levinsohn, 2007). The schools that these learners elected to attend were English-medium, and further taught English at Home Language level as a subject, presenting significant challenges to acquisition for those learners who spoke the language as a second, third or even fourth language.

The symbolic linguistic inequalities in the South African landscape – namely, that language is intimately linked to race and economic opportunity, and that the value afforded to particular languages corresponds with the value afforded to particular races – create a particular challenge for teachers in these educational contexts. The reality that the majority of South African learners are educated in English despite not being first language speakers (Department of Basic Education, 2010) means that English teachers need to critically engage with the symbolic value of different languages while equipping learners with the linguistic skills that enable them to access their aspirations. English proficiency thus needs to be contextualised in its history, in its value, and in its relationship to the underdevelopment of local linguistic forms, with the view to developing critical and transformative attitudes about the status quo of the language as a primary driver of economic success and social mobility.

It is through this that the teacher becomes crucial to this study. How teachers teach English in particular classroom contexts has salience for how the linguistic identities of learners are shaped in relation to the language. Further, because language is foundational to questions of belonging in South Africa, the influence of linguistic identities on attitudes of social cohesion is a critical area of enquiry. Social cohesion, defined further in the section on concepts, is understood in this study as the pursuit of a substantive and stable social compact through measures of structural, economic, symbolic and social justice and the fostering of positive relationships rooted in deep notions of respect and human dignity (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Barolsky, 2013; Sayed et al, 2015). Issues of language also grapple with broader questions of identity, belonging, redistribution and opportunity, recognition and cultural value, and agency in human interactions. How learners are educated into a particular linguistic normativity influences their attitudes to these questions, and most significantly to their own identities and positions within South African society. The chapter will thus state the research problem and objectives, explain its significance to broader research and practice interests, and develop the key concepts central to the study.

## **1.2 Statement of problem**

The participant teachers were located at different schools within the Cape Town area, each of which with both a historical and contemporary racial and linguistic identity. Language practices in these classrooms thus represented particular approaches to managing both internal and external diversity in the process of learning. Learner identities were shaped and transformed within these contexts as the values and assumptions embedded in teacher practices took root. This study contends that despite South Africa's Constitution (1997) and Language in Education Policy (1997) enshrining multilingualism as a desired goal, English remains dominant in various facets of society, including education. It becomes necessary to understand how the teaching of the language influences existing linguistic identities and responds to social inequalities deriving from issues of language and inclusion.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

This study aims to establish the relationship of teacher practices to the formation and disruption of particular linguistic identities in a social context where language has facilitated access to particular forms of social and economic mobility (Alexander, 1989). This is in order to understand how teacher pedagogy can more sensitively respond to issues and challenges of language diversity, to ensure that the teaching of English to the majority of South African learners does not undermine linguistic diversity or the need to promote further use of indigenous languages as a form of inclusive and transformative social practice.

The specific knowledge authorised within the official curriculum also presents crucial insights into the cultural norms and values underpinning content knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Understanding what these norms are and how they are transmitted in the teaching of particular content is also integral to developing insights on how learners locate their own experiences and cultures as valuable and generative. Arguably, teacher practices can influence how learners take up the particular values and knowledges embedded within the context, providing reason for a study of the current English language curriculum as an intervention into providing representative, relevant and socially conscious content that enables learners to grapple with the meanings, associations and implications of particular languages in particular contexts.

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Several key analytical threads relate to the main research problem: the socio-economic context that influences learner school choice and the quality of schools themselves; teacher practices, particularly in relation to language pedagogy; issues of reproduction in the ongoing dominance of English as lingua franca; the importance of curriculum knowledge in shaping learner attitudes and beliefs, and the influence of school context on the experiences and identities of teachers and learners. Arguably, this study's significance derives from how it draws these threads together through engaging on issues of linguistic identity as representative of, challenged by, or contesting social cohesion. Understanding how language functions to delimit belonging and access in educational settings is crucial to thinking through policy and interventions that sensitively, appropriately and critically deal with linguistic diversity

as both social fact and learning reality. Furthermore, the assumptions and positionalities embedded within curriculum knowledge provided insights into how the language subject is imbued with particular identities, values, and relationships to context.

### **1.5 Defining concepts**

This study deploys and develops ideas about particular concepts that influence social and political life in South Africa. This section considers perspectives on these concepts with the view to establishing how these are understood within the study.

Theories of social cohesion are multiple and range in their perspectives on the social compact. Sayed et al (2015) suggest that these veer between conservative and radical approaches to social welfare and justice, and further between behaviourist and structural interpretations of what constitutes positive social relations. While behaviourist approaches value good relationships, positive behaviour and peaceful coexistence, structural approaches view social justice and the reduction of inequalities as a primary guarantor of social cohesion (Sayed et al, 2015:7). This, the authors argue, is because of how inequalities contribute to violence, dissent and political and economic instability (Sayed et al, 2015:7). A progressive notion of social cohesion thus incorporates the establishment of positive relationships between and within different social groups, as well as the resolution of the structural inequalities that stunt their establishment. Moreover, education plays an important role in developing (or not developing, as in the case of the apartheid state) social cohesion, through the promotion of peace and positive attitudes to all members of society, and the equitable offering of access and opportunities for economic and social mobility (Sayed et al, 2015)

Social cohesion in South Africa is tied to the broader nation-building project that has characterised a major symbolic intervention by the post-apartheid government (Freemantle, 2012). Awareness of the persistent salience of race for economic inequalities and social divisions, government construction of the narrative of social cohesion has focused on developing a positive sense of South African citizenship that transcends divisions based on race, gender, language, class, religion, and geography (Freemantle, 2012: 3). Freemantle (2012), Barolsky (2013) and Sayed et al (2015) contend that this approach has not sufficiently grappled with the everyday



weight of how inequalities affect different people differently. Further, Barolsky argues that social cohesion in South Africa is based on a consensus approach that assumes respect for diversity without interrogating the underlying inequalities that establish difference as self-evident (2013:205). Consensus is established through the silencing or sanitising of particular issues in national discourse, including in the formal public education system. This is highlighted in the findings and analysis.

Critical to the establishment of social cohesion in South Africa is the resolution of inequalities and negative relationships between groups, most particularly between historic racial groups. As a state in which racial inequality was formalised within government policy, South Africa's social divisions are deep and fractured, multiple and conflicting (Barolsky, 2013; Neocosmos, 2010; Sayed et al, 2015). Rattansi (2007) argues that race is constituted through assumptions about the boundedness of physical, cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics, and invariably used to identify the intrinsic worth, capabilities and capacities of groups of people. As an important demonstration of how sameness and difference operate in identity formation, it must be emphasised that the dominant 'race' is the one with the power to define others (Rattansi, 2007). In South Africa, this power was invested in the ruling white over-class following a violent history of conquest, mass killings of indigenous Africans, the seizure of land for farming and mining, and the establishment of white control over the economy and political life (Alexander, 1989). Apartheid policy most starkly captured the hierarchy of humanity that was constituted by the different race groups in South Africa, with 'white' South Africans constituting the pinnacle of this hierarchy, 'coloured' South Africans and Indian South Africans after white, and black South Africans at the very bottom. 'Coloured' was a residual catch-all category for the descendants of racial mixing between European colonialists, indigenous Africans, and Asian slaves and indentured labourers (Adhikari, 2005). Alongside the Indian South African population, coloured South Africans were positioned higher than black South Africans and thus, while still deprived and underdeveloped by apartheid policy, able to access a few more concessions from the state. Racial difference was thus not only entrenched at the level of physicality in South Africa; it was crucially used to relationally demarcate privileges, access, and social and economic mobility, through the differential resourcing and development of racial groups that firmly entrenched this inequality

within the very visible spaces of South African cities, towns and rural areas. This study uses racial terms – black, white, coloured, Indian and white, with 'black South African'<sup>1</sup> used to include all individuals not classified as white, including persons from other African countries currently living here. However, it only uses them on the basis of their continued salience as *one element* of the landscape of social difference and inequality in South Africa, in order to draw links with other elements in order to gain a clearer picture of how difference continues to be constituted, enforced or challenged in schooling contexts. The study does not accept the logic underpinning racial classification, nor does it use these terms lightly.

An underside of the issue of race is the issue of whiteness, and how this continues to hold salience for issues of cultural and economic capital in contemporary South Africa. Values of whiteness are insidious particularly because they are neutralised and rendered invisible in the process of categorising and enforcing categories in everyday life, what Nakayama and Krizek suggest is characteristic of domination: the constitution of the dominant normativity as negative, and the characterisation of the particularities by which other groups do not subscribe to this normativity (1995:299). Whiteness is both localised and global in its institution. At the global level it derives from the dominance of Europe and the United States in popular culture, global politics and economics. In the South African context it also relates to the historical elevation of white people as a social class, and the association this created with superior education, geographic location, economic opportunity, and appropriate culture and cultural products (Battersby, 1997). Whiteness is a *hegemonic ideology*. As an ideology, it is the particular collection of myths, beliefs, and experiences of a group or government, usually intended to legitimate and further its position (Cheal, 1979). It is hegemonic because it constitutes the normativity of a dominant group, one that is shared across society and thus neutralised as the norm (Cheal, 1979). In this study, whiteness is critical to the issue of language because of English's historic association as one of the main languages of the ruling white government. It is argued that whiteness pervades the structural reality of the schooling system and is embedded in the curriculum, with profound contradictions for the discourse of social

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<sup>1</sup> This is derived from Black Consciousness work which suggests 'black' as an inclusive category for groups oppressed by whiteness (Hook, 2011)

cohesion also embedded in this curriculum, and for the experiences and everyday realities of learners and teachers.

### **1.6 Exposition of chapters**

There are six chapters in this thesis, described below:

**Chapter One** discusses the background of the study and locates its particular focus within historical context. It states the problem, objectives and significance of the research, and defines key concepts used in the study.

**Chapter Two** provides the literature review for the research, discussing four thematic areas in relation to the research question: Language arrangements in South Africa; inequality, social cohesion and nation-building, and its relationship to education; theories of educational linguistics, and school culture, symbolic power and critical pedagogy. A key contention running through the review is that contestations over language and identity under colonialism and apartheid are distilled in the everyday functions of schools in the post-apartheid context where historical and contemporary forces meet in complex, contradictory and generative ways. The chapter also outlines the key theorists in the conceptual framework.

**Chapter Three** discusses the methodology informing the research process. The process, methods and instruments of data collection are outlined. The research philosophy of critical realism is explained and a discussion provided of how case study research fits into a critical realist paradigm. It describes the schools selected for the study (and the pseudonyms provided for them), instruments used, and issues of credibility, validity and trustworthiness that challenge the validity of findings.

**Chapter Four** presents the findings from data collection according to the research questions, drawing out particular issues and themes that will be reflected in Chapter Five.

**Chapter Five** presents the analysis of findings by separating these into the themes of linguistic identity and social cohesion, and discussing the elements of teacher practices and contextual experiences that arise in response to these issues. It reflects on issues of teacher practice, curriculum and pedagogy, language and

representation, and school culture, developing these into concluding ideas about the construction of normative narratives of meaning in the process of schooling,

**Chapter Six** concludes the study by drawing together the key ideas highlighted from the findings and analyses, reflecting on the research journey and identifying further avenues for research, practice and policy.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter is separated into two sections. The first presents a critical review of the literature used to situate the study. Due to the intersecting nature of the research questions, a broad range of theoretical perspectives was required. These included literature on language identity formation in post-colonial contexts and in education; social cohesion and nation-building through education in South Africa; and values transmission and critical pedagogy. The sequencing of this section of the chapter is as follows:

- Language arrangements in South Africa
- Inequality, social cohesion and nation-building, and its relationship to education
- Theories of educational linguistics
- School culture, symbolic power and critical pedagogy

The second section of the chapter presents the conceptual framework for the study, identifying three key theorists and mapping their linkages to the question of language identity and social cohesion. This framework represents both an orientation towards understanding and conceptualising the research questions, and an interpretive paradigm for analysing the data.

### **2.1 Critical review of literature**

#### **2.1.1 Language arrangements in South Africa**

Language was an important aspect of colonial expansion particularly because subjugation, domination and establishing bureaucracy in the colonies required some form of common communicative capacity with the colonised. It is because of this that the impact of languages on colonised societies has been vast, complex and diverse in its outcomes (Bamgbose, 1998; Alidou et al, 2006). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon writes that '[m]astery of language affords remarkable power' (1952:9), further claiming that this mastery is also accompanied by the embodiment of the particular culture to which that language is attached. In the South African context, the

language struggle between Dutch (later Afrikaans) and British colonial forces concerned itself with the civilisation of indigenous peoples but, more specifically, their acceptance of the culture of the coloniser country through adoption of its languages for the purposes of servitude (Alexander, 1989). This was particularly geared towards the small mission-educated black elite, a *comprador* (or intermediary) class that served as functionaries for the colonial state apparatus (Fanon, 1967; Alexander, 1989). Alongside this, the separation of indigenous peoples into distinctive 'language communities' (as ethnic groups) functioned to entrench arbitrary difference as biological and cultural facts, dividing indigenous Africans so as to better manage and control them through a European model of *one language, one culture, one nation*, alternatively called 'nationalism based on language' (Alexander, 1989:20-23; Mda, 1997:368).

It is in this process, Alexander argues, that the economic and social value of speaking colonial languages became evident as a form of individual mobility (1989:18). Further, as the constraints of this mobility became visible, it fostered a sense of alienation resulting from the realisation that fluency in the colonial language would not equate to full entry in its society. A fair critique of this argument is that it suggests a deterministic, linear relationship between the colonial language and the aspirations of the colonised (Adele Jinadu, 1976). Adele Jinadu reminds that cultural and linguistic exchange between peoples does not necessarily only occur under conditions of domination, but that the particular circumstances elicited by the colonial project facilitate forms of exchange that serve to entrench both the spatial-geographic and cultural power of the coloniser (Adele Jinadu, 1976:605). In this sense, the ability of colonised subjects to be able to speak the colonial language may be as much of pragmatic benefit (for personal mobility or resistance within a social structure that serves to limit the mobility of whole groups) as it may or may not be a futile desire to be a part of the coloniser's culture and society. He and Fanon agree that this ambiguity generates the 'doubly-socialised' (Adele Jinadu, 1976) colonial subject as someone at the interstice of two worlds where language, alongside race, functions as a form of social gatekeeping.

Adele Jinadu further extends Fanon's argument by suggesting that colonial subjects occupy a liminal, possibly discomfiting, but not necessarily entirely unsuccessful position between their mother culture and the culture of the coloniser. He considers

that would be false to assume that colonised individuals do not recognise that acquisition of language as a form of belonging is often strongly limited by the narrow 'racial or ethnic terms' (Adele Jinadu, 1976:609) that define social groups under colonialism. It would also be simplistic to believe that the only choice colonised individuals have is to discard their own languages in sole favour of the colonial language. It is important to recognise that colonial languages occupy relational status particularly because of the social and political influences on their unequal distribution in society. Languages associated with power, and thus a powerful linguistic (as ethnic) group, come to be valuable and scarce resources that represent social mobility and higher class status (Bourdieu, 1991; Fanon, 1952). This will be further discussed in the sections on symbolic power and educational linguistics.

Issues of language in education thus become important to understanding how the symbolic value of colonial languages becomes entrenched. Wheeler (1961) describes the educational strategy of the apartheid state as intended to give black South Africans 'unlimited' possibility for development in their narrow social sphere while removing them 'from possible economic or political competition with the European citizens of the new Republic' (Wheeler, 1961:247). This included the strategy of mother-tongue education which, under democratic circumstances, may have encouraged mutual respect for all languages, greater academic development and the drive towards entrenching common and widely accepted *lingua franca* to facilitate communication between different groups. However, under apartheid what benefits could be garnered from mother-tongue instruction were disrupted by poorly educated teachers, the removal of native English-speaking teachers from black African schools, and the abrupt switch to Afrikaans and English as sole media of instruction from secondary school onwards (Banda, 2000:53; Heugh, 1999; Reagan, 1987). In effect, this ghettoised the life-worlds of most black South Africans, for whom a lack of adequate education in the languages of English and Afrikaans was intended to deliberately limit their possibilities for social and economic mobility, inter-group solidarity and political resistance.

Parallel to these developments was the rise of globalisation and the spread of English as a global means of communication (Heugh, 1999; Levinsohn, 2007). Heugh and Reagan find that the insistence on Afrikaans as a medium of instruction through the policies of Bantu Education drove black parents and learners in the

direction of English as a language of resistance, perhaps due in part to its established legitimacy and global links to other liberation movements on the continent and around the world (Heugh, 1999:303; Reagan, 1987:305). Reagan suggests that despite its limitations this relationship to the English language would continue to have salience in the formation of language policy in the course of the political change occurring in the country at the time (Reagan, 1987:305). This view is supported by Levinsohn, who argues that in the post-1994 context English's prestige as a language was associated with greater economic returns and opportunities alongside the concurrent decline of Afrikaans as a primary national language, with indigenous languages not being seen as feasible for international communication (2007). It is in this sense that Alexander argues that the politics of language remained an issue of 'white politics' (1989:28) i.e. an issue of the languages of the white colonialists and with largely quite little consideration for the languages spoken daily across the country.

The policy context in which language and language in education policy was developed for a democratic South Africa is thus important to understanding how the symbolic value of languages is negotiated at present. For Mda, this context includes the creation of the Pan-South African Language Board (PANSALB), mandated to facilitate the development, deployment, and respect for the languages used in the country; the drive towards supporting diversity and multilingualism in new policy documents and debates; and the departure of many black learners from township schools to schools in formerly white, coloured or Indian areas where the language of instruction was largely English and to a lesser extent, Afrikaans (Mda, 1997:367). Arguably, the new emphasis on diversity and multilingualism in policy was constrained by the latter due to the pragmatic choices learners and their parents were making about the strategic value of English for their aspirations (Granville et al, 1997). While multilingualism was enshrined in the Constitution and provided for within school policy (see 'South African Schools Act', Department of Education, 1996), at the everyday level English continued to be valued for the access it was seen to provide. Granville et al (1997) however caution against this assumption when they say that an important outcome of the asymmetry between English and indigenous languages is that many learners leave school with limited competence in English but an enlarged sense of its prestige, such that competency in the language



is associated with being educated (Granville et al, 1997:8). This has salience for the experiences of learners who did not speak English as a first language in the case study schools, despite being fluent in more than one other official (or foreign) language.

Makoe and McKinney (2014) thus argue that there is more continuity than change in the shift from South Africa's LiEPs during and after apartheid. This is because the conception of language, linguistic value and which languages matter has not changed significantly even when policies exist to make it so. Makoe and McKinney confront the tokenising of African languages in symbolic events at schools as coupling with the normalising of English in everyday practice to enforce the continued devaluation of indigenous languages under the guise of development and progress (2014). Nomlomo and Vuzo (2014) argue similarly that the emphasis on English as a primary MOI constrains the educational possibilities of black learners through the real challenges created by the failure to work with learners' own linguistic repertoires to improve their understanding and cognition in specific subjects. Desai further picks up on this in her discussion of how language policy can afford or deny people the possibility to fully realise their potential as citizens. Using a case study of isiXhosa-speaking schoolchildren to show the pressure placed on students to express themselves in English, and the according of merit on the basis of this, Desai argues that the strategy of introducing English early on in the educational process denies the fluency and confidence with which students can express themselves when allowed to speak and learn in their mother tongue. She makes the critical point that multilingualism is a contextual resource, and that this affects the reasons why and manner in which learners are exposed to new languages (Desai, 2001).

Language in colonial and post-colonial societies, as the above literature shows, is inextricably tied to questions of identity, belonging, power and aspiration. An important consideration for this study is the decisions made by black learners to access schooling in English, and the association of English-medium education in South Africa more generally with prestige and whiteness. The challenge to the symbolic valuation afforded to indigenous languages in the Constitution is the implementation of this value in practice, and how this is affected by the political will to deal with multilingualism decisively and towards materially transformative ends (Reagan, 1987; Webb, 1999; Levinsohn, 2007). What will be discussed further in this

chapter is how the complexity and symbolic value of English as a desired medium of instruction is further impacted by the English subject curriculum, which transmits particular cultural and social mores associated with the language. It is necessary to note that the status of English as a medium of instruction serves as a backdrop against which the English subject acquires symbolic force.

### **2.1.2 Inequality, social cohesion and nation-building in South African education**

The previous section discussed how language in South Africa has historically been tied to social, racial and economic inequalities, including educational arrangements. It is important to consider how material and symbolic inequalities have been dealt with at both a societal and educational level, as these affect the contexts within which schools operate and how the curriculum has attempted to deal with often antagonistic identities and groups. Divisions between racial groups are largely entrenched on the basis of arbitrary and stereotypical, yet powerful, essences and assumptions (Fanon, 1952; Alexander, 1989; Adhikari, 2005). Further, a complex history of antagonisms between black, Indian and coloured South Africans (Mesthrie (ed.), 2004; Adhikari, 2005; Bock & Hunt, 2015) exists that negates a simplistic reading of South Africa's social landscape as dictated solely by the relationship between black and white. Thus, the relational nature of identities contributes multiple layers of intricacy to the task of managing and valuing diversity.

It is important to define curriculum for the purposes of further discussion. Most simply, curriculum can be understood as an arrangement of authorised knowledge geared towards the development of particular skills, values, attitudes and modes of thought imbued with particular value (Hyun, 2006:25). It is intended to influence the personal and social development of the learner by bringing authorised knowledge into contact with their own realities in a process that equips them for adult and social life. Hyun challenges the definitional vagueness of the term *curriculum*, arguing that this has largely resulted in differing interpretations of what curricula are and do. She questions the arrangement of curriculum thus: 'What or whose knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences are most worthwhile? Why? For whom? Under what circumstances? Toward what ends? In whose interests?' (Hyun, 2006:25).

Teachers' understanding of what the curriculum is, both materially and in ideal terms, influences what it does in particular contexts and how it impacts on different learners (Hyun, 2006:31). Cooper (2014) further illustrates how teachers' assumptions about the relevance of the curriculum for learners' experiences and competencies can either benefit or undermine the outcomes of their practices.

Staeheli and Hammett consider the primary challenge of contemporary South Africa to be 'creat[ing] equal opportunity without redistribution of economic resources' (2013:4). They suggest that the lack of radical and immediate socio-economic transformation in the country presented a particularly difficult context into which to insert the new national curriculum, which alongside technical goals of academic performance and transferable skills also included a significant nation-building component (Staeheli and Hammett, 2013). The challenge in this new curriculum was how to deal with the reality that former perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid were now to live alongside those who had been (differentially) underdeveloped by it, largely in economic and social circumstances that remained unchanged.

Bock and Hunt's (2015) research confirms Staeheli and Hammett's argument that the cosmopolitan approach to education articulated by the post-1994 dispensation was primarily geared towards 'rendering the country's [particular history] as part of the historical record but not part of the nation's collective identity' (Staeheli and Hammett, 2013:5). Both argue that this approach did not necessarily factor in the depth of trauma experienced, and recalled, by black South Africans even after the formal dismantling of apartheid, with Bock and Hunt describing the strategies of distancing, victimhood and marginality expressed by black, white and coloured students in speaking about the effects of the past (Bock & Hunt, 2015). The society-level silence around acknowledging the depth of this troubled history remains a primary inhibitor of the development of positive attitudes to nationhood among young South Africans. Further, it affects returns to education in the country due to the contrast between the positive goals and narratives of unity contained within the curriculum and the realities of deprivation faced by the majority of learners in South African schools (Staeheli and Hammett, 2013).

Local and school contexts are thus critical, and often contradicting, influences on learners' experiences of belonging and nationhood, with the result that the South

African learner today 'is not the unitary rainbow subject that was invoked in the early democratic period' (Fataar, 2015:5). Fataar further argues that the failure of policies to decisively remedy substantial material and social differences between schools (and the learners who attend them) has the result that the social mores and dynamics of the school community largely impacts the functioning of the learning process and becomes a fluid reflection of the contexts that learners, teachers and principals bring to bear on their school environments (Sayed et al, 2013; Fataar, 2015:6). It is through recognition of the persistent challenges faced by underprivileged schools that parents and learners make the decisions they make 'to [not] be trapped by geography' (Fataar, 2015:14), and to exercise their agency in navigating across spaces to access education and the possibilities for mobility it provides. This is supported by earlier work which details experiences of life in post-1994 schools and communities (see Bray et al, 2010 and Soudien, 2012). These studies argue that while it is accepted that the unequal circumstances in which young people find themselves critically influences their identity formation, a significant aspect of this experience is developed within school contexts and their ability to access educational opportunities. However, part of this mobility also involves a level of adaptability to schooling cultures that may be antagonistic to their own cultural mores – such as, for example, the valorisation of English as both teaching language and language of communication more generally in the school space (Soudien, 2012; Fataar, 2015:70). Linguistic identity becomes a crucial factor in understanding how belonging is constructed in the classroom, on the playground, and more generally in relation to a South African identity that is constantly in flux for learners from different communities (and in different ways).

These perspectives are important for understanding the socio-political and economic context into which the case study schools can broadly be found. The differential nature of historical education provisioning in South Africa, and the individual resources and aspirations of families, affects the choices that parents, guardians and learners make about the schools they go to and the quality of education they will receive at these schools. It is necessary to understand that the language policies at these schools, while they may remain unchanged from their pre-1994 positions, represent an intervention on the part of school communities to provide their learners with access to modes of education and mobility that they may feel best equips them

to participate fully in the economy and society following a history of segregation and underdevelopment of the majority of citizens. Moreover, the unequal schooling contexts in which learners find themselves profoundly affects their attitudes to belonging and nationhood, based on what this section described as a tension between values of democracy and equality and the material and historical realities that these are transposed into. The discussion now turns to theoretical and academic impressions of language and schooling, and the salience of these for the research.

### **2.1.3 Identity and educational linguistics**

The initial discussion presented literature dealing specifically with the questions of language, and language in education, in the South African context. What is also important to this study is a more general theoretical conception of education, sociolinguistics and identity. A variety of theorists have grappled with the question of what the choices of language of instruction mean for learners in schools marked by differences in race, class, religion, and/or gender. They find, in differing ways, that linguistic identity is often a formative component of how learners situate themselves within the world, as language is ordinarily the means through which culture, education, and everyday interactions are mediated. Read in context with the section above describing issues of inequality and nation-building in South African education, this section attempts to draw together the issues of language and inequality into a particular conception of how this operates at the linguistic level.

Identities are associated with the multiple positions that individuals occupy in different social spaces. They are relational; they do not occur in isolation. They are also, crucially, articulations of sameness and difference (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Rattansi, 2007). Individuals are able to self-identify, but also have identities imposed on them externally; furthermore, power is entrenched within those groups of people who are able to classify others (Fanon, 1952; Bourdieu, 1991; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Approximations of similarity and difference are negotiated as processes of inclusion and exclusion, which are determined on the basis of particular markers. Being a Christian means *not* being a Muslim, and within Christianity multiple denominations exist that further demarcate specificities between faith communities. Historically, in South Africa, being a black South African means not being white, and

without the according structural and symbolic privileges that accompany being identified as such (Alexander, 1989; Bray et al, 2010; Soudien, 2012; Staeheli & Hammett, 2013). The hierarchy of racial difference that privileges white South Africans is embedded within the historical and political conditions that facilitate their having the power to engineer it to this effect. Moreover, as identities are always fluid and in transition, the ways in which they come to be threatened or challenged provides critical insight into shifts in social, economic and political power, and how boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are redefined as contexts shift and transform. Because of the different contexts and positions in which individuals operate, and the fluidity that exists within and between them, individuals are capable of holding multiple, sometimes conflicting identity positions (Sook Lee & Anderson, 2009; Rattansi, 2007). This is captured by Rattansi, who suggests that 'individuals can compartmentalize different expectations into separate moral spheres, allowing them to behave in accordance with different ethical rules in different contexts' (2007:117), through strategic negotiation of the terms on which they exist in particular spaces.

Philips finds that the relationship between language and social inequality is fundamentally about the idea that 'some expressions of language are valued more than others in a way that is associated with some people being more valued than others' (2004:474). She points to Bourdieu's assertion that language represents a form of symbolic capital offering differing degrees of access to modes of economic and social mobility and, alongside this, varying degrees of authority based on the legitimacy of the dialect spoken and its proximity to the official dialect as endorsed by the state. This is also suggested by McGroarty, who considers language to be tied to questions of ideology in the sense that decisions about its usage reflects issues of choice, value and appropriateness of dialect in given circumstances (2008:98). Political arrangements around language may be explicitly framed in terms of choice of official or national languages, but more often can be inferred by the terms of use and ways in which the dominance of particular language(s) is encouraged or enforced. Reflecting on Labov's work on Black English during the Civil Rights period, Philips argues that it was the refusal of mostly white teachers and administrators to engage with the linguistic and cultural complexity of the dialect that saw many black learners underperforming in schools that were, as a result, inherently hostile to their modes of expression – modes which were deeply related to their cultural and social

realities (Philips, 2004:477). This was found in two forms of disvaluing: through expressed disapproval of the use of that dialect, but also through exclusion and silencing of topics, values and features of the dialect and its associated culture(s) in the official practices of school and curriculum (Philips, 2004:477). McGroarty makes a similar distinction in defining *iconicity* and *erasure*: iconicity meaning to categorise a group's language usage and status as representative of its essence, and erasure the process by which particular practices and groups are rendered invisible in the mainstream discourse (McGroarty, 2008:99). This has implications for the economic possibilities that Philips alludes to in her discussion of Bourdieu; she find that 'economically disadvantaged persons have less prestige, and so do the codes they use' (2004:483). The underside of this is that more economically advantaged persons have the ability to dictate the terms of the codes that are legitimated and expanded in the economic and social spheres. Philips's primary argument here is that the dominant economic language of the urban centre comes to replace, displace or fragment the languages used on the periphery of cities, towns and in rural areas, due to its relationship to modernisation (2004:484-7).

It is crucial to recognise the learner as occupying a dual relationship to time and space – both as a learner present in the classroom and as a citizen being socialised and educated for the role of participating in society and economy in the future. The choice of language in education bears responsibility in preparing learners for this future state because it influences the range of opportunities that are available to them, particularly in circumstances where citizenship may be attached to individual skills and competencies and not the social and political context which enables or constrains its full realisation (McGroarty, 2008:109; Staeheli and Hammett, 2013:6).

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) suggest that 'identity' is crucially a question of *sameness* – particularly of the drive by groups to establish the commonality that justifies their collective identification with each other:

'When individuals decide to organise themselves into a group, they are driven not by some pre-existing and recognisable similarity but agency and power... Social grouping is a process not merely of discovering or acknowledging a similarity that precedes and establishes identity but, more fundamentally, of

inventing similarity *by downplaying difference*' (own emphasis) (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004:371)

In order for this similarity to function, the presence of some kind of Other – whether explicitly acknowledged or not – is foundational to the measurement of sameness and inclusion into the group identity. As Sook Lee and Anderson argue, '[identity formation] is a product of social action that creates the categories by which it is later defined' (2009:189). This constant negotiation of the meanings that underpin identities is mediated through relationships of power. As more powerful identities become naturalised and neutralised, they become less visible as *identities* and become normalised standards against which other groups are measured in their divergence from that norm. The authors argue that the privileged status of English elevates it as an unmarked norm that renders it almost immune to challenge, unlike indigenous languages (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004:372). Crucially, the unmarkedness of a linguistic normativity also renders social inequalities on the basis of language natural or normal, and makes it necessary to understand the exercise of agency that accompanies acceptance, resistance and navigation of the dominant language by those external to its social and linguistic group (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, 1991). It is because of this that the authors suggest that language usage and linguistic identity embodiment is deliberate and self-aware, and further that identities are situational attributes rather than essential characteristics of individuals or groups (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004:376-381). Taken together, this means that the performative aspect of language occurs at the level of the situational positionality of the speaker, who occupies different roles, relationships and codes in differing circumstances.

McKinney and Norton (2008) take up this perspective in their discussion of identity in language education. Multilingual classrooms are not inherently democratic or equal in their composition, values, or attitudes to the different linguistic identities learners bring into the classroom space, especially where diversity is tokenised and not recognised for the social or material inequalities that often accompany the discourse characterising it (McKinney and Norton, 2008:192). They recognise that learners may have complicated and ambivalent relationships to language acquisition particularly if the language being taught is not their primary medium of



communication or holds a relationship to the dominant order that is at odds with their own social positioning:

'If learners "invest" in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital' (McKinney and Norton, 2008:195)

Integral to this is acknowledging that critical pedagogic practices – foregrounding an awareness of inequality, domination and ideology in educational practices and texts – may be at odds with the personal experiences and aspirations of learners, who may be resistant to recognising these issues without being appropriately educated in how to resist, change or adapt to them (McKinney and Norton, 2008:196). Learners are invested in their education for multiple reasons and in differing ways, and overstating their responsibility or submission to social issues may undermine the recognition of the immediacy of their own circumstances and their will to change it. The authors argue that in order to legitimise learner experience while giving them access to dominant modes of thought and action, critical and sensitive awareness of the multiple identities learners bring into the classroom is needed; moreover, critical language and literacy education must bridge the gap between acknowledging inequality without reproducing it by leaving the most marginalised learners outside of the dominant system of knowledge creation, and fostering new forms of learning and self-making (Hyun, 2006; McKinney and Norton, 2008:202).

This section described how identities are formed and negotiated within and across particular spaces, with a particular emphasis on how the identities learners enter the classroom with are disrupted, challenged and affirmed in their education. Despite the emphasis the literature places on how relations of power are fostered and affirmed through schooling, it is important to recognise that this process is neither unidirectional nor closed. At differing levels learners, teachers and schools are engaging with the individual and social linguistic normativities that surround them, engaging in complex processes of adoption and discarding as they attempt to fashion new identities for themselves against historic, externally-imposed categorisations (Granville et al, 1997; Soudien, 2012).

#### **2.1.4 School culture, symbolic power and critical pedagogy**

The literature discussed thus far has sought to contextualise language, inequality and social cohesion within South African education, arguing that the tensions between past and present have complex consequences for how diversity is negotiated at varying levels. A further area of complexity exists within the school context, and in teacher practices. The school is the site at which these multiple social forces intersect, and where teacher practices are embedded within a wider school culture. Thus, the symbolic elements of schooling are addressed in this section in order to understand how meaning is negotiated and transformed in the process of teaching and learning.

Maxwell and Ross Thomas (1991) suggest that school cultures are comprised of beliefs, values, behaviours and knowledges that are produced, reproduced and contested in the everyday functions and interactions of the school and its members. Schools are also able to develop identities around particular narratives and characteristics such as academic excellence, cultural and sporting performance, activism or community engagement, and can instrumentalise these to attract quality teachers and high-performing learners. Conversely, weak perceptions of a school's institutional culture can have a knock-on effect on the self-perception and performance of its members, creating a cyclical relationship between school culture and reproduction of that culture. Relating to this, Gaziel (1997) suggests that strong institutional culture is an indicator of productivity due to an established consensus regarding common values and goals. However it is important to bear in mind that this consensus may be dependent on particular silences and arrangements of power and authority, and cannot be accepted as arising from solely democratic processes. Maxwell and Ross Thomas further argue that school cultures are comprised of both covert and overt values, beliefs and behaviours, which together create a complex terrain for learners and teachers to negotiate in order for learning to take place (1991).

An element of school culture that is critical to this study is the hidden curriculum. Kentli (2009) and Giroux (1978) provide important insights here. It is firstly pertinent to note that the term 'hidden' implies clandestine intention and in a liberal democratic context it is important to discard notions of deliberate cultural violence in the classroom through teaching values that undermine students' agency, values and

social experiences, unless this can be definitively proven. South Africa's numerous policies, standards and frameworks for education indicate progressive and integrational intentions that conflict with other discourses of efficiency and globalisation, so where and how these 'hidden' curricula come into force is embedded within the everyday practices of schools, which Giroux refers to as 'agents of socialisation' (1978:148). Kentli argues that it is these unwritten or unintended curricula which inform the socialisation processes of the classroom that teach students prestige, good and deviant behaviour, excellence and participation, and not the formal content of the curriculum as dictated by policy and government direction (2009:83). Following the discussion of Fataar previously, she suggests that the disciplining and socialisation processes of schools also inculcate certain values and behaviours considered fundamental to constituting the good student, requiring students to adapt into behaviours that will afford them the social and linguistic capital needed for success (Kentli, 2009). Part of this may involve learning to suppress aspects of one's identity in order to be accepted by peers or teachers, particularly for learners from working-class backgrounds and learners who occupy other 'outsider' positions (such as queer or foreign learners).

It is in this sense that the relational nature of linguistic identities and social inequalities can be considered to operate in the classroom at the level of interactions between teachers and learners. This is because the social and linguistic positions of learners are validated (or not) through processes of interaction with their peers and teachers, through the forms of knowledge that are legitimated or discarded in the learning process, and through the behaviours, values and attitudes that are encouraged or discouraged on a daily basis (Giroux, 1978; McKinney & Norton, 2008).

The works of Pierre Bourdieu (with Passeron, 1977; 1991) and Henry Giroux (1978; 1981; 1989) are important texts for drawing the links between culture and politics at large and how these are reproduced, contested and consolidated through the function of language as one form of symbolic capital. While symbolic capital is invested within individual esteem and achievement, cultural capital is the jointly-owned and –negotiated symbolic property of a group or society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The value accorded to the cultural properties associated with particular groups is often made particularly evident within the education systems

formed to facilitate the reproduction and neutralisation of it (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Cultural and symbolic capital are two important elements of the social and individual contexts learners and teachers bring into their classroom experience, and critical influences on which forms of knowledge are affirmed. As Giroux argues, schools are not neutral, objective spaces, and as they are the main sites where future citizens are socialised and conscientised, the manner in which teachers teach and students learn has significant consequences for the way particular values and ideologies become normalised (Giroux, 1989). Further, he notes that a conception of cultural hegemony is necessary to understand how certain forms of knowledge and culture become legitimated and neutralised in societies; namely, that ruling groups exercise an alliance of interests that submit the interests of other groups to elite will through a process of establishing common-sense assumptions about the nature of society, the economy, and mainstream culture 'to establish its view of the world as all-inclusive and universal' (Giroux, 1981:23). Bourdieu and Passeron consider this to be an exercise in symbolic violence in that it establishes the dominance of elite culture while rendering this domination invisible through neutralisation (1977:4).

Of fundamental importance is to recognise that this neutrality and domination is constantly negotiated, and its boundaries redefined in order to adapt into new circumstances. In the South African context the negotiated settlement saw a change in political power without a substantial change in economic power, with the result that two classes of elites exist in tension and collaboration with each other – white monopoly capital, which still largely controls key industries and the financial sector, and a black political elite, located in but not confined to the party political space (Alexander, 2013). This means that stakeholders in the education process come from a range of socio-economic and political perspectives and with differing agendas, and that this reflects on the liberal democratic values transmitted through the education system and the degree to which the current curriculum reflects the current political arrangement.

Giroux thus suggests that we consider a public schooling curriculum to be 'a selection from the larger culture[s]' (1981:123), and that this selection is rooted within a relationship to power that cannot be separated from the content and manner in which knowledge is organised into the official content transmitted to learners. The cultural capital of the dominant classes is transmitted through the education system

because it serves as the standard to which members of other classes are measured for entry into the labour market (Giroux, 1981, 1989; Bourdieu, 1991). This dialectical relationship between the education system and the economic (labour) market describes how performance in the school system – of which language acquisition is a fundamental component alongside numeracy skills – is often the primary means through which economic aspirations can later be achieved (Bourdieu, 1991:51) Education systems thus legitimate the dominant form of a language by using it as a form of knowledge transmission and showing its relation to future acquisitions in the economic market (Levinsohn, 2007).

However, as stressed before, this does not mean that the relationship between teaching and learning is deterministic, or that learners are empty receivers of ordained knowledge. Rather, the work of Bourdieu and Giroux is necessary to show that the process of education is inherently a process of socialisation into different kinds of citizenship for different kinds of people, and, as will be shown in this study, that learners are not unaware of this reality and respond to it in a variety of ways.

Davies, Hirsch and Graves Holmes (2007), in a dialogue on hidden curricula and social justice in education, argue that learners from working-class and foreign backgrounds are often considered to be deficient in some or other way that hampers their full integration into the educational process. They note that most learners can be expected to perform better under optimal circumstances, with the result that the high performance of learners in better-resourced schools and communities could almost be seen as a no-brainer, and the low performance of learners in poorer schools and communities cannot be solely reduced to individual weakness (Davies, Hirsch and Graves Holmes, 2007:100). Davies suggests that a Freirean model of 'reading the world' is a crucial step in encouraging learners from different backgrounds to engage critically with the texts that often provide their primary source of official knowledge and conceptions of the society into which they are being socialised, but moreover that learners are already adept at decoding texts that reflect negatively on their lived experiences (Davies, Hirsch and Graves Holmes, 2007:101).

The effects of teacher practices on learner identity formation are not solely an issue of pedagogy, but also relate to their conduct as professionals. In summarising a

range of literature on the issue, Gamble argues that teacher professionalism is contingent on coherence between the differing roles and duties that teachers are responsible for and must fulfil in order to do their work effectively (Gamble, 2008). This includes, but is not limited to, their management of the classroom, both in terms of resources and relationships; their ability to negotiate differing linguistic needs and competencies of learners, whether in terms of medium of instruction or specific language subjects; their implementation and navigation of the curriculum and learning materials, and their management of assessments and evaluations (Gamble, 2008:23). In the South African context, a key text influencing teacher professional conduct is the SACE Code of Professional Ethics (2000), which, while also dealing with the issues described above, also requires teachers to manage diversity effectively, deal sensitively with content, and instil a culture of mutual respect and value for learning in the classroom.

Notions of critical pedagogy, and critical language pedagogy, are an important consideration in attempting to understand how teacher practices can affirm or challenge established inequalities and differences. It is also necessary to engage with perspectives on education for diversity, especially in educating learners from historically marginalised or disadvantaged groups. Sleeter (2001), Msila (2007) and Kirkland (2008) reflect on different aspects of how these work at both the policy and practical level. Sleeter argues that teacher training needs to equip new teachers to grapple with the symbolic values of whiteness embedded in schools and learning materials (Sleeter, 2001:95). These values persist in differing circumstances, and critical pedagogies need to be deployed in order to affirm the identities of marginalised learners and grant esteem to their social and cultural artefacts (Msila, 2007; Kirkland, 2008). Important to what constitutes critical pedagogy is the element of challenging established or universalised knowledges that are taken for granted as official narratives. Teacher practices need to engage with the diverse contexts and experiences of learners in ways that are sensitive and transformative, employing their cultural resources in learning while also subjecting these to interrogation alongside those of the dominant culture (Giroux, 1989; Hyun, 2006). Hyun argues that a critical approach to pedagogy manages the boundary between making content relatable and making it an uncritical representation of learners' lives, while also

including marginalised learners and not undermining learner experience in the process of teaching them to be reflexive agents (Hyun, 2006:22).

Soudien critiques critical pedagogy for containing elements of despair, arguing that its tendency towards anti-establishment thinking is polemical and fails to account for the reality that marginalised learners do not need to be 'made aware' of the circumstances they experience daily (2012). It is limiting for critical pedagogies to seek only to expose structures of domination, especially when the underlying relations of domination between and within groups, and within individuals, goes unacknowledged. Teachers and learners need to also recognise the conflicting knowledge they possess as it influences their understandings of curriculum knowledge (Giroux, 1981; Hyun, 2006; Soudien, 2012).

Kumaravadivelu (2003), Godley and Minnici (2008), and Li (2012) provide particular insights into language pedagogy as a specific field of study and enquiry. Li (2012) provides a detailed discussion of strategies for effective English language teaching. He suggests that language teacher pedagogy needs to be concerned with several key processes: developing and implementing challenging and relevant content; finding useful approaches to teaching different elements of the language; developing learners' vocabulary and reading skills; inculcating knowledge of how to use language in different contexts, and integrating the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Li, 2012:3). Li further argues that teachers can affect learners' motivation by using their languages as learning tools, and by teaching content that reflects and engages with issues relevant to their lives (2012), echoing Kirkland (2008) and drawing on perspectives in critical pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu (2003) discusses similar strategies to Lin, describing these as *macro-strategies* that can be developed into more specific measures for teachers within their contexts. Crucially, teaching in diverse contexts necessitates specific approaches by teachers in order to mitigate local structural, symbolic and social challenges to learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). This is especially important for teaching learners who do not speak the dominant language form, to avoid engaging in symbolic violence against their linguistic identities through teacher practices that privilege this form (Giroux, 1981). It is crucial to also recognise that teacher positionalities may influence this marginalisation of particular linguistic identities (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Godley and Minnici (2008) reflect on these issues in their discussion of critical language

pedagogy, arguing that teachers can draw on critical pedagogical approaches to engage learners practically on issues of linguistic diversity and identity, the privileging of particular linguistic forms, and the usefulness of their own linguistic repertoires for both learning and communication. They suggest that this is a crucial intervention in ensuring that learners develop agency in language learning, and critical attitudes to normalised linguistic arrangements (Godley & Minnici, 2008).

These perspectives show that the curriculum knowledge that learners engage with is embedded within school cultures that seek to foster particular kinds of learners and future citizens. Further, the use of language in invoking cultural dominance and modes of correctness is foundational to the manner in which some learners are legitimated and others are problematized. The conceptual framework draws the literature discussed above into a logic of how it will be operationalised in analysing the findings of the research.

## **2.2 Conceptual framework**

The study considers the role of language in the South African context through the lens of English teaching. In order to reach this narrowed focus, it is necessary to make a number of conceptual and historical moves based on the discussion of literature.

Significant importance is placed on the language of the coloniser in relation to constructing colonial society and enforcing its domination (Fanon, 1952; Adele Jinadu, 1976). Simply put, language is the mechanism through which cultural domination is enacted in colonial society, and the subjugation of indigenous languages and modes of expression is fundamental to ensuring the social inferiority of colonised peoples. Alexander (1989) reflects on this in his discussion of the history of language in South Africa and the moves made by both British and Dutch (later Afrikaans) colonial authorities to enforce linguistic domination and establish power. This is crucial context for the study because it locates the use of language as a tool of political will within a long and fractured history and offers explanation for the policy aims of the post-1994 government in trying to reconcile a multitude of needs and perspectives on the issue.



Specific moves to reach the question of English are visible through a process of elimination explained below. Firstly, mother tongue instruction in South Africa faces an interesting contradiction in terms of language policy and practice. While the major eleven languages in South Africa are all afforded official status in the new democracy, the damage to mother tongue instruction had been done during the apartheid era in that, for many black parents, it came to be associated with the inferior, content-poor education offered in townships and rural areas (Banda, 2000; Alexander, 2013). As a result, economic and social mobility is still encouraged by both parents and teachers through learning English as the primary medium of instruction in school (Banda, 2010:60). Banda's argument is that the current education system is one of additive bilingualism: 'English-plus-ten-other' (2010:55) official languages that are afforded secondary status practically despite being given constitutional equality. Despite the government's emphasis on making mother tongue instruction available to students and stressing the importance of students at least beginning being taught in their home language in the early years of schooling, for instrumental purposes English has come to occupy central importance as a medium of communication in South Africa in spheres ranging from government to popular culture and academia. This has led to mounting pressure for students to be proficient in English in order to succeed (Banda, 2010; Brock-Utne, 2003). The decline of Afrikaans has accompanied this due to its imposition on black students during apartheid. While Afrikaans is counted as one of the official languages, it is rejected as a language of instruction for black students and as a hegemonic language in general (Banda, 2010; Heugh, 1999). English is seen to fill the gap here, but it would be simplistic to assume that English is a neutral, objective and instrumental linguistic tool. Indeed, Pennycook argues that the fundamental problem with English is that its assumed neutrality masks its location within particular forms of cultural, political and economic domination that continues to suppress the development of many former colonies and countries in the global South (Pennycook, 1995).

It becomes important, then, to synthesise these ideas into a coherent question that deals with issues of inequality, diversity, policy-making and social cohesion. This question, 'How do Grade 11 English teachers address issues of social inequality and linguistic identity in their teaching methods?', will address these issues through an

analysis of the pedagogies deployed by teachers and how students respond to them. Three key theorists are of particular importance.

Bourdieu's theory of reproduction through cultural mechanisms affords importance to factors beyond existing structural mechanisms and instead looks at how specific cultural habits, mannerisms, values and norms establish dominance through processes that legitimise them and render them invisible, normalising them as standard for all in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This is important in a South African context where the political dominance of the African National Congress cannot be assumed to also encompass social and economic dominance by black people in general. While the ANC aims to improve the lives of the previously disadvantaged - including and especially the black majority - elite political power remains firmly entrenched, albeit no longer in white hands, and a relatively small number of black South Africans have reaped the benefits of measures such as affirmative action and employment equity (Neocosmos, 2010:63). With few of the institutions of apartheid adequately disrupted and dismantled, the dominance of white normativity has been retained through economic power (as the extensive assets of white South Africans were left largely untouched by the post-1994 government) and cultural power disguised as norms of social mobility (Alexander, 2013). Much like colonial times, language is crucial to this cultural power, as the signs and symbols of the upwardly mobile are encoded in English and contained in rules of appropriate and correct usage of the language, especially since the underdevelopment of indigenous languages has yet to be adequately remedied at the empirical level (Pennycook, 1995; Brock-Utne, 2003). It is in this sense that continuities in English teaching and the types of values transmitted through its content are important to assess. Bourdieu (1991) offers a clear discussion of the social nature of language and its role in the reproduction of particular norms and standards, and as a result particular social and political forms. Bourdieu's point is that language is a manifestation of *symbolic capital*, that is, the degree to which those who use a language and embody the cultural mores associated with it are recognised, legitimated and validated by other members of a group, and are thus possessors of particular cultural, as group, capital (1991:73). It follows that those who are not fluent in a language do not have the capital to enter into particular spaces where belonging is premised on the ability to express oneself appropriately.

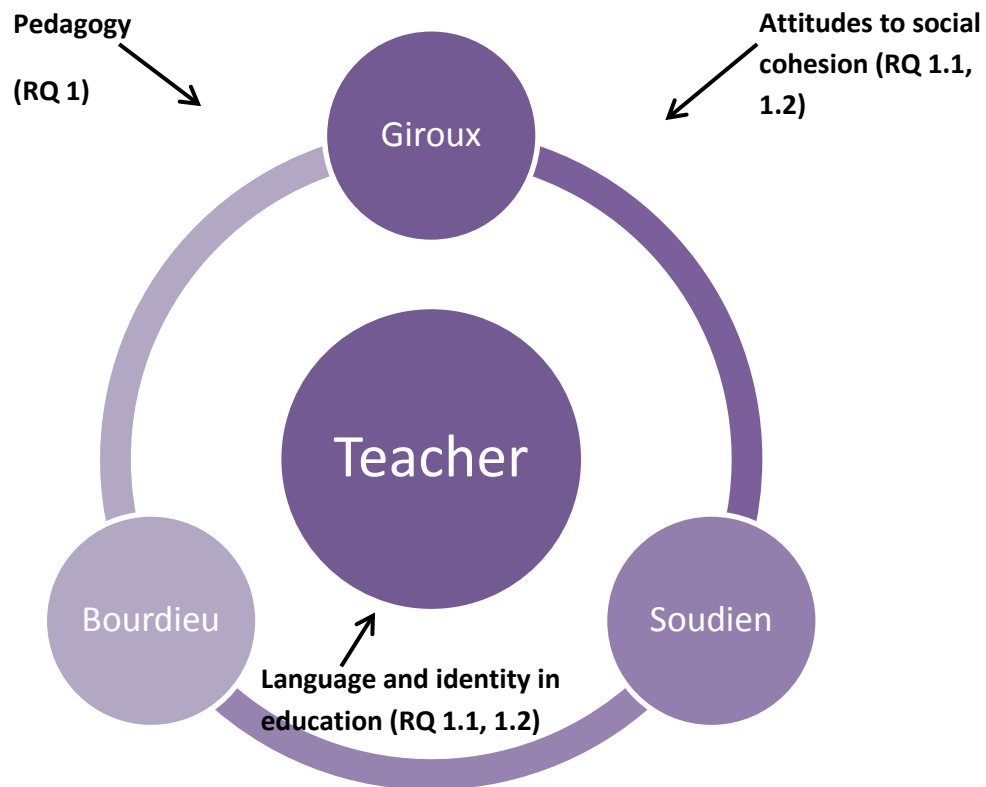
The social factors influencing the performance of learners are converted into a summation of their 'natural' aptitudes in the form of the final Matric certificate they all work towards – a document that influences their access and entry into further fields of socialisation at differing levels.

Bourdieu considers that people bring the life-worlds of whole social groups to bear in their individual interactions, and the relational status of the languages and registers they use (1991). For members of lower social groups or classes, this often means being under pressure to speak 'well' or 'properly' in order to be legitimated. However, this is not a unidirectional process because these same individuals may recognise that docility in accepting dominant linguistic norms impacts on their social virility or sense of worth, and may push back against these expectations to comport themselves in a manner deemed acceptable by those with authority over them. For learners in the classroom, this may take the form of using slang, code-switching, or other resistant mechanisms.

Henry Giroux's idea of 'pedagogy of and for difference' (1989:141) is of particular relevance to a discussion on South African education. This idea of difference is not understood in terms of school population, but in a wider societal framework where disparities between schools mean that students enter tertiary education and working life equipped very differently for the world, and with different expectations of their prospects in it. The legacy of structural racism in South Africa is such that many formerly black, coloured and Indian schools still lag behind former white schools in terms of their resource capacity, development and investment in students, leaving the majority of black South African students at a relative disadvantage to their white peers (Kapp and Badenhorst et al, 2014:51). Giroux's conceptualisation of schooling as a form of cultural politics calls for teachers to analyse 'how social power organises the basic categories of class, race, gender and ethnicity as a set of ideologies and practices that constitute specific configurations of power and politics' (Giroux, 1989:147). He argues that teachers need to actively promote educational methods that challenge domination and encourage the agency of students in shaping their knowledge bases and engaging with their lived realities. In South African education, for example, it is not sufficient to acknowledge the history of apartheid. It is important to connect students' experiences of their particular situation with the history that shaped it, and with pedagogies that promote resistance against deterministic

assumptions of students' abilities and social value according to the contexts that they come from. Implicit in Giroux's theory, however, is the idea that it is the dominant class in society whose values, attitudes, aspirations and behaviours are normalised through education. This is limited in the sense that it does not account for societies in transition, or where elite groups compete for the ability to dictate meaning in the cultural field. In the South African context, a tension exists between the norms and values of those with economic power and those with political power: while the government of democratic South Africa dictates the standards, values and content of the formal curriculum (with a heavy emphasis on nation-building, social cohesion and reconciliation), the economic disparities between students from different social backgrounds shapes their understanding of what knowledge is necessary for social and economic mobility.

A useful text orienting this research is Soudien's *Realising the Dream* (2012). The book discusses the effects of schooling on the formation of learner identities, including how they experience and deploy categorisations of race, religion, class and language. Soudien challenges the default to racialised thinking when attempting to understand the factors shaping contemporary South Africa. He argues that race is contextually negotiated and contingent on other factors in the negotiation of its boundaries, such as language, but further that assumptions about the fixity of race continue to affect constructions of self, other and community (Soudien, 2012). As argued by Giroux (1978) and Bourdieu & Passeron (1977) schools are responsible for the transmission of authorised values and knowledge, and thus play an integral role in the socialisation of young people (Soudien, 2012). Soudien serves as a necessary foil to Giroux and Bourdieu in that his work highlights the complexity of the relational nature of identities at the individual level, and accounts for the possibilities of fluidity and disruption in the negotiation of identities across and within spaces.

**Figure 1**

Central to this study is the teacher. The key theorists in the conceptual framework capture differing elements of education and cultural politics, but share a common thread in their recognition that education is not a neutral aspect of social life, and that it is mired in historic and political arrangements of what constitutes legitimate and important knowledge, behaviour, values and dispositions. Bourdieu and Giroux are essential to understanding teacher pedagogy; the notion of culture as symbolic power speaks directly to the authority invested in the teacher and the authorised knowledge they transmit (and how), while Giroux accounts for how this symbolic power is engaged with, affirmed or disrupted through recognition of schooling as a form of cultural politics (Giroux, 1989). These cultural politics are central to Soudien's enquiry into how schooling shapes attitudes to belonging and selfhood, particularly regarding how the transmission of cultural values and attitudes affects how learners create their allegiances to and distances from particular social and linguistic identities. The relationship between language and achievement is also integral to this

because of how particular language-in-education arrangements privilege, and thus reproduce, the cultural capital of certain groups (Bourdieu, 1991). It is this reproduction that draws Bourdieu and Soudien into conversation, in that while the knowledges, attitudes and values of the dominant culture are reproduced in the school setting, these are also contested and negotiated in complex ways through the interactions of learners and teachers. The contexts in which schools are located, and where learners and teachers come from, deeply influences how meaning is negotiated within these institutions and attitudes to wider social identities are developed.

The literature framing this study provided critical insights into the linguistic and educational landscape in which the participant teachers operated. With this theoretical context provided, the discussion now turns to the methodology in the following chapter. The rationale for the choice of research participants will be further discussed, and the methods used for conducting research will be explained alongside issues of trustworthiness, reliability and validity.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the method of the study, explaining the process of acquiring all data and justifying the use of particular instruments within the theoretical orientation. It also gives further detail about the key assumptions made about the context in which research took place. Further, the rationale for the choice of schools will be provided, relating this to other more detailed studies already mentioned in the literature review (See: Soudien, 2012; Bray et al, 2010).

#### **3.2 Research questions**

This study is not particularly focused on the issue of academic performance in language classes, but rather in the cultural mores and attitudes to linguistic and social identities that are formed in the process of schooling. The primary authors noted in the conceptual framework deal with specific but related issues of social transmission of ideas, symbols, and values, and the implication of these for the development of culture, and hegemonic culture, through the process of education. South Africa's history as a racially divided state has the effect that its post-apartheid policies still seek to address what are considered primarily racialised inequalities, and effectually close the gap between more historically privileged white South Africans and those disenfranchised by white rule. Because of this, issues of social cohesion in the country will necessarily relate, at least in part, to the racial, class, and spatial dynamics that continue to dictate life for many of its citizens. They will also relate to the way in which language has been at the intersection of these dynamics, contributing to the landscape of social difference through the codes that dictate entry into particular spaces.

The research questions for the study are as follows:

1. How do Grade 11 English teachers address issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion in their teaching methods?

1.1 What skills and values are transmitted by Grade 11 teachers in their teaching?

1.2 What are the effects of their teaching on learners' linguistic identities and on creating social cohesion?

The main research question is concerned with the classroom practice of teachers – not only their pedagogy but their interactions with learners in the process of teaching. It is argued that teaching a language, especially one with a complex relationship to identity in post-colonial contexts, revolves around more than just the neutral transmission of grammar and syntax. It also involves a negotiation of identities and positions – of the teacher, their learners and their differing circumstances, the school culture and their relationship to society at large.

The sub-questions situate the teacher within the classroom context. The first sub-question deals with the way the teacher's linguistic methods and practices are taken up in the classroom, both positively and negatively. The second probes the relationship the learners have to the teacher, and how their experiences of teaching shape their attitudes to language and its position in South Africa. It also interrogates how their linguistic identities impact on their associations with broader social and national identity discourses. The reality that apartheid (and colonialism) was as much a cultural as it was a political and economic system of domination means that education was a key point of entry for the socialisation of people into differential social positions (Alexander, 1989; Soudien, 2012), with the result that both access to and content of education needed to be addressed in the post-apartheid state. The degree to which government has been able to encourage an inclusive, caring society through its education system is dependent both on teachers and on the attitudes and experiences of learners outside the classroom.

### **3.3 Research approach**

As discussed in the chapters preceding, language in South Africa is foundational to issues of race, class and identity, and remains an important site of power and redress in the post-apartheid context. Affording eleven of the country's major languages with official status was a powerful symbolic statement that provided formal parity of esteem for previously unequal language communities. However, this



does not translate to equality of usage at a societal level, and also does not grapple with the structural effects of inequalities between languages. This study sought to engage with the social dynamics created by these issues at the classroom level, in order to understand how teachers attempted to deal with them and how learners were influenced to think about their place in society through their education into its dominant language. In pursuit of this understanding, qualitative case study research was conducted within a critical realist philosophy. How this suited the research problem is discussed in further detail below.

### ***Critical realism and case study research***

Developing the conceptual framework necessitated a research philosophy, critical realism, which would enable these ideas to be operationalised in the process of formulating the study and understanding the data. Qualitative research methods were used in order to understand the implications of three teachers' classroom practices, how these functioned within their contexts, and how they related to broader issues of social cohesion in South African society.

Critical realism acknowledges the impossibility of making truth claims on the world while still attempting to use data to explain why things function as they do in the context in which they are found (Halfpenny, 1987; Easton, 2010). In reflecting on the importance of context for grounding this approach, Halfpenny suggests 'that [within realism] actions and institutions are to be explained as the observable manifestations of underlying social or economic or material or mental structures that are the real generative mechanisms causally responsible for them' (Halfpenny, 1987:35). Understanding the material and symbolic conditions underpinning institutions, spaces and relationships is integral to critical realist research because of how these shape the circumstances that enable and constrain agency. Of further importance is for this research to credibly establish that particular mechanisms are, in fact, causally responsible for particular phenomena, and under what conditions (Halfpenny, 1987:35; Schudel, 2012:141). For this study, the primary mechanism in the classroom context is the teacher, who operates at the interface between authorised knowledge and local contexts and subjectivities. How the teacher approaches language education is critical to interpreting the frames within which learners

interrogate their own linguistic identities, particularly as part of their broader social realities.

Maxwell (2004) grapples with key assumptions made about the incompatibility of qualitative research with realist approaches to causality. He argues that qualitative research goes beyond mere description because it makes visible the conditions under which particular phenomena function:

‘qualitative methods have distinct advantages for identifying the influence of contextual factors that can’t be statistically or experimentally controlled, for understanding the unique processes at work in specific situations, and for elucidating the role of participants’ beliefs and values in shaping outcomes’ (Maxwell, 2004:9)

A realist approach to causality supports qualitative research because it emphasises a critical understanding of the dynamics underpinning everyday exchanges, located as they are within particular historical, social, and economic contexts (Maxwell, 2004). For example, while it is useful to quantify which and how many learners believe in values of social cohesion, arguably it is more important to interrogate how they negotiate the boundaries of what social cohesion means in practice, and in relation to their peers.

Easton further advocates for a critical realist, case study approach in circumstances where it is ‘particularly well suited to relatively clearly bounded, but complex phenomena’ (2010:123), which a classroom serves as an ideal example of. Bound by time and space, classrooms are environments where structure (such as timetables), order (class rules) and authorised knowledge (curricula) is transmitted and negotiated through the teacher and the teacher’s interactions with learners. In this sense the structurally fixed location of the classroom is transcended through the fluidity of experiences and perspectives that are introduced, interact and transform within the school space. This captures Scott’s argument (2005:3) that under a critically realist lens actors are not able to interpret and change the world as they wish, but that they are enabled and constrained by the material and social realities in which they exist. While there are policies and frameworks in place that may intend to shape or dictate the types and methods of education that teachers provide to their learners, teachers have agency in terms of how they interpret and create meaning

within the classroom (Hyun, 2006), and learners have some kind of agency in how they respond to and engage this information (Philips, 2004). That said, their impressions of their teachers, and the ways their teachers approach them, is also mediated by their own positionalities in society (Bray et al, 2010). This renders the classroom a complex interface of ideas, values, attitudes and identities where the use of quantitative methods cannot adequately capture the detail of its day to day functioning – and where case study research is best suited to identify the implications of this interface for both policy and practice because of the level of insight it generates into how it operates in context (Schudel, 2012).

The above discussion proposes that critical realism partners well with case study research because ‘[I]t justifies the study of any situation...but only if the process involves thoughtful in depth research with the objective of understanding why things are the way they are’ (Easton, 2010:119). This is especially true when ‘the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin, 1981:59). What is crucial is that a conceptual framework exists to situate the case study within a particular structure, grounding it in a theoretical paradigm. Yin considers this to be an important part of establishing a chain of evidence in the process of analysis, ‘[consisting] of the explicit citation of particular pieces of evidence, as one shifts from data collection to within-case analysis to cross-case analysis and to overall findings and conclusions’ (1979:xii). The conceptual framework of this study captures the logic of the research questions while tethering these to literature on key points of interrogation, such as critical pedagogy, language as symbolic power and reproduction in education. The inclusion of Soudien (2012) adds an empirical layer to the conceptual framework in that it ties existing research on issues of identity and belonging in education to similar points of enquiry. This enables the cases in this study to speak back to research while offering new insights that can contribute to knowledge on linguistic and social identity in education.

Common criticisms of case studies are that these are not methodologically and theoretically rigorous and useful (Flyvberg, 2006). Flyvberg argues that criticisms of case study research usually centre on issues of ‘theory, reliability and validity’ (2006:4), i.e. whether these can be considered scientifically sound. Case study research produces context-dependent knowledge in a world in which human action is generally context-dependent and –specific, and Flyvberg’s argument is that

context-dependent knowledge is therefore as, if not more, important than any attempt to determine universalisms and rules governing human behaviour (2006:7). However, he further states that 'the choice of method should clearly depend on the problem under study and its circumstances' (2006:10). Case studies become especially useful when attempting to understand the depth, and not the breadth, of a particular context or phenomenon. The key here is that selecting the most typical of cases for study will likely not yield the richest of data, but that establishing a baseline of study allows for different cases in a cross-case analysis to yield a narrative thread that can explain, probe and evaluate how different contexts yield different and relational effects. The schools selected for this study all contained elements of 'typical' South African schools, overlaid with the complexity of the post-apartheid experience such that they could not be said to be deterministic of the experiences, realities and opinions of the learners and teachers who comprise them.

One criticism that it is important to acknowledge, and that will be reflected on later in this chapter, is the issue of subjective bias. In order to respond to the question 'How do Grade 11 English teachers address issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion in their teaching methods?' it would not be amiss to assume that the researcher would have a bias towards verification, that is, a bias towards selecting schools and interpreting data that confirms preconceived notions of these environments (Flyvberg, 2006:18). Awareness of one's positionality is crucial in this regard, but more specifically one would need to be aware that the case study context exists independently of the researcher's expectations of it. Consistently checking one's own biases against the reality of what is seen in the field contributes to generating knowledge that stands up to critique of its primary research strategy. An important methodological decision was made not to study schools that fitted into the historically, racially tiered (black, coloured and white) landscape in Cape Town, out of concern for the possibility of reproducing racial logics in describing how these schools functioned in comparison to each other. Of particular interest to this study was how historically homogenous schools have had to deal with difference, whether as an immediate reality within the school or at the level of curriculum and shared knowledge.

### **3.4 Participants and site**

The study is focused on teachers and learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (i.e. Grades 10-12). Grade 12 classes, due to their increased workload and the pressure of the end of year exit examination, could not be used for the study. Grade 11 teachers teach at the second-most senior level in schools and so their course material is relatively more sophisticated than at Grade 10 level, where learners have only just completed compulsory basic education and begun the process of specialising in the subjects of their choice. In this sense, the content of Grade 11 coursework may be more advanced and complex in the ideas, messages and values that are portrayed, and provide a greater depth of knowledge than Grade 10 coursework which has to do the job of adjusting learners to FET standards after completing their General Education & Training (GET) phase.

As mentioned before, the spatial engineering of apartheid resulted in schools being located in spaces that were inherently raced and classed. The spatial engineering of Cape Town, where the study was conducted, is discussed further in other literature (see Coetzer, 2013; Bray et al, 2010; Soudien, 2012), but it suffices to say that the city is divided along racial, class and geographical lines that largely mirror apartheid organisation, with black townships on the extreme peripheries of the city, white suburbs dotted along the mountain, city centre and coast, and coloured townships and suburbs acting as a buffer zone in-between these. A range of literature (Soudien, 2012; Sayed et al, 2013; Fataar, 2015) describes the reality that many black learners are electing to attend schools in historically coloured and white areas, with the result that multiple linguistic identities are negotiated within these new learning contexts. This shift from township schools to schools in the metropolitan area is specifically related to the desire to be taught in English and acquire the social capital that accompanies fluency in the language (Fataar, 2015), but as an area of study commuter schools remain under-researched. While there are township schools that teach in English, only one township school in Cape Town could be found teaching English at home language level as a subject, providing a practical reason for the choice of this school type as well (WCED, 2016). Fataar further adds that 66% of learners attend schools outside of their immediate vicinity (2015:66), making this an area of study worth interrogating, to an extent, within this research.

It is for this purpose that three schools were selected to be sensitive to these dynamics, and a specific set of criteria was developed for determining sites of research. These were:

- Spatial location
- Demographic composition of school
- Dominant home language of learners
- Teaching of English at Home Language level in Grade 11 (a factor all schools should have in common)

This is a purposively selected list of criteria aimed at being inclusive of economic and social disparities, personal linguistic identities of learners, and the linguistic directives of the school itself. While accepting the logic of racial distinction needs to be problematized and rejected on a biological level, at the social level race remains a factor in South African society and any study of language needs to recognise the relationship of language to race in South Africa (Alexander, 1989). Understanding issues of reproduction and schooling as cultural politics required a study of different contexts in which these are negotiated and facilitated. Assuming a typology of schools based on historical contexts negates the complexity that exists within and between communities that live in tension with this history on a daily basis. The ability for the study to be representative of broader issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion is thus dependent on the sample of cases providing different insights into how these issues function in the kinds of schools learners choose to go to in pursuit of their future aspirations. Arguably a baseline of study is created through the above criteria and an awareness of the standard inputs that contribute to framing teacher practice: education policy, curriculum policy, and learning materials. How these inputs influence the development of linguistic identity and social cohesion is dependent on the teacher's interactions with learners within the classroom space; their impact is contextually-located.

### ***Participant teachers***

Ms Fisher was an English teacher at School 1 (known in this study as Lodge High School), which is a commuter school with a mixture of black and coloured learners who travel from areas as far as Kensington, Mitchell's Plain and Delft to attend

school. She was a young white woman who had been teaching at the school for about four years, and in that time had been associated with a sharp rise in the performance and confidence of the learners she taught – a mixed class of learners from multiple religious, racial, social and national contexts. Lodge High was built in a neighbourhood that was later classified ‘white’ following forced removals. It is close to the city centre, surrounded by tourist sites and public transport routes, which is a major factor influencing the choices learners make in their ability to access schooling. The school itself is comprised of several old, and some newer buildings and facilities, and has well-kept grounds that learners are able to use for sporting codes. A variety of sports and cultural activities are offered alongside the academic program, and it was apparent that learners are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. Lodge High was historically a coloured ‘struggle’ or political school: one of those schools that had been active within the anti-apartheid movement, had mobilised their resources in support of it and educated their learners within a particular political frame, often with radical humanist or leftist politics. It had been attended by the children of many coloured professionals during apartheid, giving the school some measure of a (racial) middle-class identity. Many political schools had also been academically strong, and had enforced this alongside a culture of high discipline. Lodge High set common goals for school performance each year, and consistently reached its targets, suggesting that learners were also invested in maintaining, and thus being associated with, the school’s academic tradition.

Ms Bezuidenhout was an ex-student of School 2 (known as Juniper High School) which she had also taught at for about four years after finishing her teaching degree. Juniper High is situated in a coloured neighbourhood, with a roughly 50-50 mix of English and Afrikaans-speaking learners. The school has basic facilities and is occasionally victim to vandalism and petty theft. It is situated on a flat expanse of land with a big, dusty field that serves as a playground and a space for soccer and rugby. The neighbourhood itself is a mixture of working, upper-working and middle class families, with many middle-class school-going children opting to commute to schools in other suburbs (especially historically white schools). It is a 25 minute drive from the city centre without traffic, but is an important central point for neighbourhoods further out on the Cape Flats. As such, most of the schools in the

neighbourhood serve working-class learners, some of whom commute from other areas such as Lavender Hill or Mitchell's Plain – there is a public transport terminus close by the school with transport that connects these neighbourhoods with each other, and the neighbourhood with central points in the city. While some learners opt to move out of these local schools, for others they are an important point of entry into urban and peri-urban spaces when coming from more geographically isolated spaces. Juniper faced local stigma for being a catch-all school, meaning that it accepted those learners who did not or could not opt to go elsewhere, including those learners who had been expelled from schools such as Lodge and Lillie. It was also significantly challenged by issues of substance abuse, pregnancy and violence within the school context.

Mr Haxton had taught at School 3 (known as Lillie High School) for about ten years, and had been teaching for twenty following postgraduate studies in English at two of South Africa's historically elite universities. He had experience working in different former Model C schools, and so had particular knowledge of how different patterns of transformation affected learner needs as teachers realised they would need to consider the new demographics in these schools. Lillie High is located in an affluent, historically white suburb, close to amenities such as sports facilities, shopping malls and restaurants, green spaces and, importantly, the learners' homes. While many learners commuted to the school, dropped off by parents, private or public transport, many also lived close by to the school and so also to these facilities. The school has a good academic record and a strong cultural and sporting tradition, with the main school campus and sports facilities being busy well after the school has ended. It is still a largely white school, though a significant number of learners are from other former racial groups. While Lodge High's culture of excellence was tied to a particular political experience, Lillie High's history as an excellent white, English-medium school was a particular attraction for black and coloured parents, being as this excellence was also associated with strong connections to local universities and so represented a clear path to realising particular social aspirations.

### ***Learners***

Each participant class contained roughly 35 learners. Each focus group used a sample of ten learners. These learners were sampled in two ways: during the course of the observations, particular learners were identified for their participation and



contribution to discussions (irrespective of whether they were the most academically successful in the class). This selection constituted less than half of the participants for each focus group. The second addition to the composition of the focus groups was through learners volunteering to participate and then having these volunteers screened by the teachers, in order to be as demographically and linguistically representative as possible within the classroom context. Thus, at Juniper High, learners in the focus group came from both the local community and further afield, while at Lodge learners were also representative of the linguistic, national and religious differences within the school. The Lillie High participants were mostly white, with the exception of Maryam, an Indian Muslim learner, and two coloured learners.

It was hoped that this sampling method would avoid the selection of only top achievers or those most likely to give a particular perspective to the researcher. Further, through observing the social dynamics in each classroom, it was important to have a broad sample of learners from different peer and friend groups, so as to draw their experiences into a composite sketch of how teaching was experienced and negotiated in the classroom. Learners were assured that they would be given pseudonyms in the writing up of the data, and this enabled them to share opinions that they otherwise feared would have led to reprisal by their teacher. In introducing the study and setting out the terms of engagement for the focus group, I briefly discussed with learners why anonymity was important to ensuring their comfort and trust when participating. Following this I encouraged them to respect their peers' anonymity when speaking about the focus group with their peers and teachers afterwards, ensuring that they did not discuss aspects of the focus group that might get their peers in trouble or reveal sensitive information about their experiences.

The participant teachers and learners, and their schools, have been given pseudonyms in this study. One class per school was selected, often at the discretion of the teacher or grade head. Research at each school was conducted over a two week period during their English Home Language lessons. Ethical permission was granted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and then subsequently by the school principals and class teachers. Learners were requested to participate in focus groups in advance, and could withdraw from these at their own volition; most elected to turn up on the scheduled day.

### **3.5 Reliability, validity and rigor in data collection**

This section begins with a discussion of the issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research, drawing on a range of literature that engages how these issues influence data collection methods and the trustworthiness of findings. The alignment of research question, data collection method and instrument is important to ensuring the methodological rigor of a qualitative study. While data from across the three collection methods was used to respond to different questions, particular methods were aligned with particular research questions in ways that best answered these. Versions of the instruments used can be found in the Appendix.

#### ***Reliability, validity and triangulation***

Golafshani writes that an important question a researcher must answer in qualitative undertakings is whether the data and analysis presented are believable (2003:601). Issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research, then, are primarily concerned with the **trustworthiness**, and thus the methodological rigor, of the findings presented. Golafshani (2003) and Morse et al (2002) show how reliability and validity were initially derived from quantitative research before being recast as trustworthiness and rigor for qualitative research. Morse et al (2002) conceive of trustworthiness and reliability and validity differently, situating them as distinct elements of the research process. They caution against the trend of conducting research that only pursues trustworthiness as a post-hoc consideration after data is collected, rather than on ensuring that the process of data collection and analysis is reliable and valid (Morse et al, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Further, they argue that a return to an understanding of the meaning of these terms for qualitative research would enable researchers to grapple with the challenge of using qualitative methods in ways that deliver quality, credible, believable results.

In a quantitative research paradigm reliability relates to the measurement of the consistency between data and the generalisability of findings (Madill et al, 2000). However in qualitative research, reliability relates to the consistency of findings derived from deploying targeted research methods and completing analyses of framing documents (such as curricula and teacher policies) (Golafshani, 2003). The aim here is to confirm that findings are believable based on methodological and theoretical rigor: through developing a method for the study that clearly and precisely

articulates how research will be conducted, data analysed, and findings related to existing theory or similar studies (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004). Golafshani (2003) thus considers reliability to be an outcome of validity.

Unlike in quantitative research, the validity of a qualitative study is arguably diminished by the active participation of the researcher in the research context, as this has the effect of undermining the naturally-occurring everyday phenomena that are the subject of study (Golafshani, 2003). Validity is dependent on the ability to prove that the research was able to answer the research problem, but more specifically that the findings represent what is found in reality (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004). This is not about developing a universal truth in qualitative research; more specifically, it relates to the ability of the researcher to draw out the multiple, and often conflicting 'truths' or interpretations of reality that are offered by research participants (Brink, 1993; Shenton, 2004). Being able to confirm these interpretations and establish the findings as valid has a critical effect on whether the study is considered reliable as a whole.

Brink thus considers that threats to reliability and validity relate to the researcher, the research participants and context, and methods of data collection (1993). The researcher's biases and positionality may impact the sampling, instruments, and interpretations of data, and influence selective readings of findings. Research participants can pose a threat by affecting the consistency and truth within the findings, based on particular power dynamics that may make them reticent to share particular information or opinions with the researcher (Brink, 1993). This is further complicated by existing dynamics within the research context. Moreover, data collection methods can be affected by sampling biases that produce findings that confirm the researcher's own bias (Brink, 1993). Triangulation methods are thus a critical factor in ensuring that researcher and sample biases are mitigated through establishing corroborating evidence for claims.

Shenton (2004), Golafshani (2003) and Madill et al (2000) also recommend the use of triangulation mechanisms – whether through mixed research methods or mixed data collection instruments – in order to verify the claims made by the primary subject of research (Golafshani, 2003:603).

**Figure 2**

‘Triangulation’ represents an attempt to confirm the consistency of findings by approaching the collection of these from multiple perspectives with respect to the research subject. The above graphic shows that in order to understand the teacher holistically for the purposes of this study, interpretations of teacher practices need to be understood through both actors in the classroom space (teachers and learners), the researcher as an external observer, and the teacher as captured within policy and academic and theoretical work. These interpretations were gathered using the different data collection methods discussed in the next section.

Researcher responsiveness – the ability of the researcher to adapt to changing circumstances in the field and be sensitive to shifts that may break with the initial hypothesis – is important to qualitative research, particularly when using multiple data sources. As Golafshani argues, ‘Engaging multiple methods, such as observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities’ (2003:604), especially if researchers are reflexive about their findings and constantly check these against their own assumptions and biases. Shenton (2004) agrees with Golafshani, suggesting that using a mixture of data collection methods resolves the problem of their individual limitations, and allows for

the research context to be captured from various perspectives in order to establish the legitimacy of the claims made by participants.

### ***Verification strategies***

The timeline of research in each site situated focus groups and interviews towards the end of the research period in order to shape questions, while general in the instruments themselves, to the contextual circumstances that became apparent over the course of observing lessons and seeing interactions between teachers and learners. This responsiveness partners well with what Morse et al (2002) call 'verification strategies'. They argue that verification in qualitative research cannot take place on a post-hoc basis and must instead form part of the research process, ensuring that checks and balances exist to offset potential risks to the reliability of the study (Brink, 1993; Morse et al, 2002:20). Several strategies for in-process verification were used in this research. These relate to:

- *Establishing methodological coherence*, specifically, that the research questions align with the methods of data collection chosen (Brink, 1993; Morse et al, 2002). This process can be affected by researcher responsiveness as exemplified above, where instruments and the use of particular methods are tailored to particular contexts in order to maximise the willingness of participants to share information and experiences.
- *Appropriate sampling* to ensure that the research subjects are as representative as possible or exhibit the most knowledge of the topic of study (Brink, 1993; Morse et al, 2002:12). The sampling for this study targeted teachers and learners in three of the different kinds of schools that learners elect to attend now that they are not confined to racially- and spatially-dictated schooling. Learner participants were also in Grade 11, and so were senior enough to be dealing with sensitive issues of language and society in their course materials and with the teacher.
- *Concurrent data collection and analysis* to ensure that what is required for the study is actually found in the course of research (Brink, 1993). During the research process, this took the form of using field notes and listening to daily recordings in order to note particular exchanges, to be aware of certain

dynamics, and to establish context-specific prompts for interviews and focus groups.

- *Thinking theoretically and dialectically about the data* so that ideas that emerge are confirmed in the data and used to generate new ideas that form the basis of the analysis (Morse et al, 2002:13). It was important that ideas and assumptions developed from initial findings – particularly observations – were checked against the responses to focus groups and interviews. Initial assumptions had to be consistently checked and adapted in comparison with new findings, and raw ideas and arguments developed on an ongoing basis.
- *Theory development on two levels* was critical; looking to build theory from the findings of the research and to use this theory as a basis for further comparison (i.e. generalisation) (Morse et al, 2002:13). The conceptual framework was not intended to form a check-box strategy of simply verifying findings according to existing research. Rather, the findings were used to develop further insights into the elements identified within the framework, to identify how these might work in different contexts, and to develop theory from the analysis that speaks back to the original research while offering insights for future work.

The specifics of in-process verification are dependent on methodological approach, but verification is particularly crucial to qualitative research because it provides for ongoing, reflexive processes of ensuring reliability and validity. Morse et al (2002) further argue that attending to these issues in the process of conducting research can mitigate the possibility of thin data sets by enabling inexperienced researchers (such as students) to assess the quality and relevance of their data through constant reflection and engagement. This can resolve the challenges of trying to establish trustworthiness after the data has already been collected and of trying to produce trustworthy analyses with weak data. Following Morse et al (2002), this study attempted to ensure reliability and validity through utilising in-process strategies of verification, establishing methodological rigor for the purposes of producing credible data and analyses. Important to this methodological rigor was the selection of appropriate data collection methods, which are discussed below.

### **3.6 Methods and Instruments**

The table below illustrates the sampling and data collection method for each research question, and the relationship between research questions and individual methods and instruments. These methods will be discussed in relation to theoretical perspectives on their use in research, and how these were operationalised within the respective instruments.

**Figure 3**

<b>METHODOLOGY BY RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>SAMPLE (No.)</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION METHOD (No.)</b>	<b>INSTRUMENT</b>
RQ1	TEACHERS (1 per school = 3)	INTERVIEWS (3)	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE
RQ1.1	CLASS (TEACHER & LEARNERS) ( $\pm$ 35 per class = 105)	OBSERVATION (3 x 12 = 36)	OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
RQ1.2	LEARNERS (10 per FG = 30)	FOCUS GROUPS (3)	FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

#### ***Documents***

Documentary analysis was a crucial part of orienting the study prior to beginning data collection. The literature discussed in the preceding chapter provided deep insights into issues of language, education and social dynamics in South Africa, alongside critical theories of education and reproduction. However, what was also needed was an understanding of the particular policies framing the participant teachers' practices in (public) schools, such as the Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1996), the CAPS FET English Home Language document (DBE, 2011), the South African Schools' Act (DoE, 1996) and the South African Council of Educators' Code of Professional Ethics (SACE, 2000). Because documents are both produced and applied in social contexts, Prior (2003) argues that it is important to understand how they function in their use in different organisations or institutions. The policies identified were all documents that the participant teachers were expected to be familiar with and interpret through their practices. A further source of information was the respective schools' handbooks, which are not included in the appendices for

ethical reasons. These provided insight into each school's vision, their history and position within the community, and their codes of conduct. The specific expressions of these documents are often combined with theoretical perspectives in the analysis of the data, so that more nuanced, contextually relevant analyses can be developed.

The textbooks and activities discussed in the findings and analysis were analysed based on a guide (see Appendix H) drawing from existing studies into textbooks and representation (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009a, 2009b).

### ***Primary instrument: Interviews***

Knox and Burkard (2009) suggest that interviews are critical research tools because they tap into the deep experiences of individuals within particular contexts. They are especially useful when targeting specific individuals whose experiences or narratives provide particular insights into the subject of study (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Because the primary subject of this research is the teacher and their practice, it was important to engage the participant teachers in particular depth on the values and attitudes underpinning their work (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Their responses also provided valuable context for the everyday interactions witnessed in the classroom. As critical spaces in which meaning can be co-created and thus validated with important respondents (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), interviews are also important tools for establishing and challenging validity in the findings because of how this method relates to observations. The tensions that become apparent between the responses of participant teachers and the observations of their actual practice are of particular interest in the discussion of findings, because these show the importance of the classroom context for negotiating the different meanings actors bring into it.

The interviews focused on aspects of teachers' pedagogical process as well as how they understand and interpret the LiEP and CAPS. Questions in the semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix C) dealt with what teachers considered the ideal value base of an English teacher to be; what they considered to be the role of English in the South African context; what type of content they considered important to teach; what they expected from their learners behaviourally and academically, and how they approached learners who struggled with the language. It was important to interrogate teachers' pedagogic practices alongside their understandings of policy because this is infused in their interactions with learners in the classroom space.



This was made possible through using semi-structured interviews because of the richness that is gained from using open-ended and probing questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Stokes & Bergin, 2006).

### ***Secondary Instruments: Classroom Observation and Focus Groups***

The value of observation lies in its ability to confirm or challenge the assumptions and narratives that individuals report about particular relationships or events (Maxwell, 2004). This directly relates to Maxwell's assertion that the context in which interactions take place is a crucial influence on the causality of particular relationships (2004:6). This study relies on an understanding of context because the relational exchanges between teachers and learners cannot be disaggregated from the environments in which these take place. Observation was necessary tool for creating an image of the classroom and school context, and for tailoring the basic elements of the other instruments to get participants to reflect on specific interactions witnessed in context (Jorgenson, 2002). This study used a semi-structured observation guide to record particular details about the classroom context and interactions, and note other instances of interesting phenomena. It relied on my role as a researcher being non-participatory, although it was made clear to learners that they were being observed before research began.

It was also important for several other reasons. The first was that it could verify the claims made by the teachers in their interview responses. The second was to establish the pedagogic approach of the teacher and understand how they delivered the curriculum and its objectives in a practical sense. It was also crucial to compare the textual base of the content (covered in the textbook analysis) with its delivery in the classroom, and how learners responded to and engaged with it. By including classroom observation as an instrument, the perspectives of learners gained through focus groups and the responses of teachers in the interviews allowed for the data to be triangulated in order to ensure its credibility in terms of drawing coherent links between what was seen, what was expressed, and what was theorised (Brink, 1993; Morse et al, 2002; Shenton, 2004). It would not be a legitimate study if only the perspectives of teachers were requested; nor would it be fair to only engage learners on their experiences of learning without having some indication of the teacher's

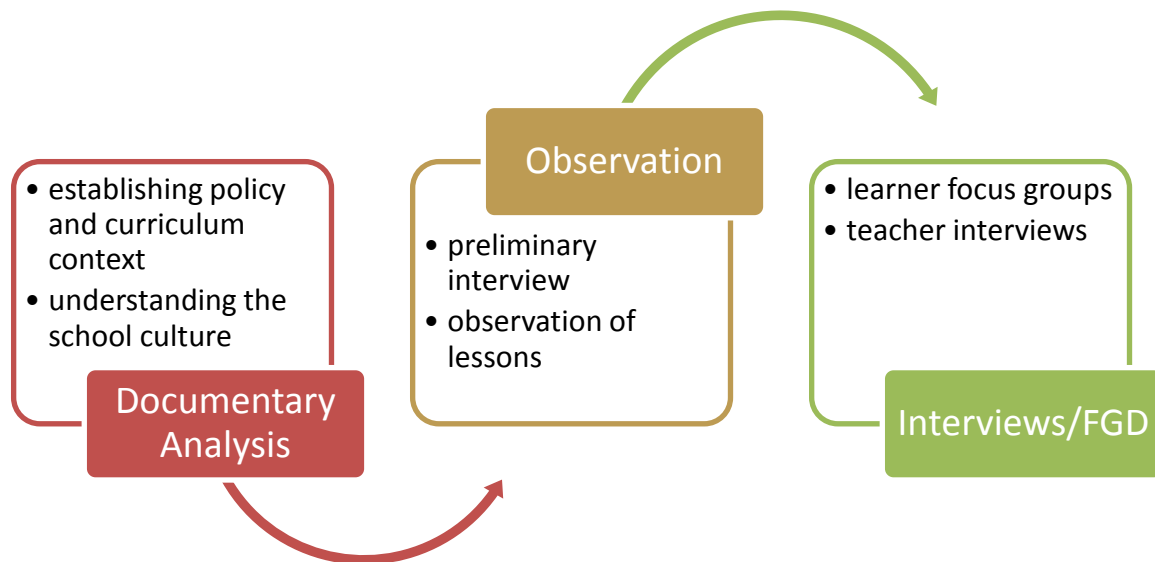
approach. If the teacher's style did not encourage engagement, for example, understanding both the teacher's perspective and the learners' views away from the teacher would make classroom observation the ideal mechanism through which to see these differing perspectives at work.

Focus groups were initially popularised in market research due to their efficacy in providing a range of qualitative responses to elements of a particular topic through the drawing together of individuals with knowledge of it (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). The selection of these participants is critical for establishing a trusting 'atmosphere of disclosure' (Williams & Katz, 2001) that enables them to express their opinions as freely as possible. Crucially, this means that focus groups require researchers to be sensitive to the differing roles and relationships being exhibited in the process of discussion, drawing out dissonant views and encouraging debate while protecting the dignity of group members (Williams & Katz, 2001; Grudens-Schuck et al, 2004). The desired outcome of this is the avoidance of manufactured consensus through the silencing of particular voices, and the establishment of the meanings of local perspectives (Williams & Katz, 2001).

The focus groups with learners were necessary to open up a space for dialogue on issues of language, identity and inequality. One group of ten learners per participant classroom was posed topical questions on course content, classroom dynamics, and the types of things they are taught to value and embody in order to succeed. These discussions were at least forty-five minutes in length and semi-structured, and every effort was made to intervene quite minimally in the process other than to guide the trajectory of discussion in a meaningful and relevant direction, to respond to potential conflicts critically and sensitively, and enable learners to feel comfortable enough to express their views. The focus of this study was, however, predominantly on the teacher, which is why individual interviews with learners were not required, and instead a general sense was sought to contextualise the data gained from observations and interviews.

### 3.7 Data collection and analysis

**Figure 4**



The process of data collection followed a particular logic. An initial context had to be established through a preliminary document analysis, which was completed in the first half of 2015. Important documents for consideration (see Appendix) included the Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1996), the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Grade 11 English Home Language (DBE, 2011), the prescribed reading list for Grade 11 and school handbooks. For ethical reasons these handbooks are not included in the Appendix. Following documentary analysis and the agreement of schools and teachers to participate in the study, briefing interviews with teachers were conducted in order to frame the research, establish researcher positionality in the classroom and get a sense of the context in which the teacher operated.

The research was conducted during September 2015, and the first round of data collection at Farramere High was conducted and almost completed before the teacher withdrew. After renewing ethical clearance with the WCED, Lodge High was selected as the replacement school and data was collected in the first half of 2016.

Each research period began with the classroom observation, spanning about two weeks at each school. It was important to spend a substantial amount of time

observing these classes in order to become accepted and neutralised within the classroom space, and in order to gain a significant amount of research data for the purposes of analysis by progressing with the class through a portion of their set works or grammar education. With six classes per week at forty minutes each, the total time spent collecting the observation data amounted to roughly seven hours per class. Classroom observation took place prior to the focus groups and interviews, as it was felt that the study should not be disrupted by introducing issues to teachers and learners that could change how they responded to each other and how the educational process occurred in the classroom. Focus groups and interviews thus provided a useful point of reference when engaging with both learners and teachers, by drawing their attention to particular occurrences in the classroom and teasing out their attitudes and impressions of the education process.

Observations, focus groups, and interviews were all audio-recorded, and notes taken in response to the elements of each instrument. The norms and values of the pedagogical approaches teachers described were drawn from these responses in order to establish a general image of each teacher's guiding pedagogy, in order to have an available frame of reference for contextually analysing the responses of learners and the interactions between teacher and learners in the classroom. The data extracted from interviews was compared to the classroom observations in order to make sense of how each teacher's described pedagogy played out in a practical sense and what the implications of those pedagogies were for the way learning took place in their specific classroom setting. It was also compared to the impressions that learners shared of their teachers. However, the interviews were also cross-referenced with each other so that the differences and similarities between teachers' methods could be understood in relation to their particular contexts, and the broader social and political implications of their teaching styles in relation to the local context of the school. The information derived from the instruments was then interpreted in terms of the conceptual framework and used to develop the arguments of the study and responses to the research questions. Writing up the data involved synthesising relevant literature on education in South Africa with the analysis of three case study schools to allow for extrapolation of the research findings into an account of how these may highlight or represent general trends in South African education.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Sultana finds that 'ethical research is produced through negotiated spaces and practices of reflexivity' (2007:375) throughout the process of conducting a study and not simply at the end during the writing up of the data. Knowledge is not produced neutrally and researchers occupy specific relationships to time, space, identity, and the context in which they conduct their work that influences how they perceive and are perceived by their research subjects. It is important to reflect critically on these factors in the process of defining research questions and subjects of study, in carrying out the data collection, and in framing the data in the course of the analysis. Crucially, she argues that this requires a move away from solely technocratic processes of ethical codes, such as gaining ethical approval from relevant institutions, to also incorporating 'moral and mutual relations with a commitment to conducting ethical and respectful research that minimizes harm' (Sultana, 2007:377). For research with learners in school contexts, this also involves approaching topics in a manner that is not gratuitous or harmful, and that does not put learners at risk of reprisal from peers or their teachers for what is said.

Practical ethical considerations included seeking permission from the Western Cape Education Department and subsequently the participating schools. The intent of the research was included in a letter seeking permission to conduct research, outlining the period of study and assuring the WCED of every effort being made to guarantee anonymity, respect for the school space, transparency and mitigating potential harm. With the WCED's approval, each school was contacted individually to seek the permission of the principal and teachers, and to ascertain which teachers would be willing to participate in the study. While some learners were requested to participate in the focus groups and others volunteered, it was impressed on all of them that their participation was voluntary and that there would be no punishment if they elected not to attend on the day.

Important initial issues with the research further related to anonymity and the role of the researcher. Participant schools, teachers and learners were given pseudonyms. Demographic information was also necessary to locate the racial, economic and geographic positioning of participants, but it was important not to allow this information to create preconceived impressions of participants, or assumptions about

the identities they invoked in their responses, without further interrogation. In the process of conducting the research, this included asking participants for clarification of statements that could be interpreted in varying ways, and being careful not to lead them into answering questions in particular ways. Where this did seem to occur in practice, those responses or observations were discarded for their unreliability.

### **3.9 Positionality**

The issue of positionality was also important in negotiating acceptance in each school environment and navigating the different power dynamics in spaces where one's embodiment as a particular gender, race and/or class can either improve or hamper the process of doing research. It was interesting how issues of symbolic capital played a role in mediating researcher acceptance in the different school spaces. It was an unexpected realisation that particular relationships existed to each school based on different elements of my positionality. At the time of doing research I lived in a suburb adjacent to the one where Juniper High School is located, and so there was some familiarity that could be established with the teacher and learners around common social and economic spaces in the neighbourhood. However, my exposure to a relatively more privileged lifestyle and education (as the high school I attended is one generally sought after by aspirational families in this neighbourhood) was something I had to navigate quite carefully; learners displayed sensitivity to issues of inferiority and being spoken down to, as class difference within historically coloured communities remain contentious even now (Bray et al, 2010; Fataar, 2015).

I also attended a school similar to Lodge High in its history and politics, and had many university peers who were alumni of Lillie High. Mr Haxton and I further developed a mutual respect on the basis of our shared position as alumni of an elite, historically white university, something that also made learners more trusting of the stranger in the room. Navigating my position at Lodge High School was, perhaps understandably, the least difficult due to an intrinsic understanding of the school's values and the expectations placed on learners, but I was careful not to equate my own experiences of a similar schooling context to the concrete realities experienced at Lodge. This was an inherent bias that I recognised and constantly grappled with in the course of the research there.

Awareness of positionality also required sensitivity to the manner in which different schools operated and trying as far as possible not to disrupt the routines and power relationships that formed part of each classroom, as these would skew the outcome of the research data. As a young person (likely no more than four or five years older than most Grade 11 learners), there were both benefits and drawbacks in terms of the study. It became evident that it was possible for learners to relate better to me and establish a level of familiarity or comfort that enabled them to speak freely in focus groups and not feel restrained by the burden of additional authority in the classroom space. However, it did exhibit the potential to lead to disruption in the class at the expense of the teacher, or distrust for me as an outsider undertaking academic study. In terms of teachers, I needed to establish a level of understanding with the teacher at each school and agree to boundaries that did not compromise the potential research data or the teacher's regular practices.

A careful negotiation of identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Rattansi, 2007) was thus important for the sake of ensuring credible research data and navigating the relationship between teacher and learner in a way that was sensitive, consistent, responsible and respectful. I needed to constantly interrogate my position in relation to teachers and learners and be reflexive enough to act accordingly as dynamics shifted on a daily basis. It was important, also, not to exhibit visible reactions to events that may have surprised or startled me (as will be discussed in the findings chapter) in order to allow for the teacher to respond to the situation in a manner that was as natural as possible (though, of course, the very presence of me in the classroom meant that their reactions were already being tailored to an awareness of an outsider documenting their behaviour).

### **3.10 Limitations**

Particular limitations to the study can be identified. One that was acknowledged prior to beginning research at Lodge High School was my limited knowledge of isiXhosa and French, the languages primarily spoken by black learners in the class. While I could not study their interactions with each other, I was exposed to the strategic ways in which these learners deployed their linguistic repertoires as they switched between exchanges with different peers. This performance of linguistic complexity

was more important than being able to understand the specificities of what were generally brief and perfunctory exchanges. I accepted that expecting learners to communicate with me in my first language was a power move that might destabilise the relationship of mutual respect and trust I was working to establish if I did not manage this constructively. It was important, across all schools, to allow learners to speak in the codes they were comfortable in, and to be patient when they switched to English (if this was not their primary language).

A significant limitation of the study was that it was not longitudinal and could not track the experiences of individual teachers or learners. There were several reasons why this constituted a limitation. It would be of particular interest when attempting to establish a theory of change for the development of an English teacher's practices over time and in relation to context. It would also have enabled a look at how learner attitudes to language identity and social cohesion were developed in the course of a particular year of study, or through a particular phase. Further, it would have presented an interesting opportunity to triangulate teacher methods with developments in learner proficiencies over time, and attempt to draw links between teacher method and learner performance. This suggests interesting possibilities for future research on issues of language pedagogy and linguistic identity.

Further, the study could not reflect directly on issues experienced by speakers of specific languages, such as black Afrikaans or isiXhosa, or quantify how their performance was affected by not being taught in their mother tongue. This would have been a crucial addition to a body of knowledge on strategies for managing multilingualism in language classrooms, and how symbolic values underpinning the dominance of particular linguistic varieties are as influential on learner performance and confidence as their actual proficiency. It would have been interesting to engage further, and over a longer period of time, with learners who could articulate whether and how their experiences of learning English impacted their confidence in using their linguistic repertoires as contextual resources.

More generally, the study would have benefited from a larger sample of participant teachers (and thus learners) in order to develop an understanding of the similarities and differences in teacher practices in diverse schooling contexts. Learner voices could then have been further captured through a quantitative survey that distilled



elements of their schooling experience into questions that could statistically capture impressions of teaching, curriculum, and social cohesion.

The next chapter presents the findings arrived at through the methods discussed above. These findings are arranged in response to the research questions and further divided according to each participant teacher. Their practices are cast within a model of teacher methods derived from the literature review, relating to how teachers could manage linguistic and social difference in their work. This model thus provides a useful baseline against which to compare how the participant teachers situated their practices in context. Further, the chapter also presents the experiences of learners, drawing links between their everyday realities and their experiences of belonging in the language class.

## Chapter Four

### Presentation of Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the study for discussion before these are analysed and worked through in Chapter 5. Findings from the different research methods used will initially be presented in response to each research question, and then particular themes and cross-cutting issues drawn from the data at the end of each section. Reference will also be given to insights gained from findings that are secondary to the main research questions.

#### 4.1 How do Grade 11 English teachers address issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion in their teaching methods?

The primary data collection method used to respond to this question was the teacher interview, but these findings are buttressed significantly by the responses from learner focus groups and in class observation. It was important to engage with the way both the teacher and the learners understood the teacher's methods, and what these methods actually looked like in the classroom setting.

In order to see how issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion functioned in teacher practice, understandings of these were operationalised into a selection of teacher practices or behaviours that could be observed in the process of the research. These are synthesised in the following tables from a range of literature (Bourdieu, 1991; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Philips, 2004; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Barolsky, 2013; Sayed et al, 2015), including the official curriculum and its expectations of teacher practice (DBE, 2011):

**Figure 5**

<b>LINGUISTIC IDENTITY</b>	<b>TEACHER METHODS</b>
Responding to language needs of the class	<i>Dealing with linguistic diversity among learners by being responsive to what particular learners' skill and proficiency levels were, and how best they could be</i>

	<i>assisted by the teacher.</i>
Extent to which teacher engages with the symbolic value of different languages	<i>Ensuring that linguistic diversity was not devalued in the process of educating learners to speak the dominant language, and was used as a learning tool</i>
Extent to which dominant language is normalised as a standard of aspiration	<i>How teacher practices informed the way learners viewed the importance of the dominant language</i>
Manner in which grammar and speech are corrected, praised, and graded	<i>How teacher practices enforced particular linguistic standards when assessing learner performance</i>

**Figure 6**

<b>SOCIAL COHESION</b>	<b>TEACHER METHODS</b>
Fostering and deepening interpersonal links	<i>Encouraging the development of a classroom learning community</i>
Creating a learning atmosphere that is empathetic, inclusive, and productive	<i>Modelling behaviour that encourages learners to be responsible, respectful and cooperative in their interactions</i>
Dealing with learning material critically and inviting positive debate	<i>Dealing with the meaning embedded in content in ways that are sensitive to and manage difference effectively, while allowing learners to grapple with this meaning in critical dialogue with their peers</i>
Promoting an approach to language that is open, dynamic and critical	<i>Facilitating language learning that is context-driven and responsive to learners' school and social contexts.</i>

These behaviours indicate the extent to which linguistic identities are managed in the process of teaching English, and how this teaching is reflective of positive attitudes

to social cohesion. While they are not measureable indicators, it is hoped that the findings presented will offer an insight into how, and the extent to which, the participant teachers were dealing with these issues. The tables above can be considered a useful guide for following discussion, flagging key features expected in each participant teacher's practices.

#### 4.1.1 Ms Fisher

##### ***Managing linguistic diversity***

Ms Fisher was in her sixth year of teaching and had been at Lodge High School for four years. She worked to create a caring classroom atmosphere with her Grade 11s. She also took seriously the limitations of her inability to speak an African language, saying,

"I feel like I would do so much more justice to my teaching, if I could... explain in different ways and maybe understand why certain things are a challenge for certain learners... if I could understand the mechanics of another language, then I could maybe know my language a bit better, and how to teach it."

She incorporated this into a general sense that her role as a teacher was to be "mindful and sensitive":

"It's so easy to remain ignorant if you haven't been in someone else's shoes... so I spend a lot of time talking to them [about their lives]... some of them are a lot more open and they'll come and tell me, while others, sometimes I'll see that something is not quite right and I'll ask. I need to be able to gauge the understanding of the learner; many times you'll take for granted that a learner will just know if, for instance, they get a question *discuss the colour blue*, you take for granted that that child knows what *discuss* means... and so you totally miss your lesson, because you were so focused on the content that you missed the detail of the mechanics of English."

Evidence of this attitude to her learners came out in most of her lessons. After the delivery of an oral presentation, she said to the speaker: "Thank you. Just try and stay away from using too much slang? You may get away with using an interjection

here and there, but try not to make it too repetitive, it might take away from the formality of your speech. But well done, it was very nicely done.” On most occasions, she allowed learners to get away with using slang or words from another language if it allowed them to express themselves more clearly.

As she worked through particular activities – whether reading poetry or the passage of a comprehension exercise – she would also often stop to check that certain words were understood, parts of speech picked up on, and that learners were able to keep up with both the words and their meaning as she went along.

During her reading of the poem *Invictus* by William Earnest Henley, after a student read the poem for the class, she read it line by line, asking questions around the class and repeating individual learners’ answers for the benefit of the group:

*“In the fell clutch of circumstance.* What figure of speech is noted there?... Clutch, to grab, to grasp – it is indeed personification. Circumstance does not have hands in order to clutch something...

*Under the bludgeonings of chance.* Bludgeoning, what does bludgeoning mean? ‘To beat’... but bludgeoning is a lot more emotive. It means to literally torture, to beat someone into submission... *My head is bloody, but unbowed.* What do you think the tone is in that particular line? ‘Aggressive’, okay... Yes? ‘Defiant’, lovely. ‘Determined’, lovely, good.”

On another occasion the class was given a comprehension from an examination paper, on the pros and cons of using social media as a primary form of communication. Ms Fisher preceded the reading of the article with a class discussion on their own social media use, introducing words that would appear in the activity. She then read the article, stopping occasionally to flag interesting points for further thought or discussion, or to point out particular parts of speech or writing devices and quiz them on their knowledge of these (e.g. “What is an ally and what is an adversary?”).

“There is often a communication gap between what is said, what is meant, and what is understood,” she said, asking the class why misinterpretation is a common outcome of using social media. “What are the two factors influencing this?... Amirah says tone... remember tone is the emotion behind something. What is the other

factor?... Facial expression and body tone. For instance there's a big difference between a 'hi' [*said in a drab voice*] and a 'hiii' [*said in a high-pitched, girly, excitable voice – class laughs*].'

Throughout the discussion of the comprehension she referred to social media platforms she knew most, if not all, of the learners were using, such as WhatsApp or Facebook, in order to relate the article back to their own experiences and make its arguments more relevant. She also asked questions that allowed learners to reflect and interpret their own knowledge and experiences, such as how often they got into arguments over social media compared to personal interactions, and why. This further enabled them to reflect on how context influences and affects different communicative exchanges.

Ms Fisher explained that: "I try to make the content as relatable as possible, but I don't always get it right. Learners need to engage the content. There are certain things I get to choose and make it relevant. Literature is still Shakespeare, which totally demotivates learners [...] The themes are still current and relatable but how does it serve them?"

Echoing Godley and Minnici (2008) and Kirkland (2008), she added: "Black learners could do so much better if they were taught literature that is about them and serves their development. My aim in choosing material would be anything that betters them for the future in different roles. I try and touch on all spheres but also keep it light-hearted."

Despite feeling that some of the content was not relatable to learners, she did consider the curriculum to be useful in the way she organised lessons and developed the classroom environment. She did not criticise the syllabus even though her earlier comments indicated that she found some of it misplaced. "The CAPS document is good; it's structured without hindering creativity. It's organised, you get weekly teaching plans. In terms of English I have no issue with what is prescribed – it helps the learners pass and recognises that not all learners are proficient in written responses [so they can make up their marks through orals, for example]. However the overall system is not something I agree with. I think universities are not focused enough on the policies implemented at school, I had to find my own way around these documents. They need to teach student teachers to be more discerning about

policies and create a passion for the field of curriculum development.” She was also concerned that, with the policy of learners only being allowed to repeat one grade per three-year phase, learners were entering the FET phase of their schooling academically unfit for a grade and not allowed to be held back again. “It feels like you’re helping to create labourers for the country.” Ms Fisher hoped to combat low achievement through positive, consistent teaching and the development of an environment conducive to critical, supportive and active learning. This is further discussed in the following section.

### ***Fostering a cohesive environment***

Half of the research period at Lodge High was taken up by oral presentations, which, as Ms Fisher expressed, were an important opportunity for learners to improve their year marks. The learners had just finished reading *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, their novel for the year, and Ms Fisher had set the oral topic to be a political speech that incorporated the speech-making devices they had learned from the book. The activity asked learners to imagine themselves as enrolled at ‘Suikerbossie High School’ where new legislation had been passed that would dramatically affect them and their families. New policies included having their friends and subjects chosen for them, having the whole school follow one religion, an eleven-hour school day, increased school fees and no extramural activities. They were to write protest speeches based on this.

The ideas expressed in learners’ speeches were telling of their attitudes towards each other and to their school. Despite ‘Suikerbossie’ being their imagined school in the activity, learners’ responses were largely modelled on their experiences of Lodge High. In this way the overall classroom atmosphere, and relationships both between learners and with their teacher, became apparent.

In one example, Ms Fisher called a learner, Sihle, up to present his speech. The class applauded him as he went up and then went very quiet as he readied himself.

Sihle: “Good morning comrades. It’s a great honour to be here with you, to... it’s a great honour to be here with you, my peers, to fight the shocking and heart-breaking of... heart-breaking of injustice that have poured over our school. (*pauses*) Can I start over, Miss, please?”

Ms Fisher: 'Yes, of course.'

Sihle: "Good morning comrades. It's a great honour to be here with you, my fellow peers, to fight the shocking and heart-breaking injustice that has poured over our great school. We stand up and say to hell with the new... (*mumbles*)"

Class assists: "Legislation." Mild chatter breaks out for a moment, but peers and the teacher restore silence once more.

Sihle: "So please come and stand with me and fight and say to hell with that!" He then continued with his speech at a slower pace, egged on by his peers. Ms Fisher did have to request that they settle down as they became especially enthusiastic in their support. "... We need time, to socialise, and to be with our friends and get to know each other better; because learning with people for, like, us here at school, we started from Grade 8 some of us, up to Grade 11, we bonded. Some of us we became friends and we even got that bond, as becoming family. So that hours of school is not okay with me. We say no to that, comrades!" The class echoed: "*No!*" They applauded loudly for him when his speech ended.

Ms Fisher commented when the class had gone silent: "Did you hear what was really great about Sihle's speech was his projection? He projects really well. Even though he might not have known his speech as adequately as he should've, he projects really well and that's important. It's commanding authority and showing confidence, even though you don't feel confident. So well done, Sihle!" She then encouraged the class to applaud him once more.

On another occasion, Ms Fisher addressed the class after an oral in which learners had been restless and had disrupted the speaker at one or two points in her speech. "Well done Amirah. Alright, Grade 11s, I just want to remind you (*class quiets*)... I just want to remind you that even the little bit of conversation that you have does disrupt and does detract from the speaker, because they do get distracted. So please don't chat amongst yourselves, be respectful; it is nerve-wracking being up here, so let's try and encourage each other, not chat and distract."

One significant finding in the classroom environment was the level of mutual respect and responsibility learners showed towards each other and the teacher. While many



of the speeches contained quips or funny references to other classmates, aside from the occasions mentioned Ms Fisher rarely had to ask learners to be silent before they did it themselves or were silenced by a classmate. “I don’t like fighting and confrontation, and I feared that I was not authoritative enough, but I’ve realised that this works in my favour. The learners actually respect me enough to fight for me when disruptive learners try to cause problems, and I hope that this will be the way my teaching career generally goes. I try to get older learners to be young adults and act mature.” Learners in the focus group had differing opinions on her approach to discipline. Mamadou argued that she should be more authoritative because some of his classmates took advantage of her nature, while most others disagreed with him and said that there were few occasions where learners were extremely disruptive.

Decisions that affected the running of the lesson, such as a learner who did not prepare his oral and was not willing to speak unprepared, were dealt with by the teacher but made known to the learners. During the mild chatter between orals, Ms Fisher and the learner spoke at her desk. He had not prepared his speech despite knowing it would be presented that day, so she requested that he remain after school to do it in order to not receive a nil mark. She did not raise her voice and spoke to him pleasantly, and he was cooperative and willing to take responsibility for not doing what had been expected of him. The class was informed of the decision that had been made for the purposes of transparency, and as a warning to those who might make the same mistake. She still offered him good feedback on the speech he eventually gave.

“Positive reinforcement is necessary for learners, [especially underperforming ones]. I try to focus on the positive aspects of their work and not be too critical. I would rather show them and encourage them to improve,” said Ms Fisher. This was echoed by learners in the focus group, such as Mamadou’s response below.

Mamadou: “Sometimes, like even – we did orals recently, right? Now not everyone is the best at orals, right? Now, last year we had a teacher that constantly – like, she constructively criticised us to do our best. But Ms Fisher, she’s [incoherent], she’ll always give you positive (sic) even in the most

dullest work (*they all laugh in agreement*). So she's very motivational in a way."

This attitude also seemed to maintain a positive rapport among learners rather than fostering a competitive atmosphere. Despite there being a leader board for each of her English classes on one wall, Ms Fisher usually doled out praise and criticism equally across the learners in her Grade 11 class. Learners were thus supportive of each other and celebrated their peers' successes.

Pheli presented her speech before the class on the second day of observations, a double period.

"Friends, I greet you in the name of peace and justice. We are gathered here today to witness a discussion of our school's new legislation. I am a loyal and disciplined student of Su-kerbossie High School-"

"Sookerbossie!" teased someone. A few laughed, but most hushed their peers.

"For that reason I am duty-bound to point out our disapproval of the new rules. The rules are ruthless and harsh, leaving us no option but to unite to overcome them. It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory will be assured. I hold that all of us agree on total determination to obtain justice and liberties. Our aim is to permanently abolish the new legislation... [*Pheli's speech continues in this vein, touching on the importance of freedom of speech and association, and how despite their differences learners could unite around issues that would affect all their lives*]

"So let us dedicate ourselves in repossessing our [incoherent] rights. Let us call upon each other, to unite, to become united as one. Let us go forward together and bring justice to our school. *Amandla!*"

"*Ngawethu!*" responded the class.

They gave her a loud, rousing standing ovation, while several classmates could be heard congratulating her on an excellent speech. Ms Fisher then commented, "That, Grade 11s, that was a true protest speech. Her language was emotive, her tone, I think that's something that she really mastered, is the tone that she used. She was

defiant, she was motivated, there was something about the way that she used the emotion in her voice, and it didn't even matter what she said, it was the way that she said it that I think was quite moving. So well done, Pheli." Learners gave another round of applause.

Despite there being an overall positive atmosphere in the class, Ms Fisher was aware that learners were contending with other undercurrents of division and difference. "There is still massive segregation between the races at Lodge, and I find that snarky comments are directed at others. I confront these when they arise. Foreign learners, [some of whom] have been born in South Africa, don't associate with other black learners in the class – rather the coloured or Cape Malay learners. English is a bridging language when black learners speak in their home languages." Coupled with the degree of acceptance shown to slang and colloquial language in the everyday activity of the class, Ms Fisher's awareness of these sensitive undercurrents led her to try to foster an accepting environment where learners' differences were all accepted to the same extent – such as, for example, allowing learners to slip in French or isiXhosa words when working in groups and not solely allowing Afrikaans speakers to do so because she could understand them.

Ms Fisher's conduct reflects Giroux's assertion that teachers need to be mindful of the role of language in learners' experiences of learning and school life (1981). Giroux argues that it is important for teachers to utilise the cultural capital of learners or risk devaluing the existing cultural mores that they enter the classroom with, particularly for learners from historically or presently marginalised groups whose identities and histories are not represented in the curriculum or modes of teaching (1981:134). Findings from Lodge indicate that Ms Fisher tried to address issues of language through both her teaching of English and her management of the classroom. This then contributed to creating an environment where learners largely felt comfortable expressing themselves and showed support, respect and responsibility towards their peers. It is important to recognise that this atmosphere was constantly negotiated between teacher and learner, and among learners themselves, as the positive environment of Ms Fisher's classroom was always interacting with the external tensions that existed within the school and the internal occurrences that posed potential threats to the class's social fabric. Ms Fisher was mindful of her positionality as a white teacher at the school, and tried to use the

many articulations of difference she encountered as a positive learning tool. As seen above in their speeches, learners also took this on and started to be critical of the boundaries of difference and sameness, of their positions in the world, and their relationships to each other. Her positionality is crucial to bear in mind when considering Mr Haxton's, discussed in the next section.

#### **4.1.2 Mr Haxton**

##### ***Language for achievement***

Mr Haxton had been teaching for twenty years, and had been at Lillie High School for about half that time as a primarily English, but also history teacher. The school had a proud academic tradition and high standards in discipline, and Mr Haxton's class, the top set for Grade 11, was objectively the quietest of the three case study schools. Learners were quite focused on lessons and did not often veer into conversation when engaging the teacher or asking questions. They did exhibit respectful relationships when seen participating in class.

Like Ms Fisher, Mr Haxton felt it would be useful if he were more fluent in an African language (he understood some isiXhosa). However, this was juxtaposed with his impression that the school's linguistic and academic dynamics made speaking other languages a purely social necessity if anything. "There are not really any major social or practical issues being faced in the classroom. If I could speak isiXhosa better... it may be helpful – but then again many of the Xhosa speakers who come to Lillie can already speak English quite fluently anyway. We just are that kind of... I suppose 'elite' school that we can... you know, kids that are getting 35% for English are just not going to end up here." He went on to say that it would be useful to speak another language as a matter of social practice, to be able to "say more" to learners in the corridors and on the soccer field.

Mr Haxton also tried to encourage a supporting classroom environment that facilitated maximum learning. He felt that due to disparities in their qualifications, not all teachers were equipped to teach the grammar component of the English syllabus, and often felt more comfortable teaching, and thus overemphasising, literature.

“I don’t think that is something that is taught at universities, especially if you go the BA, postgraduate qualification route... I think what needs to be taught at the postgraduate level is to... help learners explore the literature, rather than just lecture the literature. Sometimes we come out as very rigid, and say ‘this is the only interpretation of this poem and that’s the way it is’, rather than, well, ‘what does your life say, how do you view this?’”

Incidentally, a significant portion of the observation time at Lillie High School was spent on literature, but Mr Haxton’s teaching style incorporated grammar and history in order to both provide context and make the text seem more relatable to contemporary circumstances. The set drama for Grade 11 was *Amadeus*, a play written by Peter Shaffer about composer Wolfgang Mozart.

Issues of class, gender, religion, and contemporary culture became apparent in the course of reading the text, leading to interesting (but usually brief) discussions between Mr Haxton and the learners. His relationship with the class was friendly, jovial, and often kind and doting, but there seemed to be a greater awareness of the boundaries between him and the class and the purpose of what they were doing. Learners engaged with him and with each other quite respectfully, although they were reserved compared to the other two classes observed. Rather than talking directly to each other, the learners usually directed their comments to him, and he served as a conduit for the conversation taking place. As a result the level of noise in the room rarely went above a discreet hum. In a similar vein, while each day different learners read for different roles in the play, Mr Haxton would always read the stage directions.

In one scene from the play, Mozart’s wife Constanza offers to sleep with Salieri (the main antagonist) in order to get her husband a job, as they are near destitute with two children.

Mr Haxton: “What does the... scene have to say about goodness and virtue? You’ve got Constanza who arrives and is prepared to sleep with Salieri; Salieri who wanted to but doesn’t. Something about a compromise? The end justifying the means? Nothing? Lily?”

Lily suggested that Constanza was sacrificing her virtue so that Mozart could get a better job at court. Mr Haxton questioned, again, if the end justified the means. Salman said that the end could justify the means but not entirely, depending on whether Constanza was particularly religious or not. This led to an interesting conversation on theology and morality.

Sean: “Can I ask a question about gregarity? So, I don’t know much but in Sunday school at Milner School and stuff, we were kind of told that if you accept God into your life, you will, like, go to heaven. So Salieri accepts God into his life but he hates Him. So what happens to him?”

Mr Haxton offered to give the question to more religious friends of his to think about and answer according to doctrine. Sean then asked if prayer (for forgiveness) constituted a bargain with God. The teacher said that this would be considered a Catholic approach, and explained that there are differences between sects of Christianity. He then asked the Christian Union member in class to bring this up in their next meeting and get their position on it.

Sean: “What I was just saying is that the people that taught me about Christianity were not good people, like they gave me a very bad experience of it and I imagine it could be quite a good experience... but isn’t accepting God into your life also a bargain... because if you sin, it’s fine, like isn’t that a bit skewed?”

Beth (CU member): “It’s not really a bargain... we believe that Jesus died for our sins, which is the ultimate sacrifice... if you are really sorry about what you’ve done God will know.”

Sean: “Oh, I see, so it’s about whether you’re actually sorry – it’s not about the act of apologising.” He and Beth continued to tease out the complexity of this distinction in relative silence, as the class and teacher were listening intently. Before they returned to the original question, Mr Haxton thanked them both for the discussion.

Mr Haxton: “It’s not appropriate for us to place our morality on Constanza. A lot of people in the room would say – absolutely. The husband would get a good job, a decent salary... then, sure... people would say that’s a good thing... fifteen minutes of sex and your husband has a job for – essentially for life-”

Michael: “Isn’t that just prostitution?”

Mr Haxton: “Whereas others would say absolutely not, it’s immoral, you mustn’t do that. So that’s our morality. She’s clearly in the play prepared to make that decision. Michael?”

Michael: “I was going to ask, isn’t that sophisticated prostitution?”

Mr Haxton: “Isn’t everything?”

“*Whooooo!*” the class then burst out laughing.

This incident was reflective of Mr Haxton’s general attitude towards the substance of what he was teaching. When asked what values he thought English teachers should embody in their work, he said: “The flippant answer would be ‘none’, because anything goes. I think mainly, in literature I think the only value we should be teaching, and trying to get the kids to incorporate into their lives, is just acceptance of different types of literature. But I’m not sure as an English teacher we should be looking at any particular moral value... except just making the kids aware that, you know, different writers from different backgrounds and there are going to be different values, and you need to look at it in context and evaluate the literature on context and not necessarily *your* values.” Mr Haxton believed that learners benefited most when they understood experiences and values in the literature within their given contexts before imposing their own ideas on these. In this way, he hoped, they would develop critical attitudes towards both their own established understandings of the world and those they encountered in the text. Learners largely agreed with this strategy in the focus group discussion; Amy, for example, said: “I think I enjoy... when we like, read a book or something there are different ways it can be interpreted by so many different people, like one thing can mean so many different things to different people... and then I just like the conversations that it starts.” Luke added: “I guess the same thing with conversation in poetry, because often the poetry that we

do [incoherent] this year, it takes a while to get into but once you do it's really interesting."

### ***Achievement without representation***

There seemed to be general sense, shared by both Mr Haxton and some learners, that the prescribed curriculum was not as complex as it could be.

Mr Haxton: "The CAPS document... [*shrugs*] it's okay, I think elements of it are quite wishy-washy... but I understand why, I guess I'm looking at it from the viewpoint of Lillie kids. But it's... I think it's free enough for you to do your own thing. Probably the biggest issue I have is in the junior grades where they insist that we do at least four genres of literature per year, and if you want to do it in any depth that's just not possible. They're trying to incorporate too much, but at a very superficial level."

The English department at Lillie met every Thursday at 7.30am to discuss progress, share their experiences of the content from the week before, and flag issues that might arise in the course of teaching the next week's lessons. Between members they also developed question papers for tests and assignments, which, Mr Haxton noted, were often pitched at a higher difficulty than the national assessments. During the observation period the learners wrote a grammar test and comprehension based on *Amadeus*. Mr Haxton returned marked tests and noted that the class average was 34/40, or 85%. He then went through the most common errors found in the test.

Mr Haxton: "The rules that we teach you... is the standard British English. Right, explain what an oxymoron is. Everyone got two marks for that, and most of you were able to give an example of an oxymoron. From one or two of you I got some very funny things. Somebody wrote *headbutt*." The class laughed loudly. He added that he would not mention the person's name, saying, "To be fair, the person that wrote it crossed it out and wrote something else."

"Right, 3.3... *from now on I'll be watching* – sssssh... *from now on I'll be watching everything you do like a fine-tuned comb*. There are two possibilities with that. The first is a mixed metaphor."

Luke: "Ja, but it's not a metaphor."



Emma: "It's a simile-"

Mr Haxton: "If you go back, did you get simile marked wrong?... the term for it though is *mixed metaphor*... there isn't actually a thing called a mixed simile. But also there's a malapropism there. It's not a *fine-tuned* comb, it's a *fine-toothed* comb."

Further expressions of linguistic valuation were encoded in the test questions, reflecting biases or attitudes about particular linguistic forms. For example, in the test memorandum being discussed, Mr Haxton noted:

"Right, in Salieri's newfound hatred of God, he *wyses* him... it's slang, inappropriate register, we did accept language from, uh, term from another language."

Sean then tried to explain where he found the definition of the word and referred to it as a form of jargon.

Mr Haxton: "What are you going on about jargon for? That is not jargon."  
[*amused*]

Sean: "Sir, the definition of jargon in the dictionary says it's special words or phrases used by particular people – in a-"

Mr Haxton: "Ja-"

Sean: "Especially in work-"

Mr Haxton: "Ja. Whereas *wys* is far more *colloquial* [speaker emphasis]."

He explained that it was necessary to be understanding and flexible when trying to teach learners and give them the most benefit from their language education.

"In far too many schools the other languages are shunted aside. I taught in one school where at least 7 or 8 languages were spoken, which is tough... but I don't think the attitude of 'praat Afrikaans of hou jou bek' is the way to go... I certainly don't think 'speak English or hold your tongue' is how we do things here. [I taught at a school where] Afrikaans was the home language, but they were being taught in English, and it was an issue but it was, well if you can't

express yourself in English say it in Afrikaans and we'll help you. I know for a lot of teachers that wouldn't be acceptable, even if you have someone who could speak Xhosa – I don't, I know a few words – if you had someone who could do that, the teacher would still say no, this is an English class, you can't use Xhosa to ask the question. So I think that is an issue, and I think it's about making the pupil comfortable with English, and saying that it's okay for you to lapse into another language if you don't know the terminology.”

Despite this view, Mr Haxton did not seem to consider colloquial speech to be a legitimate form for learning in the classroom, and appeared to hold the view of languages as distinct entities where learners used the correct form of each. The result was that learners could rarely be heard switching to colloquial speech in the classroom.

This could also be understood as a reflection of their attitudes to language learning more generally. The high academic standards at Lillie meant that learners were often very interested in their performance in assessments, and took seriously the possibilities for improving their marks. Mr Haxton felt that they had bought quite strongly into the school culture. “Cynically, for a lot of them, it's about passing the end of the year and doing well. For a lot of them, that is all they care about – ‘I need to do well in Matric, show me how’ – which is very cynical, but unfortunately true. For the rest, there are those who struggle, for whom it is a slog to get through exams [but those are in the minority] and then for the other, very small group, is to give them the freedom to express themselves and enjoy literature and enjoy writing... I often wonder how many of the pupils would take English if it was an optional choice. At this school there is a big focus on maths and science.” Because Lillie High emphasised high achievement, and in ‘hard’ subjects critical to scarce- and high-skilled careers such as medicine and engineering, it was evident that learners had begun to strategically adopt the values and behaviours that best facilitated their success (Kentli, 2009).

This does not negate learners' personal levels of investment and agency in pursuing high standards. Learners often took the initiative in bringing up possible examination questions and tried to be as prepared as possible for any eventuality in assessments and submissions. Kate noted that several people, each of a different nationality,

were mentioned in particular scenes in the book. She asked if they might appear in an exam paper.

Mr Haxton: "Absolutely... in last year's exam, the first question asked you to give their exact positions and the languages they spoke. That was worth four marks."

Mr Haxton thus also encouraged them to remain aware of their performance, and learners were constantly updating their portfolios with newly marked assignments and reflecting on their grades. He also issued several reminders about exam questions and continuous assessment submissions during the observation period.

"Right, take out your homework diaries." He asked them to turn to a date a month in advance, soon after the beginning of the fourth term. "Tuesday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, *Amadeus* literary essay is due. The topics are in the back of the module. Remember, the word limit is a guide, it is not binding, and the rubric obviously is the standard one. Then, the *Amadeus* test I can confirm for you is on Thursday the 1<sup>st</sup> of October."

"Need to remind you of two things before we start. Number one is that there is a test next week... the structure of the test will be very similar to the *Cuckoo's Nest* test, in which you will have contextual for half the marks and an essay for the rest of the marks. Last year there was also a section for ten marks in which you had to identify the character's work, so Von Sweeten, Von Strack, Rosenberg, Bach. You had to write down their names and their positions at the court..."

"And then don't forget your essays are due early next term... and in the first week, the first and second week, we will have to do your orals. So what I will ask you to do is to have a look at the topics tonight... pick one that excites you. If nothing excites you, you may write your own topic, but you must have it cleared by me first."

It became apparent that their level of academic performance was a key influence on learners' linguistic identity formation, but that this overemphasis negatively impacted

the possibility of the syllabus tackling sensitive social issues because of its limited connection to their own experiences.

Maryam said: “It doesn’t necessarily reflect on [incoherent] as a South African. It could be... there are certain aspects of literature that influence who I am as a person, but not as a *South African*.”

Beth: “I think especially because we don’t really do books written by South African authors, we do a very Western [oriented type of literature], so it isn’t as relatable.”

Mr Haxton agreed that criticisms of representation in the curriculum were valid. “I think teaching the novels has been quite interesting. We’ve been doing *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* in Grade 8, we’ve done it for two years, and it’s very clear [who the kids are] who’ve grown up with Monty Python, and that... very *English* kind of ridiculous humour, because they get it, and the other half of the class just hasn’t – so ‘this isn’t funny’. So I think that’s an interesting divide, and it is... pretty much a racial divide. It’s mostly white boys who’ve grown up with that kind of humour, and the rest just haven’t, which I suppose is, again, a cultural thing.” He mentioned that the Grade 11s had previously done a South African novel called *Shades*, set in the Eastern Cape. Most had found the beginning chapters quite boring until issues of identity came to the fore. “[As] we got into it a bit more, and the ideas of race, religion, language, things that we do talk about every day anyway started to come up, I think they accepted it a lot more.”

Learners also used free choice assignments to bring alternative literary forms and experiences into the classroom. It was evident that representation remained an issue for the school, and that this impacted the kinds of literature that learners were exposed to.

Mr Haxton: “We’ve had a number of Matric orals on [rap music], and we used to do... I think they stopped it the year before I arrived, instead of poetry in Grade 9, it was song lyrics. I can’t remember exactly what was in it, but there was definitely some form of rap. It does work. It is literature. I think it’s about the schools. Schools around this area... I can’t think of one with a really young staff. I think in our English department the average age has got to be at

least forty. [Nina, at Campground High, she's an isiXhosa-speaker from Grahamstown, she's the only black English teacher I know of in the Southern Suburbs]... Rap is still seen as a black music form, and most English teachers are white... we had a past pupil come and speak to us last year for one of our programs dealing with transformation. [For the first time] he felt the confidence to criticise the choices of literature that they were presented with – they were all English or American men, white men. I think if you look at our department, we're nine of us, eight white men and one white woman... I think it is a valid criticism.”

Mr Haxton's objective approach to the curriculum was intended to provide learners with a foundation from which to engage critically with texts and not transpose their own value-judgements onto these. However there was common agreement on the fact that those texts were unrepresentative, and still largely reflected the experiences or ideas of white, Western men. The school, as a historically white space, also dictated the terms on which black South African learners could enter, and this created the largely monolingual environment in which Mr Haxton felt that learning an indigenous language was more a matter of social practice than educational necessity. Despite this, he worked to foster an environment of shared achievement and enjoyment, with the primary focus being on learners' immersion in language study. This was similar philosophy to that of Ms Bezuidenhout, discussed below, though with significant differences for how their approaches worked in practice.

#### **4.1.3 Ms Bezuidenhout**

##### ***Language as communicative practice***

Ms Bezuidenhout was an ex-student of Juniper and had come to teach there after graduating with her education degree four years ago. She knew the school and its teachers very well, and seemed quite popular with learners (she was also a Life Orientation teacher). This often resulted in daily interruptions by learners passing by to sell snacks, learners bunking class, or stopping to chat.

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Now, in this class there's quite a few achievers, is that not so? Then you get the ones that are working very hard, they (sic) not

necessarily the top learner- [*interruption; someone else at the door*] If it's for Oreos or chocolate, not now; if it's someone who wants to speak to me, I'm busy, I have someone observing my lesson, now I look incompetent...Right, so like I was saying, you get the different groupings.”

This incident took place on the third day of the observation period. Prior to this Ms Bezuidenhout had stopped teaching to buy sweets from a passing learner and interrupted lesson time to chat to a learner. The latter interaction with the learner, discussed later on, provided a critical example of her relationship to learners, the school context, and attitudes towards their educational prospects.

Ms Bezuidenhout taught in a large classroom where the desks were arranged in a semicircle along the walls and with two rows running down the middle, towards the front of the room. This desk arrangement created an atmosphere in which learners felt comfortable to speak and discuss as groups rather than direct their responses at only the teacher. However, it also created a central group of learners who received a significant amount of teacher attention compared to their peers. Relationships with the teacher seemed positive overall, and learners largely related to her as they would to an older friend. This was largely due to the fact that she had started out teaching them as Grade 8s, and continued to be their class English teacher as they progressed through the grades. She felt that an important influence on her classroom design and generally friendly demeanour was her desire to create a positive learning space: “I want to create a non-threatening environment that allows learners to be more receptive to learning, and sharing opinions.”

The learners considered their familiarity with the teacher to be a positive influence on their ability to learn.

Kaylah: “Miss and the fact is if we do... *Macbeth* and stuff like that, we're not like other classes that just sit... we actually take notes and we have fun with it, we don't make it boring, we make it fun, and that's how children learn more. If it's boring then you're not really interested in it... if it's more fun and stuff then you learn more from it.”

In her teaching, Ms Bezuidenhout could often be found encouraging learners to take an active interest in and ownership of their learning, especially by relating it to their

hobbies and experiences. “When I say, explore a little, have fun and get involved, I’m not saying catch on nonsense and don’t take responsibility for your actions. I’m talking about getting involved at school, don’t just sit there and do your work, do other things as well because you’re going to look back and you’re going to regret being so... how can I say this without making it sound like I’m not for academics... you’re going to look back and think ‘yoh, I was very boring in school.’”

The Grade 11 class she taught was the top set. While they were lively and energetic, she said that she was careful not to pitch the content at a level that seemed too high for them. It was Ms Bezuidenhout’s first year teaching Grade 11, and she stuck quite closely to the course materials and the additional guides she had bought. She spoke positively about the experience of teaching a higher grade each year, saying that it gave her a chance to take on new responsibilities and work with different content. A disconnect between her and the learners became apparent, however, regarding the level at which the class was working at. While Ms Bezuidenhout’s earlier comment indicates that she did not consider her class particularly strong, the learners felt that they were being educated at a much higher level, especially because they were known to be the top performing class in the grade and so would be considered capable of a higher standard.

Sumaya: “We enjoy that we get to speak our minds, not just speak our minds but we analyse things and because... not just because we are 11A, that just sounds very cocky... but because we are able to like go in depth with certain things and we have a lot of humour, and Ms Bezuidenhout also helps us simple-”

Tara: “Simplify.”

Sumaya: “Simplify our answers because we sometimes give way too much information...”

Tara: “I don’t think my teacher limits us to anything in English because she wants us to know, she wants us to know everything that happens in this world and she really encourages us to think out of the box, and to think further than

our point. And she also teaches us how to answer certain things and... even in life, she teaches us how to do things.”

Other learners felt that they were being equipped to speak their second language properly at the level at which they were being taught.

Kaylah: “In my house they speak Afrikaans, but I can’t speak Afrikaans, and when you speak English you never speak the proper English, so when I here at school learn this high English I can almost... not correct, you know what I mean, the English is better, and that’s why it’s helpful to learn it.”

It also became apparent that learners measured their performance in English to impressions they gained from occasional interactions with peers from ‘white’, English-speaking schools:

Kaylah: “The way she teaches us, like with our orals and stuff, it helps us to... like when we go to say another place like a white school, and they’re speaking this high English and stuff, it helps us not be intimidated by the way they say stuff. ‘Cause maybe we understand what they’re saying but they’re just saying it in a different way to what we would say it.”

It became apparent that Ms Bezuidenhout was trying to balance the linguistic needs and identities of both home- and second-language English speakers in her teaching, and in doing so was leaning towards a level weaker learners could also access: “The Grade 11s have a backlog of grammar education to make up on... they have not yet developed the ability to articulately respond to questions in discussions and assessments.”

While Ms Bezuidenhout did intervene when individual learners were struggling, this did not form part of broader ongoing interventions into learner performance. Possibly a result of this was a limited amount of feedback provided to learners. Despite the positive rapport between her and the learners, Ms Bezuidenhout did not provide detailed responses to learners, particularly in their individual capacity in orals or spoken activities. Learners presented character analyses for the drama *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. One group presented over a conversational chatter that continued throughout, unabated. Ms Bezuidenhout said to the learner presenting, “Louder, please man?” The learner struggled with some pronunciation and fumbled a



few lines, but the teacher did not step in to assist her. “Thank you, next,” she then said when the learner completed.

Often, as Sumaya said, she would simplify their responses when repeating them for the class. A recurrent theme in the prescribed grammar textbook was world leaders and political leadership – largely men such as Dr Martin Luther King or President John F Kennedy. Note in the two examples below the limited discursive engagement with learner responses.

The class did a comprehension on Nelson Mandela’s speech at the Grand Parade following his release from prison in 1990.

Sumaya: “He spoke about how the apartheid president was actually a good man because he was able to overlook all that past years – what do you call that – apartheid.”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Good, so he didn’t try to down anyone in the process. Anyone have anything else to add?”

Tara: “And the thing is miss, he didn’t speak about me, me, and I, he spoke about us as a nation, together.”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Lovely, he didn’t take all the credit for all of that, he’s very modest.”

Tara: “Miss, when someone says you’re modest – like when someone says Tara you’re very modest, or when someone says you have a nice body and I say no – is that being modest, even when you know you have a nice body but you don’t want to say ‘I know’?”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Being modest and humble is very similar. But Tara you do have a nice body.” [to laughter from the class]

Learners also did a comprehension on an article for high school learners written by former University of the Free State rector, Prof Jonathan Jansen.

Tara: “You know what I get from this comprehension? He talks about very serious things that happens in school, but he makes it humorous. Like for example, he talks about peer pressure in here but he makes it humorous, he talks about bullying but he makes it humorous.”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Yes, like he says it’s not a big deal when you grow older, so you learn from it.”

Ms Bezuidenhout’s identity as a Life Orientation teacher also influenced her teaching style greatly. Findings presented thus far indicate a high emphasis on ‘life lessons’ and her tendency to turn particular interactions with the content into moments to teach them these lessons. For example, during the Jansen comprehension, she went on to say:

“When you in a situation, like now, your emotions are running wild, so you not gonna (sic) see the situation for what it is. When you take a step back and you look at it, like now you can reflect on when you were in Grade 8, when you were in Grade 9. Then, you thought you were the shit, cause you just that girl or that boy...[noise] This class is very irritating, because we are having an interesting discussion, the others are not interested; if you’re not interested then at least close your mouths and don’t talk.”

‘Discussions’ were largely confined to Ms Bezuidenhout speaking to the class, or speaking to Tara and Sumaya, the most vocal of the top performers, while the rest of the class listened, or responded as a group. The two learners assumed an authority to speak for the collective and were often the first ones to respond to questions or comments by the teacher, with Ms Bezuidenhout rarely intervening to ask other learners to respond as well. Learners were thus wary to engage or disagree with Tara or Sumaya, but this cannot be mistaken for apathy, as they held their own opinions of issues and shared them when given the space to. They also tended to defer to the two learners when the teacher was not present. This became evident in the focus group, where the learners were asked what they enjoyed, and did not enjoy, about the English syllabus.

Craig: “[T]hat question is a, how can I say, it’s a self-opinionated question to each one of us. [*stammers*] Like m-many of us don’t enjoy Shakespeare, that also has an influence on our work and how we approach it.”

Researcher: “Okay so why don’t you enjoy Shakespeare?”

Sumaya: “I think the reason is that some learners don’t enjoy Shakespeare is they don’t understand it, the language. Like it’s a different type of English also. And some people... don’t have that much confidence...”

Byron: “I started to read it at the beginning of the year and it didn’t grip me, and when we did it in class you actually read and understand and you want to finish it.”

Researcher: “Okay, but you’ve said you liked Shakespeare and you explained why. He said he doesn’t, and I would like to hear from him why that’s the case.”

Craig: “[T]he storyline to Shakespeare’s books is one I always look forward to but the language he uses is not being taught to us now, and I feel like it’s irrelevant and it’s going to be of no benefit to us-”

Sumaya: “No miss-”

Craig: “Learning is about something that will benefit you in the future, and I feel like Shakespeare is not doing it.”

Sumaya’s interjection was characteristic of the fractured relationships between learners, who frequently spoke over each other and did not maintain silence when a peer was speaking. As in the case of Sumaya above, this was ordinarily done to contradict others, rather than to argue critically or engage with each other. This may have contributed to Ms Bezuidenhout’s battle to maintain control over the class, both in terms of their attention and the noise level.

“Excuse me... listen here, ne... Now if I’m giving you an instruction, I’m telling you what you must do, you talking; You going to come to me after I just told you what you must do, ‘Miss what must we do?’ so don’t take me for a fool. Must I explain again for those of you who were talking?”

By the third day the fragility of the positive relationship she described became apparent. The class was discussing the answers to the Jansen comprehension. Ms Bezuidenhout was reading out questions and supplementing learner answers with those from the memorandum. It was, again, largely Tara and Sumaya responding, and the other learners became bored and began to talk.

Ms Bezuidenhout: "Question 4 – why do you think there is no mark for neatness in high school? Yes, Tara?"

Tara: "Miss, in primary school, primary school... they taught you all the basic things of life, like you must be neat... but when you get to high school you're supposed to know this stuff."

Sumaya: "Then again, the way to drill this into you is to do it from a young age..."

Ms Bezuidenhout: "Thank you. You can't assume that the knowledge of neatness and cleanness is taught at home. It is assumed that this gets taught at home."

A few more members of the class then started a discussion about the different standards of neatness at their primary schools. Within a few moments the noise level had escalated.

Ms Bezuidenhout: "Let us talk one at a time, I'm so interested in what you're saying. Tara was sounding so enthusiastic."

Tara: "Miss and you don't even say *I want to be an ambulance one day*, you say *I want to be a psychologist...*"

The buzz in the classroom rose while Tara spoke. Ms Bezuidenhout shouted: "*Waaait*, my f\*\*king word!"

However much Ms Bezuidenhout valued her good relationship with the learners, it did not serve to improve their willingness to engage in the class, to listen when she spoke, and particularly to maximise learning time. The convivial nature of the classroom space proved detrimental to productivity, and the level of investment in

actual classwork was erratic. Learners negotiated their workloads with the teacher, suggested groupings for group-work, and called out suggestions when any form of organising needed to be done, which made handing out simple tasks a longer process than was necessary. This was also coupled with disruptions in learning time on the teacher's part. On two occasions, Ms Bezuidenhout was called out or left the class for an extended period, leaving learners to read on their own. On one occasion, she left for almost ten minutes, and had not returned by the time the period ended. During the comprehension on Nelson Mandela, she was called out by another teacher and remained gone for fifteen minutes. Learners were instructed to read the passage and tell her what it was about when she returned. What followed in this observation is important to the next section.

### ***Managing external difference and disruption***

Before she had left the noise had risen; only a few learners took out books while the rest engaged in conversation. It took a few attempts for learners to bring their peers to relative silence, a fragile silence that was broken on several occasions while Tara and Sumaya took turns to read paragraphs from the passage. Sumaya began the speech, reading it in an imitation of a white South African accent, her voice firm and authoritative. Learners continued to make jokes as she went along. When Tara took over, she slipped into an exaggerated caricature of Nelson Mandela's accent. The class found this rendition of a black African accent amusing, laughing as she continued and forcing her to raise her voice to be heard. "Ex-cuse me – I'm *mos*<sup>2</sup> reading," she said, when the noise became too much. She and Sumaya finished reading the speech, speaking the last line together with particular emphasis: "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination..." Ms Bezuidenhout returned shortly after they finished and asked them to read it again for the class. Tara continued to read it in the exaggerated accent, and the class was unable to contain its mirth. The noise annoyed Ms Bezuidenhout, who then asked her to read in a 'normal voice' but did not correct or challenge her decision to speak in that way.

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<sup>2</sup> Usually used for emphasis; sometimes indicates a shared awareness with the other conversant, i.e. 'You can see that I'm reading'

This incident was not the first in which Ms Bezuidenhout did not correct prejudicial or problematic behaviour, despite saying that she tried to encourage a fair and inclusive approach to dealing with issues of race, class and gender. The research was conducted during the period in which the Fees Must Fall movement was fomenting, and students at Stellenbosch had recently challenged the Afrikaans culture of the university as exclusionary to those who did not subscribe to it. One of the learners raised the issue in class, enquiring as to what it was about.

Fabian: “Miss, what is this whole thing about Stellenbosch?”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Oh, the racism?” Several learners began to talk at once.

Sumaya: “Miss, the question was raised about Stellenbosch being an Afrikaans-only university... some faculties are just Afrikaans, so because Stellenbosch is a-”

Tara: “Who the – *naai*<sup>3</sup>, *miniete*<sup>4</sup> – someone keeps talking-”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “No man, f\*\*k man... no man guys, why not contribute to the class for a change?”

Sumaya: “Like, some faculties are just Afrikaans. So there was a question raised... that they’re going to have to make it English also to make it an international... what’s the word?”

‘Miss but they’re going on about it being an Afrikaans university. So if you’re not Afrikaans’ [several students join in] ‘*don’t go there!*’

Ms Bezuidenhout: “No, but there are English classes as well. And they can translate as far as I know. *Listen...* yes, Tara?”

Tara: “Miss I just have a comment to make ne, I don’t understand our country. Why are we so sensitive when it comes to racism?... if there must be a Afrikaans class, let there be a Afrikaans class, if there must be an English class, let there be an English class-”

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<sup>3</sup> Approx.. ‘No’

<sup>4</sup> Approx. ‘Damn it’ in this context

Sumaya: “Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch the area, has majority blacks. Now they, that’s why the question was raised, of why are there majority whites if the surroundings is majority blacks.”

Several learners could then be heard interjecting. “Thing is Miss-” “Man they are *versin*<sup>5</sup>, they so sensitive-”

Tara: “Miss I was watching [this thing]... the Africans, the whites and the Afrikaans people had an argument. The English peeps said *no, we want classes in English*. Then the Afrikaans kids said *no we want it in Afrikaans, why don’t you separate it?* Then the black kids said, *but why can’t we have it in our tongues?* Then the white kids, the Afrikaans kids, said *why do you want it in your mother tongue when there’s eleven languages, like nine mother tongues, how are we going to fit it into the university we must make more space*, and then the black kids said *no but we must, because you’re having it*. Now what kind of argument is that?”

Ms Bezuidenhout let much of this exchange pass without intervening, except to shout when the noise level threatened to become unmanageable. She did try to encourage learners to see it from a different perspective, but did not challenge their established understandings of the nature of South African society, which impacted on the findings discussed for question 1.2. An important issue of recognition and transformation was being raised, and the opinions expressed by learners, and Ms Bezuidenhout’s response, reflected their embedded understandings of their position in society.

Ms Bezuidenhout: “So what is your opinion? If you had to make a decision at Stellenbosch what would you suggest?”

Sumaya: “If people could just leave it at English because everybody speaks English.”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “If you were the one who was being disadvantaged in that sense, if you were Afrikaans and strong Afrikaans, your English is very poor, and they said ‘Look we’re going to switch everything to English’, how are you

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<sup>5</sup> Approx. ‘Stupid’

going to feel?" The class let out a collective groan of discontent. "Do you understand what I mean?"

Tara: "I think everyone must stop associating everything WITH RACE!" There were noises of agreement from some classmates.

Ms Bezuidenhout: 'But why do you think there's a regulation? Why do you think there's a regulation? Have you taken the past into consideration? If there was no coloureds anywhere in anything, then you guys are going to say 'Ja the coloureds don't get a chance'. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

The learners had a clear awareness of the importance of speaking English, despite not being as fluent in it as their peers in the other two schools. This echoes Granville et al's (1997) suggestion that despite not gaining an according proficiency many learners complete school with an enhanced sense of the prestige of English as a means of communication. Further, Even when Ms Bezuidenhout tried to get them to empathise with the conditions experienced by the protesting students, their responses showed that they were struggling to reconcile dissonant identities and experiences and trying, instead, to combine disparate worldviews. While the class was active and discussions were common, they did not result in learners critiquing or challenging their own views, and, it will be shown, the result was that they switched between what their own ideas were and what they understood to be the attitudes that were expected of them.

The friendly relationship between teacher and learner also served as more of a hindrance than a help in the learning process. While Ms Bezuidenhout did try to enforce boundaries at times, her everyday conduct affected the way learners responded to her attempts to discipline them. The casual classroom dynamic was not based on mutually understood terms, with the result that while Ms Bezuidenhout felt that the good relationship she tried to foster with learners should encourage them to be better-behaved and compliant, the learners themselves did not usually cooperate. The blurring of her identity as an English teacher with that of her other specialisation, Life Orientation, also meant that learners could direct the lesson towards topics that could be discussed, rather than allowing her to complete, for example, the grammar components of comprehensions. This is what cultivated the culture of 'life lessons' doled out to the class in lieu of concrete teaching taking place.



The result was that the syllabus was not covered in as much depth as it could have been, with a knock-on effect on learners' linguistic and social identities that will be described further in this chapter.

#### **4.2 What skills and values are transmitted by Grade 11 teachers in their teaching?**

The findings for this section are largely drawn from the observation and focus group data, with inputs from the teacher interviews provided to support or challenge these. It was important to understand how the three teachers' methods were taken up in the classroom and what kinds of behaviour, skills and values they were encouraging in the process of their teaching. Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) consider values to not be implicitly behavioural, but concerned with the standards to which individuals hold themselves and others. These standards are latent and influence behaviour indirectly as they reflect ideal states and motivate individuals towards them (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). For example, a learner may be religious and hold values that are encouraged by their faith, such as charity, piousness and kindness. This may influence the learner to behave in ways that are reflective and pursuant of these values.

The Department of Labour's *Scarce and Critical Skills Research Project: Educators* (2008) defines a skill as 'an ability, expertise, proficiency, aptitude and competence, in doing something well, usually gained through training or experience' (Mda & Erasmus, 2008:7). Understanding that skills may be reduced to mechanical abilities, the authors of the report expand the definition to include those social disciplines that require a looser conception of 'skill' in respect of the more abstract abilities required to perform particular tasks competently. Teachers possess skills that can be observed and compared, such as time management with respect to completing syllabi, effective administration, and capturing of student information and performance; they also possess skills that are more abstract and relate to issues of pedagogy (following Hyun, 2006), such as their ability to convey information effectively, their style of interpersonal relations, and their sensitivity to political, economic and social differences among the students they teach. In the same vein, learners develop technical skills, such as an understanding of grammar rules and

structure. They also develop abstract skills that may be influenced by their values and beliefs, such as conversational abilities (which may be influenced by gender or cultural dynamics), critical thinking (which combines both values and knowledge) and being capable of empathising with their peers or characters in a book.

Further, the curriculum identifies three key skill areas for learners in language classes. These are *listening and speaking*, *reading and viewing*, *writing*, and *presenting* (DBE, 2011). Teachers must be able to develop learners' abilities in these areas while being mindful of the social and cultural values and norms in which these skills are framed. It is also useful, following the tables in 4.1, to consider how learners' skill levels and existing linguistic identities were managed in this process.

#### **4.2.1 Ms Fisher**

##### ***Empowerment and critical thinking***

Ms Fisher's teaching style contributed an additional layer of complexity to the overall school culture that seemed to encourage learners to want to do their best. As noted in the methodology, Lodge High had developed a strong academic record alongside its political credentials. A chart in the school foyer showed that the school set grade- and subject-level goals for performance each year and consistently reached these targets. This suggests that learners were also invested in maintaining, and thus being associated with, the school's academic tradition.

Ms Fisher took on this ethos of good performance while trying to provide a nurturing space for learners to develop. She was aware that learners entered her class with different proficiencies in English, and that in order to encourage learners to reach theirs and the school's goals she would have to work with them developmentally rather than towards tests and assignments. "Learners need more structure. I try to be as consistent as possible without taking away from creativity. They know what I expect of them and this rarely changes... [within the school there are] strong expectations of learners to perform well and be disciplined." She said further that she felt a sense of apathy existed within learners and their parents and tried to curtail this as much as possible through investing her lessons with care and interest. When introducing her, the principal of the school described her as "wonderful", saying that in the four years she had been at the school she had been a positive influence on the learners she taught and consistently delivered good results.

The values and skills Ms Fisher wanted her learners to take away from the class related greatly to their general personhood. "I want to facilitate learners that are discerning, and that think critically. It is important that the youth begin to question; there are not enough critically thinking youth and not enough role models for them. I want to get rid of the apathetic mindset that they have." She identified developing a sense of social responsibility and creativity as part of this, saying that she wanted to encourage learners to form their own opinions and be empowered by achieving in order to break the cycle of poverty. It was also important to her that learners learned to care for their fellow human beings and show kindness. "From personal experience, I never did well in subjects where the teacher wasn't kind or nice. It is important to model that kind of behaviour to be a positive influence."

One observation which was particularly indicative of her approach involved the poem *Invictus*, mentioned in the previous section. The class was having a double period and Ms Fisher was being evaluated by the deputy principal and the head of the English department. When the HOD arrived, she was greeted warmly by the class and sat with the deputy while Ms Fisher began the lesson.

Ms Fisher: "Today we are going to be doing a poem by William Earnest Henley. He wrote the poem *Invictus*, which deals a lot with adversity. Does anyone know what adversity means? Yes... obstacles in life, yes, anybody else? Challenges, yes, obstacles, difficulties. Are we all faced with them every single day? Sometimes adversity comes in small packages and sometimes in very large ones. Alright. Let me ask you this, do you feel that you are in charge, are you a victim of circumstance, or are you in charge of your life? How many of you would say you are victims of circumstance? How many of you feel that you are in charge of your life, your fate? Right, so let's say that's 50/50. Can I have some responses as to why you feel that you are either a victim or in charge?"

Roxanne: "Miss I think that we are in charge of our circumstances [incoherent] the things that happen in our lives because, um, we can be going through anything but we can choose whether it will bring us down or whether we'll use it in a positive way to... let us rise up and stuff."

Ms Fisher: “Roxanne... feels that you are in charge of how you allow a situation to affect you, your response to it. That’s good, well done. Tsitso, and then Rafael.”

Tsitso: “I’d say that we’re not in charge of the circumstances... that are laid upon us but we are in charge of how you react and respond to that circumstance. Like for example something happened recently, something tragic happened... well not that tragic but something happened this weekend that affected me negatively... I had the opportunity to either choose whether I would sulk over that thing, or... make it part of my... life experiences... and use that experiences to mould me.”

Ms Fisher: “Very nicely said... I think we can come to a consensus that generally, sometimes we can’t control what happens to us but we can control our responses, our reactions, our behaviour.”

Ms Fisher was concerned with teaching learners to take responsibility for building their character, and used the literature to draw links with positive life lessons similar to Ms Bezuidenhout. She kept drawing these lessons back to the content rather than veering too far away and becoming too general in her discussion. “It is important to focus on holistic development. If I was only focused on teaching English, English wouldn’t get taught. Values and norms need to be taught to make language as relatable and interesting as possible.”

It is also important to highlight the dichotomy she drew in the above exchange between being a victim of circumstance and being in charge of oneself. This is reflective of her desire to rid the learners of apathy or a sense of victimhood, but it is not certain whether this approach was appropriate given her positionality and the lack of context given with her question. Tsitso’s response showed careful reflection and a renegotiating of the boundaries between the two possibilities that her question did not seem to account for.

### ***Value-driven skills development***

Alongside developing critical thinking skills, learners also generally made an effort to be prepared for assessments, such as the orals. Many tried to memorise their orals word-for-word, and for some learners this negatively impacted on the confidence in

their delivery. Ms Fisher intervened after the first few learners delivered their speeches.

“Just another point, I see a lot of you are really striving to memorise your speeches; I really commend you for that because I was – I am still to this day unable to memorise things. And if I do try, I end up being very nervous and stumbling over my words but you guys have done it perfectly, so well done to those who have managed to do it. However, don’t feel that you are absolutely obligated to remember every single word; please don’t bend over backwards and get yourself psyched up about that... cue cards work. Cue cards are just there as a reminder to what point you want to make. So rather use them instead of really, really freaking yourself out trying to memorise. It’s a gift that some of us have, unfortunately. Fortunately [*smiles at learners who managed to memorise*].”

This relaxed those learners who had not yet delivered their speeches – a few took out paper and began to write cue cards for themselves – while also setting those who had already spoken at ease in terms of feedback for their performance. It was evident that Ms Fisher’s reassuring manner made learners feel comfortable enough to take on tasks that would ordinarily been daunting or made them nervous, like public speaking.

Although she spent a significant amount of lesson time walking amongst learners in their groups and speaking to them in smaller units, one incident suggested that she did not always give the kind of feedback that individual learners needed or could particularly benefit from. The first learner to present his oral during the observation period did quite well, but had not prepared much for his speech.

Ms Fisher: “Well done. How long did it take you to memorise that?”

Several members of the class interject that he winged the speech and actually had not prepared anything.

Ms Fisher: “But you wrote it down?”

Gershwin: “Just the structure, Miss.”

Ms Fisher: “Only the structure? Wow, well done. Good job.”

Even though the learner had done well, Ms Fisher did not use the opportunity to encourage him to be more conscientious about learning his speech in the future, particularly as giving a prepared oral form part of the standard assessment for the syllabus. While she could not force the learner to be prepared, it would have been helpful to highlight how useful it would be to develop the habit of doing so, so that when the learner encountered a topic he was not as comfortable improvising with he would know what to do and how.

Arguably Ms Fisher's developmental approach to teaching was values-driven in the sense that she tried to encourage learners to pick up new skills through teaching and treating them positively. She indicated that this was deliberate: "Over the years I have learned to get over things quite quickly. When you are bitter or begrudging towards a learner you will see it in their results." As already mentioned, learners seemed to respond well to this teaching style and were willing to offer answers and contribute in class when, for example, discussing a comprehension. It seemed that her strategy of developing interpersonal skills and self-confidence contributed to creating an environment in which learners felt encouraged to learn.

However, one issue out of the scope of this study is the level of improvement learners exhibited after being taught by Ms Fisher (of particular interest because this was flagged by the principal). While the overall environment of her class was warm and welcoming, it is difficult to draw a concrete link between learner performance and skills development and the extent to which this was influenced by the kind of learning space she created in her classroom.

It thus would have been interesting to assess their grammar and vocabulary skills prior to and after her input. The excerpts from learners' speeches indicated that some struggled with sentence structure and word choice, but most were able to communicate themselves quite well and, even when they struggled, seemed confident enough to continue. Confidence was a recurrent theme in this space. Learners felt bolstered by the teacher's encouragement and so did not shy away from situations where they were put on the spot, such as one learner who read the poem *Invictus* for the class after Ms Fisher praised his confidence and projection. He received warm applause from his peers upon completion, indicating that the learners

took seriously, and celebrated, good performance. Like their peers in Mr Haxton's class below, learners in Ms Fisher's class were invested in strong academic performance, and took an active interest in pursuit of this.

#### **4.2.2 Mr Haxton**

##### ***Skills development and performance***

Mr Haxton recognised that for many of the learners he taught, performing well was a significant priority. Lillie High was a prestigious school with a long-standing reputation. Academic achievement was prized alongside sporting and cultural activity, of which there was a wide variety available for learners to choose from. He expressed that learners were oriented towards future goals (such as university) and so were often concerned with passing for its instrumental purpose. This did not deter him, however, from investing his teaching with an open approach that allowed learners to seriously engage issues that interested them, and so find things to relate to and think about from the content.

For Mr Haxton, two important skills he hoped learners would develop from their English class related to writing and speaking.

“[It's] a sense of achievement I think, particularly in writing, when a Grade 8 who... can write, but not particularly well can, by the end of Matric, they can write a coherent story – something that gives them that satisfaction as well, that's important. In terms of oral skills, I suppose the ability to present themselves and their ideas, which is probably quite important for most people.”

This was echoed by Sam in the focus group:

“If I look at the essays that I wrote in Grade 8 to one that I wrote now, that growth path... I enjoy that we've gained such a skill in being able to do that.”

Mr Haxton also used everyday opportunities, such as the daily selection of readers to fill character roles for *Amadeus*, to give learners the chance to speak alone and become comfortable in this. Learners often volunteered for roles they liked, and on one occasion a learner suggested that a male learner read a female role (as the

reverse had been done on several occasions). It was indicative of Mr Haxton's teaching approach that he welcomed this idea, inviting learners to consider their own ideas and values regarding gender in doing so.

While the learners did comment that they enjoyed writing and orals, they felt that topics were often 'depressing' or quite serious. They enjoyed when teachers allowed them to suggest their own topics because this enabled them to write or speak about things that mattered to them. In spite of this, they felt that the assessment method was flawed.

Sam: "I don't enjoy that when we get tested... or whatever I write, it's my opinion... but it gets marked by someone who has a different opinion to mine, and that opinion gets to tell me whether my opinion is good or not."

Michael: "A while back I'd gotten an essay back that I'd written, and I was just looking at the comments next to the work, and I just disagreed with all of them. I was like, if the person had read this and had tried to grasp what was going on, they wouldn't have asked these questions, they wouldn't have said these things... to me it seemed like I almost got higher marks for things I didn't think were as deserving as this was... and it's strange to get something back and go, well, that thing you gave me 80% for last week was like, way worse than this, and this you've given me a 60 – like, why?"

Michael commented further, and several of his peers nodded in agreement, that the subjective nature of the assessment for writing was not something he agreed with. He said that he felt his marks fluctuated according to who the teacher was and what their opinions were, and that this made the reliability of the actual mark difficult to gauge.

### ***Language embodied in school values***

The learners also discussed their literature component and noted that analysing texts was something they were quite interested in. Sam suggested that as much as she enjoyed the analysis, she found it overwhelming that they analysed texts so deeply in the process of learning and reading them. "I feel like sometimes it ruins the book for me because I wouldn't [normally] analyse the book in such depth, if I were to read a novel."



Michael: “[I sometimes think] we focus the analysis on things that are ridiculous...[like in the poetry] it’s like you’re analysing things that really shouldn’t be *that* analysed. There isn’t that sort of secondary, underlying meaning? So you can sort of tell that it’s sort of forced, which ruins it... I find that with reading poetry I like to read it and have my own thoughts about it, but not read it and take apart every word and where that word is originally from and what it could be saying about like, sex or animal cruelty.”

It was apparent that learners felt that their analytical skills were being pushed to the limit at times, and that this was a deterrent in their full enjoyment of the literature they were exposed to. As discussed, they also did not consider the literature they encountered to be the kinds of texts they would choose to read on their own.

Another skill that learners were encouraged to develop was their grammar and use of the language. Mr Haxton had noted this when he mentioned his impression that not all teachers were equipped to teach this component effectively. Because the internal assessments were pitched at a higher level than national ones, and because learners generally performed well in these (e.g. the class average of 85% for one test), it is reasonable to deduce that learners were largely capable in this area. The collective vocabulary of the class was also particularly advanced (e.g. words like ‘discourse’) and learners were able to express themselves more creatively and directly as a result.

It was evident that part of the Lillie High school culture was an approach to learning and working that was holistic and formed part of learner identities.

Emma: “It’s how we carry ourselves and... kind of the way we go about our work, rather than our actual work.”

*Some learners come walking in late from an exam.* “Hundred percent?” asked Mr Haxton. “Hundred percent,” echoed one of the learners.

The lessons observed in Mr Haxton’s class ran smoothly on most occasions and class time was maximised by small habits that prevented unnecessary disruptions or delays, with the only standing difference being the absence of most learners for one period a week (they were attending an advanced English program to prepare them for university study). There was no siren or bell. Learners took responsibility for

getting to each lesson on time, and when they arrived, seated themselves quickly with minimal talking, took out their set works or pen and paper depending on the plan for the day's lesson, and waited attentively to be addressed by the teacher. They worked independently and critically questioned things they did not agree with or understand, such as why certain responses were marked incorrectly in the grammar test. On that same day, six minutes of teaching time were left after Mr Haxton went through the memorandum for the test, and this time was used to continue reading *Amadeus* until the end of the lesson. The class was almost completely silent while this took place. This happened on another occasion following a discussion of a scene that ended seven minutes before the period did. Time management thus seemed to be a crucial aspect of the school's culture. For example, Mr Haxton explained in his interview that the examination period in June was kept as short as possible, leaving the school with two additional teaching weeks before the holiday. Strategies such as this were intended to keep learners focused on their schoolwork until the last teaching day rather than seeing exams as a 'writing off' of the term. In this way learners were meant to be prepared for the term ahead and up-to-date with the syllabus so that teachers had more freedom to work within it.

Skills development seemed to be primary goal of Mr Haxton's class and, again, of the Lillie High ethos overall. Even though Mr Haxton emphasised the grammar component, learners did express that they did a lot of literature (especially as they also did an expansive book project during their initial years at the school). For the teacher it was quite important that learners developed skills that would stand them in good stead throughout their lives, such as being able to critically analyse a text, write clearly and well, and speak with confidence. He was especially aware that the learners he taught were quite concerned with performing well enough to get into the tertiary institutions of their choice, whether universities or film or advertising schools, and that they wanted to be able to thrive once in these spaces as well. The syllabus was a tool in pursuit of these goals.

Assessing the level of values education learners received was more difficult. In the section dealing with the second sub-question it will be shown how implicit attitudes towards particular social dynamics were reflected in Mr Haxton's comments. Aside

from this, the primary values he tried to encourage in the class were concerned with mutual respect and understanding, tolerance, and empathy. This was often modelled on his own behaviour. Learners were discouraged from interrupting each other when speaking, and when they were reading aloud Mr Haxton would time his interventions to coincide with the end of a particular line or section. He made it clear that learners were not to mock one another for mispronouncing or struggling with difficult or foreign words, linking this more generally to an attitude to language that was intended to be open. “Appreciation of the culture of English as an international language [is important], but it is also important to remember that there are many ‘Englishes’ we can value.”

He further encouraged learners to think past their own beliefs when considering particular dilemmas or moral issues. Similarly, he handled issues of sexuality in a manner that was quite matter-of-fact and amoral – such as Constanza’s attempted seduction of Salieri in *Amadeus* – which led learners to treat these with serious consideration. Mr Haxton felt that learners needed to be tolerant of each other and of different views. “[It is important to] allow people to explain themselves, but also to be questioned [by others].” Having their views challenged by their peers or the content made it possible for learners to think critically about their beliefs, develop and strengthen them or adapt to new understandings. This was a crucial finding across the case study schools, and presented challenges to learners’ development of criticality when this was not a feature of their interactions.

#### **4.2.3 Ms Bezuidenhout**

##### ***Agency in communication skills***

Ms Bezuidenhout wanted to encourage her learners to pursue new possibilities and be positive and agential throughout their lives. Similar to Ms Fisher, she was aware of the potential apathy that existed amongst the learners she taught and tried to alleviate this through constant encouragement and instruction in matters of life. Learners were aware that the school was not well-resourced or viewed positively by other families in the community, and that their learning took place in an environment that was relatively deprived compared to other schools. Ms Bezuidenhout expressed frustration with the lack of textbooks and resources available for her teaching.

It is likely that this context is what influenced her to stress positive life skills and developing agency in her interactions with learners, in order to encourage them to take responsibility for and maximise their learning. Earlier Tara commented that Ms Bezuidenhout taught them how to do things 'in life', and Byron agreed with her.

"She always teaches us that we have to be confident and not just sit in our books because, yes learning theoretically is good, but it's not everything in my life, you have to learn, experience and other stuff in the world that we're going to need one day."

Craig felt that the encouragement came from the content of the subject itself.

"Miss I don't think it's the English teacher *per se*, it's more the English the subject alone, I mean we're talking about poetry, like we're talking about Shakespeare, like I said it does broaden your knowledge. Poetry can help you with a life situation..."

The learners then discussed the teacher amongst themselves, describing her as helpful and saying that they enjoyed her life lessons and the way she always related the content back to their lives. They saw her influence in their lives as generally quite positive.

They also emphasised that they enjoyed English for its ability to improve their communication skills. Learners were conscious of an importance placed on speaking well, and described this in the focus group.

Craig: "I think the most important is communication skills. That's what will get you far in life, in interviews, in one on ones with ordinary people... it says a lot about you, how you represent yourself, and that will get you far."

Kaylah: "I think the way you speak... it gives you a certain level of professionalism one day when you start your job, if you can't communicate with a certain person they will see you as unprofessional and they won't regard you the same as the way they think of someone else."

Learners explained that they often spoke a mixture of English and Afrikaans at home and so it was useful learning 'proper' or formal English at school. It was also clear that their parents wished for them to speak English well – Craig explained that it

mattered to his parents “because it shows how I represent them. So I need to always present myself well when I’m using my words.” Ms Bezuidenhout stressed the importance of teaching learners good communication skills, saying: “I want the learners to be well-spoken and confident... to be able to converse well and communicate their ideas articulately... and to use language appropriately. It’s a skill that will benefit them in the long run.”

### ***Assessment-driven skills development***

Perhaps due to her lack of experience in the grade she taught, Ms Bezuidenhout followed the curriculum quite carefully, especially when it came to examinations. It was a recurrent theme in her conversations with learners during the observation period.

Ms Bezuidenhout (speaking about the creative writing essay): “They must be able to throw any essay at you and you must know what to do.”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “I notice that some people don’t write in English class because we do have a lot of discussions, but the little time that we do write you are supposed to write it down, even with the poetry... I don’t know how you study for exams.” She then mentioned that books sometimes got stolen in other classes in the period before examinations started.

She became frustrated with the lack of engagement from learners when trying to elicit discussions after reading passages or articles, particularly when posing questions to them from the assigned activity. Learners, she felt, were not reading with understanding, and so were not engaging with the meanings of the texts used in their activities. Often she ended up giving the answer to them and watched them write it down.

Ms Bezuidenhout: “You see I don’t want to do this. You see when I give you an answer I don’t give it to you actually-”

Tara: “Miss but in the exam miss we will think.”

Ms Bezuidenhout: “Not always. Only a few of you are thinking properly. The others are there, they’re just floating along.”

She closely followed the prescribed poetry list and finished poems according to their appearance in past examination papers. On one occasion she went through a checklist of the prescribed poetry, marking off those that had been completed.

Ms Bezuidenhout: “I just want you to go to your poetry section and double check that... have you got *I am? Refugee mother and child?* [next two titles incoherent] *Today* you have, ne, but *Today* we must still do the answers of. I know I've given you the answers to *I am* – I've given you a copy of the answers, remember, before exams... The following poems we still need to actually do the formal answers to. *Waterless death*, did I give you that? [*class answers 'no'*]. *Today*, *The meeting*, and *Walking away* – okay we did that, I'm going to tick it off.”

The difficulty to control the class and thus make the most of teaching time meant that Ms Bezuidenhout was likely forced – or felt compelled – to not spend too much time on the poetry in order to make up the more substantial grammar and long-form literature components. She suggested once to the class that this was also partially due to their own predispositions in terms of work.

Ms Bezuidenhout: “I understand you guys, I know how you think, that's why I cut it short.” [*referring to the poetry analysis of Creed*]

In the same (double period) lesson as the quote above, she completed the questions on the Jansen comprehension, read and discussed the questions of the poem *Creed*, and then asked learners to start reading the poem *Ozymandias* five minutes before the interval. “I just need to go to the front [office] quickly... guys just read on your own... and then you tell me what you think it's about when I get back.” The class ended before she returned.

It thus made sense that Ms Bezuidenhout tended to work towards assessments; the school day at Juniper was punctuated by interruptions (some of them by teachers themselves) and as such learning time was compromised and needed to be made up somehow in order to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. This did mean that the level of learning that took place was at times superficial, especially when she gave learners the answers to comprehension or poetry analysis questions without always making them discuss and answer these themselves first. It was common for

learners to respond to her questions and for her to tell them what the memorandum said, and they would then copy this down verbatim. Learners were able to rote-learn for examinations by studying the memoranda of featured poems that were provided by the teacher, but it is uncertain whether they developed strong studying and comprehension skills in this process, especially considering that the teacher felt that their reading skills were not as sophisticated as they should be.

It was also apparent that the critical thinking skills of the learners, while certainly developing and evident, were not always put to full use. This could be seen in their cognitive dissonance when presenting contradicting opinions without attempting to reconcile them or question where the contradiction lay and what gave rise to it. A significant result that will be suggested in the findings to the second sub-question was their persistent appeals to ideals of non-racialism while still identifying and defending a racial identity. The way they grappled with this often took place in precarious ways, and in the case below exhibits how a learner struggled to critically reconcile the disparate values she was appealing to.

Tara: “Miss, if you look at our country, the population... is black, so we’re going to have to have a language that we can also communicate in because there out there in the workplace, you will see things changing, you will see dark of complexion people and you need to communicate and know what they’re saying about you behind your back.”

Tara was not the only learner who expressed these views, but she was particularly vocal in them. On another occasion she said, “Let’s not see races. Because... yoh... *You black! –Oh I’m black? I’m going to go to court and make a case now because you said I’m black.*” It was common for an embedded attitude of anti-blackness to be discernible in learners’ comments; they largely felt antagonistic towards the ruling ANC government and what they saw as an unnecessarily influential black elite. It was also not common for Ms Bezuidenhout to challenge these views, making the likelihood of learners critiquing themselves slim because these were attitudes and beliefs that they had developed in their socialisation at home and school, and seemed to have sustained throughout.

Alongside these expressed attitudes the class tended to follow the official values that were expressed in their curriculum, which may explain their contradicting views. The

CAPS document encourages values of 'human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice' (DBE, 2011) and these were evident in the content that was covered. Both the Jansen and Mandela comprehensions dealt with issues of human rights; Jansen's comprehension also reflected on ideal learner behaviour, providing a message to learners about what their teachers and parents expected of them and what lessons they would draw from their school days once they had matriculated and gone out into the world. The Mandela speech actually captured the spirit of the CAPS document in forceful terms because it expressed values and ideals that were congruent with the later South African Constitution. The poem *Creed* was about 'real life superheroes' – the creed of a group of citizen police who sought to protect and serve their community. Ms Bezuidenhout asked the class to imagine themselves developing their own creed, and asked what they would be standing for.

Kaylah: "Miss do we have to fight for something?"

Ms Bezuidenhout: "What would you do?"

Kaylah: "We could... be about motivating people."

Sumaya: "You create your own future."

Tara: "Life is about choices!"

As discussed, learners took to this kind of content and were accustomed to the language of democracy and anti-racism, able to articulate it and appealing to it multiple times over the course of discussions observed. It was the dissonance between these values and their own that generated the kinds of polarising attitudes that will be described in the section on sub-question 2. Arguably values were a large part of the education learners received from Ms Bezuidenhout, likely owing to both her second specialisation as a Life Orientation teacher and her close adherence to the prescribed syllabus. Conducting themselves well and having the ability to be future-oriented and responsible were desirable traits that she hoped to instil in them, and stressed on many occasions.

While learners also recognised the value of general communication skills, it may be that these were overemphasised at the cost of more concrete and examinable skills



such as writing, comprehension and public speaking – particularly as they did not receive strong feedback when presenting individually. Ms Bezuidenhout's tendency to work towards exams and focus on model answers in her teaching contradicted what would be assumed her overall open and conversational approach. Rote learning was not an uncommon feature in her lessons, particularly because disruptions in lesson time made it necessary to catch up on actual content or fall behind. It is somewhat ironic that Ms Bezuidenhout focused so much on examinations in her teaching but did not stress the development of skills that would enable learners to be sufficiently prepared for these. However, learner responsibility also needs to be factored in here, in that she struggled to get learners to take notes, engage and listen to instructions, and this may have had a knock-on effect on her ability to use her usual approach to get learners to work consistently.

#### **4.3 What are the effects of their teaching on learners' linguistic identities and on creating social cohesion?**

This sub-question engages and probes the relationship learners have to their teacher and how this influences their development of particular linguistic identities. It also further interrogates how their experiences of teaching shape their attitudes to language and its position in South Africa. Additionally, the question was concerned with how learners' schooling has impacted on their sense of national identity and their commitment, or lack of commitment, to social justice as a result of their socialisation thus far. Of key interest, then, is the relationship between teacher practices, learner skills development, and how they utilise the skills they gain in the classroom to engage critically issues of language and belonging in South Africa. Although the participant teachers cannot be held solely responsible for the attitudes and perspectives held by their learners, it is interesting to consider how their teaching enabled, constrained or contradicted the processes by which learners came to embody particular identities and relationships to the world. The tables identified in 4.1 are useful in this section as well.

### 4.3.1 Ms Fisher

#### ***Respect for diversities and commonalities in learner experiences***

Of the learners in the Lodge High focus group, just one said that she only spoke English at home. Most of the learners spoke at least two or three languages, and were not all first language English speakers; one learner, Mamadou, mentioned five – English, Afrikaans, Swahili, French, and another language indigenous to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where his family was from. This gave Ms Fisher a particularly complex task in managing the multiple languages and linguistic identities that learners entered the classroom with, and ensuring that they all felt sufficiently supported even with differing individual needs and proficiencies.

As highlighted in this chapter, Ms Fisher's teaching approach incorporated a significant amount of positive reinforcement. She gave positive feedback to almost every learner who spoke during the oral presentations, often flagging particular aspects of their speeches and using these to provide general advice to the rest of the class. In this way learners who spoke were made to feel as though they had contributed useful knowledge or behaviour to the class, while also fostering a general classroom atmosphere that suggested that learners could learn from each other and not only the teacher.

Ms Fisher: "Well done, Cecile, that was very nice. Good job. Cecile used a lot of rhetorical questions, good for engaging the audience for those of you that are still to come. Use rhetorical questions. It helps... participation of your audience."

This also extended to Ms Fisher's relationship to the learners. She was aware, and expressed, that they had agency within the classroom and could affect perceptions of her by the staff and other learners. This was highlighted in the time before the arrival of the deputy principal and HOD, where she handed out the poem *Invictus* and explained to learners that the evaluation would be taking place.

Ms Fisher: "Right, it was your turn, now it's my turn to be evaluated. So we're going to be doing poetry... I expect that you will be nice and kind to me."

Even though the class was generally well-behaved in her lessons, in this instance they were aware of the importance of giving a good impression of Ms Fisher's

teaching and were particularly engaging and cooperative. The lesson was a good indication of learners' abilities in terms of their language proficiency because more of them participated than previously, where they had individually delivered orals. Ms Fisher's own practices were not visibly affected or changed for the benefit of the evaluators; she largely was concerned with not showing how nervous she was. She went through the questions for *Invictus*, answering some with the class's input and leaving others open-ended for learners to consider themselves.

Ms Fisher: "Right, look right at the bottom there... when he says captain of my soul, he makes this image of his life as a ship and he's the one standing there. So that's lovely imagery. You can almost imagine him... caught in a storm, and the storm would obviously be a metaphor for his? For his struggles, for his difficulties, and he is sailing through it, he is confident that it will not sink the ship. I've given you a little page of questions..."

"What connotations does the word 'night' have? What does connotation mean?"

Rowan: "Like meanings."

Ms Fisher: "[Or] associations. So what connotations does 'night' have?"

Rowan: "I would say horror, miss."

Ms Fisher: "Horror. Darkness... Obstacles, good. Number 2, provide a definition for *invictus*. Should be fine, we stated that at the beginning. Number 3, state the figure of speech in line 5. Please explain it too, don't just name it, explain it too.

Number 4, quote the examples of alliteration and explain its use. Alliteration is?"

Members of the class suggested several answers.

Ms Fisher: "Right, it is the repetition of consonants at the beginning of each word. Refer to line 10, what is 'shade' a metaphor for?"

Ms Fisher then instructed learners to begin answering the questions in their workbooks, and requested that they notify her if any help or clarification was needed.

She then went through the room to speak to groups of learners, checking in with them and ensuring that they understood the poem and what the questions required. She noted that this allowed learners who did not feel comfortable expressing themselves in class to bring challenges or issues they faced in the work to her attention in a more private manner.

“I try not to take for granted what learners know and can do. If you’re focused on their development you get better results.”

She was particularly concerned about this in light of the reality that many of the learners who entered her class were not first- or even second-language English speakers. Ms Fisher was aware that learners’ linguistic identities operated in a macro context in which English was seen to be integral to further development and competition in spheres such as commerce and politics. In her opinion, one of the key ways to facilitate the shift from their own home languages (such as Afrikaans, isiXhosa, French etc.) was to make the content useful to learners, so that they could engage as multilingual, culturally complex subjects and not experience a complete disruption of their competencies where, if they were taught in languages they were familiar in, they would perform well. In the development of the learning environment, this meant that she did not entirely discourage the use of other languages in the classroom while learners were working amongst themselves, and only commented on slang used in the oral presentations where this became repetitive or disruptive to the message of the speech itself.

Importantly, learners did not generally share the belief that English was the most important language they could learn (Graville et al, 1997), although they agreed that it was useful in bridging gaps in situations where it was the only common language. Rafael quite poignantly suggested that being able to speak many languages was a form of wealth that fostered an open and critical identity. “[Y]ou can value... how rich a man is due to how many languages he can speak. Because it means you can relate to different people, different cultures.” Rafael’s experience of leaving his home country of Angola and coming to South Africa made him sensitive to the importance of being able to communicate with different people, and created a desire to be as multilingual as possible because of the possibilities and relationships this offered.

There was also an interesting division that became apparent while the above discussion took place. Learners collectively expressed a desire to be able to speak more languages, but on the whole, black learners (whether born in South Africa or not) stressed the importance of local and regional languages, while coloured and Indian learners mentioned European languages first.

Zarah: “I actually think if they had to give us another language, like not just English and Afrikaans, not just the basics that we’ve been doing-”

Amirah: “Like French or any other-”

Rowan and Amirah: “International language.”

Zarah: “I remember I done French, but I only done it for a year. Then I tried Spanish, but that only lasted like, a month...”

Mamadou: “I think more indigenous languages.”

Rushdi, a Muslim learner, mentioned that his father spoke fluent Arabic and encouraged his children to learn the language as part of their faith. Rushdi struggled with speaking Arabic but was able to read it well. Amirah commented that she had also learned some French and found Arabic to be more difficult than either French or Afrikaans, even after years of instruction in the language and hearing it spoken in religious and social contexts. It was apparent that learners were engaging with and affording statuses to different languages in their own lives and locating this within a desire to develop a cosmopolitan identity, even where their conceptions of what this entailed differed between individuals and along cultural, ethnic or religious lines. Boniswa expressed an affective relationship to one of her home languages, isiXhosa, due to being closer to her mother (her father grew up in an Afrikaans environment), but noted that her love for the English language derived from her experience of schooling.

Boniswa: “[In] my primary school, we were a diversity of people, and the only common language that we could express to each other was English. But back then, then you don’t really find the value of English, it’s just talking, reading... but I think that I really caught a love of it when we started, like Grade 6 or 7, where you actually had to take a dictionary and look at these big words, that’s

when things started to change for me. Being able to use vocabulary and manipulate language to express how you feel – that’s something that really drew me to English.”

### ***Learning to relate to the Other***

Relationships to their peers and the teacher formed a large part of the ways in which learners framed their experiences of schooling and the attitudes they developed. While there were largely positive, cooperative relationships in the class, Ms Fisher was aware that there were undercurrents of antagonism, particularly along racial lines, within the school. This was never addressed openly during the observation period so it is uncertain how she managed this in specific situations, but she did speak to this more generally in her interview.

Ms Fisher: “Society will never be free of prejudice. It’s about being self-aware and being able to question yourself and your ideas on a daily basis, but also to see it in learners and question it. For English you need to debate, so I use stereotypes and prejudices as a point of debate which gets them talking. I don’t try and avoid controversial issues in the class. I believe it is important to face the issue.”

She related this to the divisions between learners along racial lines, and between foreign and local black learners, noting that foreign learners gravitated towards coloured peers in the class. English became important for building relationships between learners because of the diversity in their linguistic repertoires. Boniswa echoed this, going on to add, “I think English allows a person to actually transcend through many different cultures... I think it’s very useful – it’s a tool of manipulation, I would say.” Boniswa’s response indicates a pragmatic, strategic attitude to English language acquisition as a ‘tool’ in her linguistic repertoire that enabled her to progress socially and academically, even where she retained strong ties to at least one of her home languages.

Even though Ms Fisher flagged the issue of divisions within the student body, there was not much evidence of these in the classroom, even in learners’ chosen seating arrangements. It is possible that the rapport among learners derived from a shared awareness of their similar circumstances, and the strategic choices and sacrifices they and their families were making for them to attend Lodge High. Several orals

noted common experiences that they shared and dealt with, such as living in difficult, unsafe neighbourhoods, the expensive cost of their education and the financial strain this placed on their families. Sihle (in his oral in 4.1.1) and Mamadou both stressed a familial element to the class's relationships.

Mamadou: "[T]he reason why we're so open is we started from an early, like from Grade 9 we first started together; obviously in Grade 9 we weren't so open as expressing our individual opinions with the other students but I think we've grown as some sort of a family bond with each other."

Given the existing dynamics within the school, it would have been reasonable to assume that black and foreign learners entering a historically, and still largely coloured high school may have been ostracised and treated as outsiders (Soudien, 2012). It is thus significant that these learners described a sense of belonging that transcended friendship into a more complex, intimate and stable familial connection, particularly in Mamadou's case where he acknowledges that this connection took time to develop and grow organically. It was evident from witnessing learner interactions in the focus group and throughout the observation period that a common unifying element was the school itself, and that their agency in deciding to attend Lodge High rather than schools closer to home created a shared experience that enabled learners to identify with each other.

Further, learners had adapted Lodge High's political history into the school's new context as a multiracial space. Rowan, in his speech, noted that being exposed to cultural differences was an important contributor to their learning, while Pheli argued that despite their different experiences and opinions learners could share common struggles and goals. Jade felt that even though he had only enrolled at the school in his Grade 10 year, he had been there for much longer, and put this down to the sense of camaraderie that learners shared. Learner relationships were such that internal cohesion in the classroom was visible on most occasions, and the school culture and history provided a foundation on which for civic responsibility to be developed in a broad sense. It is also possible that the identity of Lodge High as a struggle school made it an environment more amenable to black learners because of an implicit philosophy of inclusivity and anti-racism embedded in its history. However, it could not be accurately proven that black learners did not encounter

antagonism or micro-aggressions in their day-to-day experiences of the school, or that learners in general had found more subtle ways of expressing biases and prejudices due to the explicitly progressive values contained in the school ethos. Despite this, the depth of interpersonal relations between learners suggests that whatever differences existed between them were superseded, or at least mitigated, by their shared connection to the school itself.

### **4.3.2 Mr Haxton**

#### ***English-plus-ten-other: multilingualism and assimilation***

While Lodge and Lillie High both valued academic excellence, the study has thus far described the two schools as locating their academic traditions in very different histories. An interesting finding from Lillie High was the near lack of engagement, in the classroom space, with issues of social cohesion, such as racism, sexism, chauvinism and inequality. Perhaps because of the choices of literature made by the English department, these issues did not come to the fore as strongly in class discussions and were often confined to throwaway comments or discussions between learners themselves.

As already noted, Mr Haxton's attitude to language diversity was that in the context of Lillie High, multilingualism was a useful social tool but not a structural necessity for dealing with diversity because those learners who were not first language English speakers exhibited sufficient fluency in the language to be accepted at the school. Despite this, he held the view that multilingualism was not handled effectively in most schools, and that there were many 'Englishes' that could be valued beyond the standard form that learners were exposed to in the classroom.

It was therefore not clear why Mr Haxton never interrogated the loaded meanings behind small comments made in the course of his teaching, particularly in the relationships between language and social identity. The first instance of this was in the case of the *Amadeus* test that was revised in class, where a question asked what kind of language the word 'wys' was. The correct answer was slang or colloquial language, but Mr Haxton emphasised the memorandum's answer of "inappropriate register", and corrected a learner who suggested that it could be considered jargon.



The word being referenced is generally understood to mean to confront, challenge, or tell someone off, and is most commonly heard in this context in historically coloured communities. A similar word exists in white English-speaking contexts, particularly among young people – to ‘tune’. It was thus concerning that the examiners did not use this more contextually familiar word instead, and chose to refer to a word associated with an inferior (because hybrid) language associated with working-class coloured communities (Stone, 2004). It is also telling that Mr Haxton did not take this issue up with the class when going through the question. Significantly, even though Sean was not completely correct in suggesting that the word could constitute jargon, he was more open to the idea of the word forming part of a specialised lexicon with its own use and value in context. Mr Haxton’s dismissal of this possibility indicated contradictions in his expressed attitudes regarding accepting and managing multilingualism effectively. It also may have had an effect on coloured learners in his class who were confronted with a negation or undermining of dialects associated with being stereotypically coloured (as raw, aggressive, uncouth) (Stone, 2004), with the potential effect of encouraging learners to distance themselves from these elements in their speech and comportment in order to be seen as ‘appropriate’.

On another occasion, Mr Haxton’s choice of words seemed particularly ill-considered. Mention was made in *Amadeus* of an impoverished Mozart having to live in a tenement, and Mr Haxton paused the reading to ask learners about this.

Mr Haxton: “Do you know what a tenement is? Essentially a tenement is... flat-like housing. So if you think of those flats on the Cape Flats, think of when you drive down Prince George Drive and those kinds of things... in Europe they would be called tenements. So long rows of flats all joined together... *this is where the common people live* [own emphasis].”

While Mr Haxton was referring to the tenements in *Amadeus*, the inference made in associating the apartheid-era housing found in Cape Town with the poverty and squalor of the common people in the book was self-evident. It was likely not his intention to suggest this, but the moment passed without any further contextualisation of the example being made and in this way, the association was not problematized or dispelled.

Because the learners at Lillie High were generally considered or expected to be proficient English speakers, aspiring to high proficiency in English was more specifically, in this context, about speaking the British English that Mr Haxton noted was the school standard. The fact that all the English teachers at Lillie High were white, and largely educated at historically white and English universities (Mr Haxton himself had studied at both Rhodes and the University of Cape Town), meant that the content of the syllabus retained a particular character, something Mr Haxton acknowledged and agreed was an issue. This affected the choices of literature and types of assessment questions that were offered to learners, and the kinds of issues and conflicts they were exposed to in their set works.

### ***Spaces of disruption***

It became apparent that the main obstacle in introducing controversial topics to learners was the curriculum itself; Mr Haxton referenced this particularly in his capacity as a History teacher.

Mr Haxton: “In the history syllabus the worst thing they ever did... in Grade 11 there used to be a section called *Identity in South Africa*. It wasn't examinable, which was why it ended up being dropped, but essentially it was a history of early political movements in South Africa – the Coloured Peoples' Organisation, the Indian Congress, and so on... and we used to talk about our own identity, and that was the best week in Grade 11 history. And the last time I taught it I had a couple of Xhosa-speaking boys; a girl whose mother was Xhosa and father was Zulu, and that was an interesting cultural thing there; three Indians, one of whom was born in India, one whose family was essentially Hare Krishnas, and one who told us 'I celebrate all the Indian holidays, like Christmas' and didn't know anything about Hinduism; an Afrikaner; coloured boys, Muslims, a Jewish girl – so we basically had [almost every group] in South Africa. And it was amazing... and then it was dropped. It was cut out of the syllabus... [but what was unique about it was] there was no pressure, and those who wanted to talk, talked. You know, kids were a bit more reticent, but by the end of the week everyone had contributed at least fifteen, twenty minutes. And you knew something about them, about their upbringing...”

While the History subject is not compulsory in the FET phase, Mr Haxton's discussion of the course above raised an interesting issue about the kinds of knowledge that were generated and disseminated within the school. He explained that learners who did not do History were also interested in the course, and that it resulted in numerous discussions between learners and teachers in its duration and likely after. Spaces for learner knowledge were created in the school that allowed for sensitive topics to be dealt with in an open forum and an awareness of the philosophies of the anti-apartheid struggle developed around learners' own identities and experiences. It was not made clear why the course was removed from the syllabus aside from it being a non-examinable component, but Mr Haxton felt that aside from this, the main alternatives to fostering socially cohesive attitudes were in societies, extramural activities and sport. He appeared to be critical of the prescribed English syllabus for not offering enough opportunity for learners to engage with controversial issues, and largely being unrelated to their own lives. Learners echoed this.

Emma: "When we do South African poems, it's always related to apartheid, and the struggle, and I think there's so many different stories that we could be doing."

Michael: "I think with a lot of the South African literature... none of it sort of relates to our present realities in terms of challenges faced by South Africa today... Everything is sort of [about] this victory over apartheid back then in 1994; nothing seems to centre around the way apartheid is still very much ingrained in South Africa today... there's such a great divide between rich and poor... especially Cape Town. There's so much division... and it makes the people setting work seem kind of ignorant when they set work that isn't relevant to today's struggles. Like where I live, it's so weird, like the road at the bottom of where I live it's like a white area, and there's a black area, and there's a coloured area, and they're still so segregated. So it's like, that's nice, but this is still here, these roads, the way everything works, it's still in place. And like, going over to History... they sort of, they take race words out of the dialect that we use, it sort of delegitimises the issues of real South Africans in a country where race and financial privilege is still so interconnected. It seems like they don't really pay attention to reality."

Sam agrees with Michael.

Chad: “I don’t think I can really relate because I haven’t been through that struggle. I haven’t experienced it, I don’t know what it’s like, so it’s hard for me to connect with it.”

Michael’s comment revealed several important things about learners and school culture at Lillie. His mention of the erasure of racial signifiers from the terminology used in the History syllabus reflects a refusal to accept the neutralisation of inequalities under the guise of progressive teaching. While it is important to dispute the uncritical resort towards this kind of language on an everyday basis (Soudien, 2012), Michael’s point was that this needed to be pre-empted by actually engaging with the weight carried in racial language and the inequalities and micro-aggressions that persist in the present because of it. It is interesting to recall Mr Haxton’s referral to cultural, and not racial (save for “coloured boys”) markers in his discussion of the History course, in light of Michael’s statement. He also flagged the continued spatial segregation of different groups in Cape Town and how the untransformed nature of the city’s planning continues to impose restrictions on possibilities for people to mix and build relationships. Further discussion among learners showed that they were highly aware of these issues but that they rarely had the opportunity to engage them on a consistent basis because of the limitations of their prescribed texts.

Mr Haxton did try to engage with topical issues when they arose or when learners asked about them. “My general policy is [that you can] bring anything up for discussion as long as the way you approach it isn’t offensive to people.” He mentioned incidents such as the spate of racist Facebook posts that had gone viral over the last year, and the furore caused by a white waitress who felt undermined by a joke about land made by two black patrons when refusing to tip her at a popular restaurant in Observatory. “We’re fortunate in that most Lillie kids are generally quite open and willing to engage and discuss.” He felt that discussing these events was necessary particularly because there had been no major issues regarding racism, sexism, classism or other prejudices reported either in his class or the school, and that these discussions gave them the opportunity to work through attitudes and values they might hold but never fully articulate given the school’s liberal culture.

It is true that the learners in Mr Haxton's class got along very well, although very little explanation was offered for why learners sat in a particularly racialised arrangement in class. Because Mr Haxton tried to avoid moralising to learners as much as possible, it is likely that he left this issue alone, although it was intriguing phenomenon to witness given the expressed non-racism and multiculturalism of Lillie High. Despite this, Mr Haxton said that opportunities for mixing and sharing experiences in extracurricular activities allowed for learners to understand their peers' identities and "learn to take things light-heartedly."

Mr Haxton: "When you've got a group of boys together, like a soccer team, they just joke about race. 'White boys, you can't play soccer' [and that kind of thing]. It's a serious national issue, but amongst sixteen-year-old boys on a soccer field it really isn't that big a deal" [*laughs*].

#### **4.3.3 Ms Bezuidenhout**

Ms Bezuidenhout was well-liked by her learners even when this did not guarantee their cooperation in the classroom. This relationship made learners especially comfortable expressing their opinions in her presence, leading to several illuminating discussions during the observation period.

As mentioned, Ms Bezuidenhout was of the view that her teaching should not be pitched at a level that would be inaccessible to learners. The issue is the effect this may have had on their linguistic development. A simple comparison of the vocabularies of learners at Juniper, Lodge and Lillie (as seen in their focus group responses and class participation in this chapter) shows that learners at Juniper High were struggling with reading to a greater degree than their peers at the other two schools, and still expressed themselves in relatively limited language. It is unclear whether this was a result of Ms Bezuidenhout's decision not to raise the standard of complexity of her teaching, or whether this was indicative why she had not done so – although she expressed the latter view, arguing that learners were not yet at the standard of proficiency expected for Grade 11. The limitations to her teaching time and the lack of feedback given when learners spoke or offered answers may have contributed to the difficulties they encountered in articulating their thoughts and ideas

creatively. Despite this, learners had a high regard for learning to speak English well, something that was also encouraged by their families.

This led to assumptions about the ubiquity of English as a common language spoken by most people. On several occasions learners expressed the view that ‘everyone’ could or should speak the language because it was “universal”. It was evident that the frame of reference of learners at Juniper was particularly Westernised in that they located themselves in relation to, and valued their potential interactions with, people from other continents – particularly Europe or North America, from which they derived much of their cultural influences – and not with those from the African continent first (Yarwood, 2011). This was further clarified when learners began to express opinions regarding South African politics.

As discussed, learners entered a conversation around the claims of prejudice and racism in the institutional culture at Stellenbosch University. They held that it was silly to complain about an Afrikaans-medium university and that people who did not want to learn in Afrikaans should simply not enrol there. Tara argued that South Africans – but more specifically black people – were oversensitive when it came to issues of racism. Sumaya echoed her sentiments.

Sumaya: “I don’t understand. It’s *gou gou*<sup>6</sup> [people say] ‘you a coloured’, then you wanna laugh. [But when people say] ‘you a kaffir<sup>7</sup>’, everyone now wanna *moer*<sup>8</sup> you. Now I don’t understand that. It’s the same thing. Call you a Boer, call you a coloured, call you a kaffir, it’s the same thing.”

Ms Bezuidenhout did not correct her for using the derogatory term ‘kaffir’ and let the conversation continue unchecked.

Kyle: “Miss but Tara was right when she said there’s too much racism, like with what happened with the Rugby World Cup, this black guy went to Parliament, he said there’s not enough black people in the team.”

Tara: “But black people can’t play rugby.”

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Quickly’, ‘Immediately’

<sup>7</sup> A derogatory term for black people, derived from the Arabic for *infidel*, *non-believer* (Stone, 2004)

<sup>8</sup> ‘Attack’, ‘fight’

The discussion continued until Ms Bezuidenhout interjected and asked learners what they would suggest if they could decide the course of action at Stellenbosch. When Sumaya proposed that it be left at English, Ms Bezuidenhout tried to reason that they would not appreciate that if they were first language Afrikaans speakers, which the class generally (but grudgingly) agreed was a fair consideration. Tara then interjected that she wished people would not associate everything with race, which several of her peers agreed with.

Tara: "It doesn't make a difference... it doesn't [affect the] quality... like what kind of person you are. Like with the rugby thing also, it's not about the colour, it's about how good they play."

Even in the above quote she contradicted her earlier statement that black people could not play rugby, by either dismissing it completely or expressing the assumption that white players were just naturally better at the game. It is not certain which of the two she meant. Sumaya also contradicted herself when Ms Bezuidenhout then reminded them that "If there was no coloureds anywhere in anything, then you guys are going to say 'ja the coloureds don't get a chance.'"

Sumaya: "Miss but then again everyone must bear in mind that South Africa only became a democracy in 1994. What is it now, 2015. It's not that far away guys. It's going to take a *moerse* lot of time to get over racism and its damages."

Despite this, she continued to describe experiences of interactions with black people where she was antagonistic and aggressive and construed possible rudeness for racism against her. Tara agreed with the sentiments expressed in Sumaya's anecdotes.

Tara: "When I go to camp, then I go to camp with a lot of dark people, and then me and this one boy had a argument, he told me 'Oh are you now going to pull a knife out on me-'"

Sumaya: "That is the Capetonian mentality!"

The class then discussed stereotypes about coloured people that they often encountered.

Nashreen: "It's the media that... portrays us like that and we're not like that."

Fabian: "They portray us as stupid and violent."

Learners were sensitive to what they saw as their marginality under both the ANC government and during apartheid. They felt undermined and distrustful of black people and demonstrated a form of anti-blackness that several scholars have highlighted in discussions of coloured identity formation (Adhikari, 2005; Bock & Hunt, 2015). Even when discussing the possibilities of learning a third language in the focus group, Tara's first conclusion was that this was important in order to know what black people in the workplace were saying about them behind their backs. This attitude was echoed by Byron, whose comment suggested that the country was being overrun by black people: "I think it's important to learn a third language, especially because we have a black government, and most of the people in the country is black. Even advertising is starting to be-" [cut off by peer].

Learners seemed more antagonistic towards black people than white people, a group they rarely referred to except when mimicking their accents (which was never laughed at but in fact taken as a sign of seriousness when used) or mentioning their encounters with white peers from former Model C schools. They also seemed to have an impression of university as an international space attracting peers from other continents, oblivious to the reality that the majority of foreign students at universities in South Africa came from other African countries. It was evident that they saw their immediate competition to be black people. However, they still expressed democratic ideals of equality, non-racism and unity, without acknowledging or grappling with the contradictions inherent in the contrasting beliefs they held concurrently.

A further issue that arose during the observation related to an incident that took place on the third day of observations. Grade 12 learners were writing exams at the time, and Ms Bezuidenhout had just addressed students about being participatory and engaged, and not solely focused on their academics. Shortly afterwards a Grade 12 learner came to the classroom door looking quite dishevelled and smelling of alcohol. Ms Bezuidenhout stopped the lesson as the learner said to the class, "I'm



not an example”, which made them laugh. She began to explain in vivid, comedic detail that while studying for her exam the previous evening she had been convinced by friends – some of them also Grade 12s at Juniper – to go out to celebrate a friend’s birthday, where she got quite drunk and got home too late to complete all her revision. She was woken by an irate grandmother who had had no idea that she had an exam that morning until the school called to ask where she was. She had overslept and so arrived forty minutes late to the examination venue, badly hungover and underprepared. Ms Bezuidenhout listened to the story more as a friend than as an authority figure, offering little if any reprimanding and engaging her in light conversation. She complained that learner reeked of alcohol and suggested that she eat something, and so the learner asked the class for food and was given a lunchbox by one of her friends in the class before leaving. This exchange took almost ten minutes.

Besides agreeing that the learner was not a good example, Ms Bezuidenhout did not discuss the incident any further with the class, and carried on with the lesson as though nothing had happened. It was a bizarre turn of events that called into question her professionalism and ethics as an educator responsible for her learners’ wellbeing. While she could not be held responsible for the learner’s actions in going out and almost missing her exam, it was dubious that she allowed her Grade 11 class to be exposed to this particular disruption to their lesson time without taking the opportunity to address them seriously about the implications of such behaviour. Considering her previous lecture to them about participation not being construed as ‘catching on nonsense’, it was ironic that an ideal example of this presented itself to the class and was not taken in hand by the teacher. However, to be fair it may have been that Ms Bezuidenhout was being pragmatic in her approach to dealing with the Grade 12 learner and was trying to be supportive considering that the learner had come to her after the worst was over. However misguided her approach may have been, it is indicative of the school context that Ms Bezuidenhout took this incident in her stride and tried to diffuse it by making sure the learner ate and sobered up for the rest of the day.

Disruptions such as these highlighted a cleavage in the social dynamics of the class itself. While Ms Bezuidenhout and a core group of learners including Tara and Sumaya would engage with visitors to the class or get side-tracked by more

interesting things when having a discussion, quieter learners displayed visible annoyance at the inconsistent structure of lessons and the easiness with which teaching was paused or stopped completely. They rarely expressed this irritation except as a unit when trying to get more disruptive learners to settle down so that lessons could continue. Tara and Sumaya also only intervened if they were the ones reading aloud, which was often the case. Aside from this they usually participated in the chatter that threatened the stability of the learning environment. The classroom dynamic seemed to be fractured along social lines – a stereotypical social hierarchy of popular learners and unpopular ones – with ‘unpopular’ learners often deferring to learners such as Tara, Sumaya and Kaylah lest they be attacked, as was the case with Craig when he tried to explain why he did not connect with Shakespeare and was shut down by Sumaya’s suggestion that this derived from his lack of confidence. It is unlikely that all of the learners in the class shared Sumaya and Tara’s opinions about things, but aside from Craig’s comment no one ever disagreed with the two learners during the observation period. Ms Bezuidenhout’s privileging of their voices and opinions in the class, while it gave her an interactive relationship which could be useful for her teaching and maintaining learner interest, had the effect of silencing other learners and making them afraid of contributing. This was further entrenched by her suggestions that learners be quiet when she was having a discussion with Tara and Sumaya, or allowing Tara to answer several questions at a time. There was little realisation that her reliance on the two learners for a show of participation was potentially discouraging actual participation, and likely contributing to the disruptive environment that threatened the smooth running of most lessons.

#### **4.4 Summary**

The chapter has thus far presented findings for the three research questions of the study, providing evidence for claims and hypotheses made about language values and aspiration, curriculum knowledge and performance, and attitudes to issues of social cohesion. The following discussion raises some of the key points found in the findings, relating these points to the two tables outlining teaching strategies for managing linguistic identities and social cohesion in 4.1. These will then form part of the thematic analysis in the next chapter.

The participant teachers had different practices that they used to facilitate language learning, but it was of note that school culture was an important influence on these practices. Further, the relationship of school culture to the material conditions of the school is inextricable, with the better-resourced schools of Lodge and Lillie High were more able to enforce discipline and demand high performance than the relatively deprived Juniper High. This relationship between school context and performance should not be considered deterministic, especially considering that many learners at Lodge High came from similar communities as their peers at Juniper. Rather, it was the investments that learners and teachers made in relationship with the school context that influenced the outcomes of learning exchanges.

How teachers managed linguistic diversity was also a direct result of their teaching contexts, with the result that they had different approaches to dealing with the linguistic needs of learners. For Ms Fisher, whose class was differentially proficient in English and contained speakers of various other languages, the desire to speak an indigenous language was context-driven and based on her awareness of how valuable it could be for her teaching practice. Despite her own linguistic limitations she encouraged learners to use their own languages as learning resources. Ms Bezuidenhout did not have to deal with this issue because the main languages learners spoke were English and Afrikaans, which she was proficient in. Like her, Mr Haxton also operated within a largely monolingual environment, although it may be that this was largely imposed by the school's expectation that prospective learners be fluent in English as part of the criteria for entry. The historically English character of Lillie, as a former whites-only school, meant that English was accepted as the standard medium of communication. While other languages were offered and afforded official value, for Mr Haxton this was more of a question of social rather than structural necessity.

The participant teachers all recognised the symbolic value of English, but only Ms Fisher grappled with this value in her day to day practice. Ms Bezuidenhout felt that structural limitations prevented multilingualism from effectively taking root, and further that English was vital to success in a globalising world. While Mr Haxton recognised the value of multilingualism, he felt that it was not a pressing concern in his teaching context. This in turn impacted on how English was normalised as a

standard of aspiration. Learners in Ms Fisher's class were arguably more critical about the singular importance of English, particularly because of how she incorporated their own languages into the learning process. Learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class both resisted and aspired to the 'proper' form of the language, while struggling to develop a sophisticated proficiency in it. In rarely engaging with the symbolic value of English in his practices, Mr Haxton normalised the assimilationist practices of the Lillie High school culture, where fluency in English was a standard of entry and excellence.

Further, the expression of these language dynamics was couched within participant teachers' approaches to teaching and assessment. The culture of excellence that was central to Lillie High's identity permeated Mr Haxton's expectations of what constituted 'Lillie High kids'. He thus assumed that learners he encountered would be fluent in English and performing at an above average standard, regardless of their own personal linguistic identities. This was oppositional to Ms Fisher's approach. She was especially encouraging with learners, praising them for participating in discussions and doing particular things well in assessments. Learners felt confident as a result of this and were eager to develop their proficiency further, similar to their peers in Ms Bezuidenhout's class, who associated the language with being educated and worldly. Despite them being the top class, Ms Bezuidenhout felt that they were not yet at a high standard of proficiency and worked towards assessments as a way of encouraging learners to take an interest in their work.

Managing issues of social cohesion worked at two levels in the participant classrooms: in relation to the internal cohesion of the classroom and its inhabitants, represented in positive relationships and critical dialogue, and in relation to how sensitive social issues – such as race, inequality, and violence – were handled in teachers' engagements with learners. It was evident that the three teachers in this study also encouraged similar values development. They all, in some way or another, wanted their learners to be mature and responsible, to engage critically with ideas and strive to do their best. They also wanted to encourage a sense of citizenship and participation that would enable learners to be sensitive, empathetic and reflexive when encountering people who were different to them. Each of these

teachers largely developed their approaches as a result of immersion within the school context – they had all been teaching at the participant schools for a number of years and had some sense of the general attitudes, experiences and values learners brought with them into the space and adapted from peers and other teachers. Being a positive influence, in this sense, also related specifically to what each teacher felt their learners were most in need of in terms of their personal and academic development.

Ms Fisher and Mr Haxton believed it was important to confront issues as they arose in the content, in the class, or in current affairs, giving learners opportunities to reflect on these in the interests of promoting and developing socially cohesive attitudes. Ms Bezuidenhout was confronted with opinions that often derailed her lessons, and which she struggled to manage and diffuse through dialogue. Disruptions to her lessons also impacted on the general functioning of the learning environment, and learner relationships were fragmented and sometimes antagonistic as particular learners monopolised the teacher's attention. Ms Bezuidenhout recognised that learners needed to be better equipped to follow rules of engagement when engaging in conversations and discussions.

While Ms Fisher's class was almost as lively as Ms Bezuidenhout's, learners followed stricter principles of mutual respect and support. They usually quietened down quickly when the teacher or an individual learner was speaking, and offered support to peers doing orals by helping them with difficult words and applauding warmly at the end of each speech. Ms Fisher felt that in modelling this behaviour in her practices learners would be more likely to adopt these organically. Mr Haxton was similar in this respect, although the behaviour he modelled was quite strongly associated with achievement and serious enquiry. Learners thus responded similarly, although on rare occasions they made jokes or tried to lift the mood with humorous comments.

The curriculum presented a challenge to issues of recognition and representation in all three settings. In Mr Haxton's case, he was aware that the prescribed literature was not reflective of either learners' experiences or the world in which they found themselves, but put this down to the untransformed nature of the school English department and existing attitudes towards what constituted 'proper' literature. The

balance between aesthetic interest and identification with the text was also apparent in Ms Bezuidenhout and Ms Fisher's classrooms. Ms Bezuidenhout's learners disagreed on the usefulness of classics such as the works of Shakespeare, and some did feel they identified with the South African literature they had encountered, though they argued that they could not relate to narratives set in apartheid. Some of the literature choices at Lodge High allowed learners to transpose their own identities onto conversations and activities. Ms Fisher did feel that learner performance was being hindered by the literature not being representative enough of their circumstances, but learners were able to insert themselves into the value positions of the texts they read and make sense of these using their existing knowledge and experience, through skills they had developed with the teacher.

It was evident that the three teachers in this study also encouraged similar values development. They all, in some way or another, wanted their learners to be mature and responsible, to engage critically with ideas and strive to do their best. They also wanted to encourage a sense of citizenship and participation that would enable learners to be sensitive, empathetic and reflexive when encountering people who were different to them. Each of these teachers largely developed their approaches as a result of immersion within the school context – they had all been teaching at the participant schools for a number of years and had some sense of the general attitudes, experiences and values learners brought with them into the space and adapted from peers and other teachers. Being a positive influence, in this sense, also related specifically to what each teacher felt their learners were most in need of in terms of their personal and academic development.

This contextual experience certainly influenced learners' expressions towards issues of identity and nationhood. Some of Ms Fisher's and Ms Bezuidenhout's learners expressed similar attitudes relating to language acquisition and cultural alignment. Arguably, because many coloured learners derive cultural influences from Europe and North America (particularly black American culture), their immediate frames of references are shaped by exposure to Western values, social mores and cultural products (Yarwood, 2011; Soudien, 2012). It follows that they would identify themselves with 'the world' and not with an African identity because of their expressed feelings of alienation and distance from black South Africans (Yarwood,

2011). This was also evidenced in their desires to learn European ('international') languages and be associated with a wider global context.

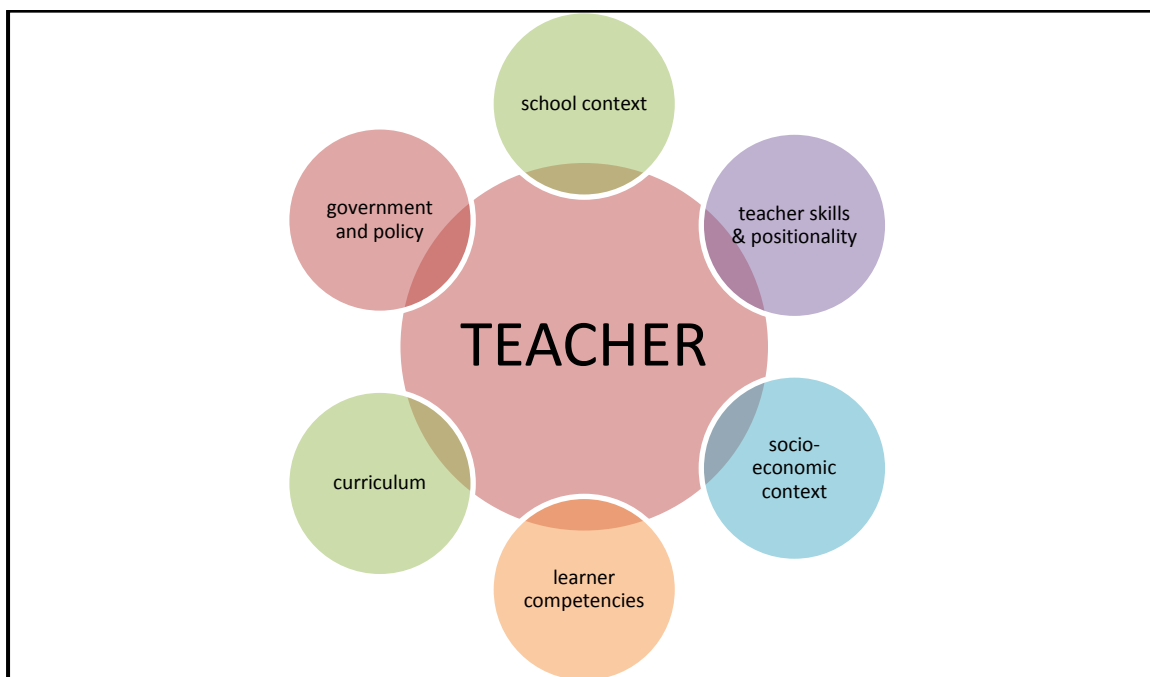
It is evident that the relationship between linguistic identity and the development of values of social cohesion is fundamentally linked to the curriculum and course content. The discussion in Chapter Five considers curriculum knowledge to be a transversal issue that cuts across the two primary themes of the study and significantly influences learners' experiences of what constitutes good literature, what their teachers consider to be appropriate language use, and how the transmission of these attitudes and values represents particular approaches to managing difference. It will discuss issues of content alongside teacher practices in pedagogy, professional conduct and managing relations in the classroom, as well as how issues of social cohesion in the participant classroom reflect wider patterns of social divisions, stereotypes and inequalities.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion & Analysis of Findings

The preceding chapter presented the findings for the study according to the research questions that formed the foundation of its enquiry. Gathered using the qualitative methods of observation, interviews and focus groups, these findings were intended to respond to the research questions and contribute to a body of knowledge on issues of language, identity, belonging and social cohesion by showing how these intersect within the process of English language education. The central focus of this study has been the teacher and the particular contextual factors influencing teacher practice.

**Figure 7**



Framed within policy and learning materials, teachers' conduct and approach to language teaching crucially orients the other factors influencing how learners learn and engage with the content and the issues surrounding it. From this point, teachers' and learners' views and experiences of the content were critical, including how content was taught and examined and how this reflected what they hoped to gain from their language education. This in turn was influenced by the classroom context and its ability to enable or constrain meaningful and collaborative learning. This



context also influenced, and was likely influenced by, the attitudes of the teacher and learners to broader issues of social cohesion and social justice, which often came up in the process of their work. In this sense the chapter is intended to move outwards from the classroom to society, interrogating linguistic identity within the learning context and how, and the extent to which, it impacts and reflects attitudes to social cohesion.

While the findings were presented in response to individual research questions, in this chapter they will be streamlined into two broad themes relating to the key issues of inquiry for the study. Within each theme are elements or sub-themes that relate to particular analyses of the findings.

- Teaching and managing linguistic identity: This theme arose from findings relating to how the participant teachers conducted themselves and engaged in the process of language teaching.
- Social cohesion: The first theme feeds directly into this broader thematic area which engages with the schooling and classroom context, including issues of respect and classroom dynamics, as well as the views learners expressed in relation to issues of social cohesion.

The chapter follows a particular logic in organising themes in this manner. Arguably while particular themes emerged in the findings, they broadly related to, or challenged, issues of linguistic identity or social cohesion, and in this chapter the relationship of these themes to the key issues is further explored.

The diagram presented on the previous page illustrated the contingent factors in the scheme of teacher practice. Important to Theme 1 are the factors (sub-themes) of

- Teacher skills and positionality
- Curriculum and learner competencies (also touching on education policy)

Important to Theme 2 are the factors of

- School context
- Curriculum
- Socio-economic context

The diagram has particular salience for the themes of linguistic identity and social cohesion and how these intersect in varying ways based on the relationships between the contingent factors. Particular transversal issues exist that resist being relevant to only one area of inquiry. For example, the negotiation of linguistic identities between policy, teacher practices and learner competencies arguably takes place against the backdrop of the curriculum, which is discussed alongside these elements in the following section. Curriculum is also an important mediator of socially cohesive attitudes, and it is in relation to this that it is picked up in the section on social cohesion.

## **5.1 Teaching and Managing Linguistic Identities**

### **5.1.1 Teacher skills and positionality**

The participant teachers generally took most elements of their profession quite seriously. Learner relationships were a crucial component of their practice, as this facilitated the effective negotiation of the teaching process and enabled teachers to respond to the particular needs, experiences and competencies of those they taught. Ms Fisher's classroom environment was intended to be a nurturing, supportive space where learner and teacher met on the basis of mutual respect for each other and a shared goal of personal and academic development. While she was friendly and accommodating, learners were aware that their behaviour had consequences and that she would be consistent in what she did not tolerate in her class. The incident with the learner who did not want to speak unprepared was a telling example of how this approach worked in practice. Without humiliating the learner who approached her, she made sure the class was aware of the repercussions of not preparing for their orals, while also acknowledging his cooperativeness in accepting his punishment. Arguably, at least in terms of her professional conduct, Ms Fisher was a model teacher exemplifying the key principles outlined in the SACE document: general respect and respect for difference alongside strong professional conduct and building positive relationships with learners and other members of the school (SACE, 2000).

The other participant teachers did present some interesting and alternative approaches to their conduct. For the most part Mr Haxton followed a similar approach to Ms Fisher in that he treated learners with respect and as partners in the learning process, even where they generally deferred to him in the day-to-day activities of the class. However, he did hit a learner over the head with a book on one occasion, and on another ordered a learner to “shut up” for being disruptive. Learners did not seem to be particularly distressed by this, possibly indicating that these random outbursts had taken place before. Aside from this Mr Haxton maintained a professional distance between himself and the learners, showing interest and care in their development but rarely overstepping the boundary that existed between teacher and learner. It is likely due to this that the traditional teacher-learner roles seemed more pronounced in the Lillie High class. Ms Bezuidenhout’s conduct was perhaps the most alternative. As shown in the findings, she regularly used profanity when addressing learners – often while shouting – and did not correct learners when they resorted to swearing while addressing her or their peers. She also overstepped boundaries when it came to other inappropriate statements, such as commenting on a learner’s body. While it was certain that she cared about her learners, she may have benefitted from a similar form of professional distance as deployed by Mr Haxton, particularly as she struggled to go back on her friendly relationship with learners in order to enforce discipline.

Effective classroom management is not only about managing relationships, but also about managing time (Gamble, 2008; Sayed et al, 2015:145). There was an evident link between the participant teachers’ management and treatment of learners, and the amount of class time that could be maximised, although this was also contingent on the broader school culture of teaching and learning. Teachers with positive, but firm relationships with learners were able to establish their authority and work through their planned lessons in good time, but when the relationship with learners became too familiar and relaxed this negatively affected the teacher’s ability to create a productive learning environment.

The theme of professional conduct arose as a secondary theme to the issue of pedagogy, as the general conduct of teachers cannot be separated from their

teaching practice: how teachers behave in their everyday interactions with learners is a crucial determinant of the frames in which their teaching methods are understood and taken up. Further, in the South African context, teacher practices remain an important site of transformation and redress. Teachers find themselves in the position of having to accommodate different learner competencies while also sensitively managing the diversity that exists within and outside the classroom (Msila, 2007). Part of managing diversity includes grappling with the multiple, complex and fragmented identities learners enter the classroom with, and dealing with these in a way that promotes inclusion, mutual respect and critical engagement (Msila, 2007:152). Crucially, this means being mindful of structural, historical and symbolic inequalities and how these affect learner experiences, and approaching teaching in a way that mediates these issues and creates an environment where learners are encouraged to engage with them sensitively and creatively.

Hyun (2006), following Giroux (1989), argues that learners are meant to engage with curricula in a dynamic, dialectical manner – not simply receiving information, but using it to make sense of their own realities and building on their own knowledge and experience in a process of ongoing learning. She argues that a critical approach to pedagogy manages the boundary between making content relatable and making it an uncritical representation of learners' lives, while also including marginalised learners and not undermining learner experience in the process of teaching them to be reflexive agents (Hyun, 2006:22). For English language education, this also means dealing with both linguistic identities within the classroom and the linguistic and cultural valuations embedded within content knowledge. The following section refers.

### ***Managing linguistic identity and devaluation***

Ms Fisher expressed the view that multilingualism was not handled effectively, and that this would have the effect of negating diversity. This drove her to be inclusive and flexible in her management of the languages learners used, though with an established awareness that it was first and foremost an English class. There are differing perspectives on the value of code-switching and similar practices in language education contexts; Setati et al (2002) argue that these are inevitable

results of teachers and/or learners not being fluent in the language of learning, which is predominantly English. They suggest that alternative language practices need to be appropriately scaffolded in order for learners to make the transition from the codes they are comfortable in to the formal language of learning; further, they argue that this does not always take place in practice, with code-switching sometimes replacing the development of adequate proficiency when used without sufficient support (Setati et al, 2002). Others argue that code-switching limits linguistic development for this specific reason, in that learners rely on their own codes to supplement weak proficiency and in so doing fail to acquire the necessary level of proficiency that is the target of the language class (Murray, 2004; McCormick, 2004).

From observation, Ms Fisher seemed to do a reasonable job of balancing learners' own languages with teaching and speaking in English, and learners themselves, though at differing levels of fluency, seemed confident in being able to converse in the language. Her use of this difference as a tool was also intended to mitigate the disvaluing of their own languages and codes, alongside showing them empirically that their languages were resources that could serve their learning and social lives.

This contrasted with Mr Haxton's attitudes towards multilingualism, where he held the view that it needed to be valued and upheld, but in practice felt that because black learners at Lillie could speak English there was not a pressing need to deal with multilingualism in the classroom. His impression was that it would be useful at a social level in everyday interactions with learners. If one accepts that black learners at Lillie were fluent enough in English to not struggle in their learning, the other issue arising from this is the assimilationist mechanisms that entrench this fluency as a part of the school and its culture of excellence. Taken concurrently, Mr Haxton's statements that "kids that are getting 35% for English are just not going to end up here" and "The rules that we teach you... is the standard British English" indicate that learners' performance in English was a crucial determinant of their acceptance to the school, which inextricably tied the school's association with excellence to fluency in a particular form of the language that was both legitimised in the official curriculum and formed part of the school's own identity. Fataar, in reflecting on the phenomenon of black South African learners moving into schools outside their immediate surrounds to access better opportunities, argues that these 'schools have assimilated the incoming students into their dominant pre-existing cultural registers'

(Fataar, 2015:77). This has salience for the issue of language at Lillie High; as Makoe and McKinney contend, it is not only the linguistic needs of learners that are affected by language choice – the valuations attached to particular languages, their usefulness and belonging in particular social spaces become apparent if and when they are legitimised in the school context (Makoe & McKinney, 2014).

The Western orientation of Lillie High was further indicated by the school's offering of European languages – such as French, which has salience for African relations, and Italian, a more obscure choice considering local and continental linguistic patterns. It is thus questionable whether the school did, in fact, value all languages and codes besides English equally. Historically white schools have been shown to associate prestige, excellence and access (Makoe & McKinney, 2014; Fataar, 2015) with proximity to English; in a post-1994 context, this is now cast within the narrative of providing 'world-class' education that enables learners to be global citizens particularly capable of moving successfully within the spaces of the global North (Soudien, 2012:172).

Learner linguistic identities were necessarily the primary influence on the strategies the participant teachers used to facilitate learning, particularly as these were context-specific and required targeted approaches by each teacher. Teachers recognised that it was crucial to manage these linguistic identities in order for learning to take place, while still being mindful of the fact that it was a language class. Mr Haxton needed to address the historic symbolic power of English in a schooling context in which it was being reinforced and connected to high achievement and status (Makoe, 2014). Findings showed that while he recognised this in theory, he struggled to escape his white and English normativity in his classroom practices. Conversely, the reality that learners were going to study and work in a social context in which their local linguistic forms were devalued (Bourdieu, 1991; Stone, 2004) made Ms Bezuidenhout and Ms Fisher aware of the need to critically interrogate this symbolic inequality while also equipping learners with the tools to function successfully in it.

It was thus interesting to note the ways in which particular learners expressed their relationships to English. It was evident in Ms Bezuidenhout's class that where learners referred to a 'high' form of English they were comparing this to what they

saw as their less sophisticated form of the language. Tara also located their command of English in comparison to peers from historically white schools, suggesting that this was the standard against which their communicative competence was intrinsically measured, but more importantly that ownership and authority over the language was associated with whiteness (Alexander, 1989; Miller, 2000). Learners in Ms Fisher's class were all interested in expanding their linguistic repertoires, although there was a distinct racial division in which languages were important to learn. However, it was evident that learners felt that English was a useful and strategic resource invested with opportunity. Similar to their peers, while Ms Bezuidenhout's learners asserted their own linguistic identities and were comfortable speaking to each other and the teacher in a mixture of English, slang and some Afrikaans, their behaviour and focus group responses suggested that being educated and seen as respectable and professional was associated with a good command of standard English.

Ms Bezuidenhout's learners were also engaging in strategies of resistance to the imposition of this standard form in the classroom, most significantly identifiable by their persistent usage of slang and colloquial profanity. Bourdieu suggests that to be considered to be adopting the dominant linguistic style is seen as a negation of one's personal, cultural and social virility, implying docility with domination and a denial of one's social, class and group belonging (1991:94). This is echoed in Stone (2004), who argues that working-class coloured communities are in some instances resistant to the resort to a more formal English by middle-class coloured people who they accuse of aspiring to or 'acting white'. While Lodge High was no longer a middle class school, its association with middle-class, English speaking coloured people made it one of the schools that learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class considered to be stuck-up and "acting white".

Bourdieu thus finds that '[T]he code... that governs written language, which is identified with correct language, as opposed to the implicitly inferior conversational languages, acquires the force of law in and through the educational system' (1991:49). This is evident in the case of Ms Bezuidenhout's class above, who equated their ability to speak English well with a high status and being better perceived even where they largely operated within the version of English they felt would not afford them the same perception. It was also observable in Mr Haxton's

class. The test question about the slang word *wys* represents an official disvaluing of particular colloquial language that also invokes a racial identification: Salieri's aggressive rage against God is captured in a vernacular form associated with a working-class, vulgar, and possibly violent coloured identity (Stone, 2004:384). Stone argues that this informal register is devalued because of its relationship to racial and linguistic hybridity, and working-class culture in communities particularly affected by organised criminality (2004:384-386). The learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class, when complaining about coloured people being publically perceived as violent and boorish, were vocalising these associations and their resulting sense of marginality and negative public image.

### ***Managing positionalities in curriculum and school context***

Of further consideration to issues of positionality was how teacher skills affected the success of their chosen strategies, and their implementation of the curriculum in particular contexts. Mr Haxton was dismissive of CAPS as "wishy-washy", while Ms Fisher felt that it was a supportive and structured program that still allowed her to exercise creativity. Ms Bezuidenhout felt similarly to Ms Fisher. She found the structure helpful and tried to choose activities that would be interesting for learners. A significant challenge that she faced is of particular salience to the issue of this discussion. Because Ms Bezuidenhout was teaching Grade 11 English for the first time in the year of observation, and with minimal peer support, she struggled to balance the detail with which particular skills and content was taught (due in part to the level of disruption in class). Arguably a significant influence on teachers' abilities to both teach content and get to grips with the embedded meanings in the curriculum, is dependent on a) their level of familiarity with this content, b) their ability to be strategic in implementing this to learners' benefit and c) their awareness of the meanings embedded within the knowledge being co-created in class. This is massively bolstered by the teaching community in which they operate, and the level of support they can access from peers, suggesting that school context is also a significant element of teacher positionality.

Aspects of hidden curricula can thus be observed in the participant teachers' approaches to language and identity. Giroux finds that 'the heart of the school's



function is not to be found in the daily dispensing of information, but in the day-to-day social encounters shaped by the structural properties of the educational setting' (1978:148). The historically stratified nature of South African schooling, and persistent inequalities between schools with different race and class identities, means that teacher pedagogy and conduct is contextually located and should be locally relevant and sensitive not only to learners' identities – though primarily so – but also to how those identities relate to wider patterns of social, economic and/or political inequalities. This influence on teacher positionality could be found in the manner in which content was contextualised for learners' benefit. It often directly reflected elements of the school culture. Ms Fisher, for example, used an oral presentation to incorporate elements of the school's political history into a speech using rhetorical devices that learners had encountered in the novel *Animal Farm*. Mr Haxton, in giving learners an example of what 'tenements' were, drew their attention to the blocks of flats that constituted apartheid-era state housing for many working-class coloured people. He referred to this as "where the common people live".

How school culture affected teacher classroom management was also evident in the findings. Ms Bezuidenhout used an article by Jonathan Jansen about his school years to draw learners into a conversation about their attitudes to Juniper High. Learners largely expressed disappointment with their schooling context, suggesting a possible reason for their disruptiveness. It was certainly evident that the discipline enforced at the school level had a direct influence on conduct in all three classrooms. Where the school expressed and enforced high standards for discipline, teachers felt sufficiently supported to place expectations on learners to be prepared, well behaved and respectful, and were thus able to achieve more in their teaching time. Conversely, where the culture of discipline at the school was eroding or being impeded in its implementation, the teacher struggled to impose expectations on learners because they were aware there were no repercussions for misconduct. This impacted on both her teaching time and her confidence in her existing skill-set, which she was unable to implement when pressed for time.

### **5.1.2 Curriculum & Performance**

Issues of curriculum and performance are important to this study for several reasons, not least of which is the relationship of the formal curriculum to the discourses and values of the incumbent political authority. Further, whether the content of the

prescribed syllabus reflects values of social cohesion – both in form and substance – is integral to understanding what learners take away from their exposure to language and literature education and how their views and attitudes are influenced by the representations of life that they encounter in this process. The curriculum enters the school and classroom context at the interface of teacher and learner, and as such establishes a matrix of meaning that is transmitted, taken up, and engaged by learners. This section will discuss how the curriculum was implemented and experienced in the participant classrooms before reflecting on the discourses underlying curriculum knowledge and its transmission.

Beyond its symbolic and cultural value, the curriculum is also intended to develop particular skills in learners, which are subject to assessment and evaluation. The CAPS curriculum provides for continuous and structured assessment, meaning that learners have several, though differently weighted avenues with which to build strong year marks. It also briefly identifies what is to be assessed in particular exercises, such as writing, and emphasises that learners should receive feedback for both formal and everyday assessments (DBE, 2011). This could take the form of walking through the class while learners are working, or engaging in reflections with them about their performance in particular tasks. Arguably, evaluating learner performance is also a critical element of teacher practice.

Bray et al (2010) argue that the way teachers teach affects the level of independence and investment learners bring to their work. For example, when working through comprehension activities in class, teachers should focus on showing learners how to reach correct answers rather than simply providing answers with insufficient scaffolding to enable learners to pick up how to do it themselves. Despite the participant teachers having classes of similar size, the level of individual attention learners received varied, with Ms Fisher being the most hands-on and Mr Haxton and Ms Bezuidenhout largely addressing the whole class from the front. Alongside this, learners also played a role in negotiating the way in which the curriculum was implemented in their classrooms, through their relationships with teachers and their interest in the content.

The ability of teachers to manage the curriculum within available teaching time is critical. The pressure to catch up on the syllabus due to lost learning time can

contribute to attitudes of apathy among learners, creating a circular relationship between disruptive behaviour and increased pressure to take on new knowledge quickly (Bray, 2010). Bray further argues that weaker learners tend to fall behind classroom settings where teachers are unable to offer sufficient individual attention, with the result that they experience a loss of confidence that affects their willingness to ask for help (Bray, 2010). The participant teachers flagged the importance of interesting content as a key driver of learner interest in the classroom. This is discussed further in the next section.

### ***Literature and recognition***

The participant teachers expressed that a critical element influencing how learners responded to the curriculum was its relatability, whether to their own lives or within a broader social context. Issues of representation were flagged throughout observations, suggesting that this was a significant challenge arising from the content. While Sayed et al (2015) refer to issues of symbolic representation as *recognition* in their study on teachers as agents of social cohesion in South Africa, their definition is useful in this discussion. They argue that it constitutes 'respect for and affirmation of diversity and identities in education structures, processes, and content in terms of gender, language, politics, religion, ethnicity, culture, and ability' (Sayed et al, 2015:4). This is especially important with respect to South Africa's historically bifurcated education system and how this reflected the relationship between structural and symbolic value afforded on the basis of race. In the contemporary South African context this relationship is rendered more complex because of the democratic ideals that overlay a curriculum considered, by participant teachers, to have retained its white, Western character in orientation and content. Further, the schooling contexts in which it is implemented have a profound impact on how this complexity is resolved at the interface between teacher and learner.

Because of its historic association with British colonial rule and a portion of the white South African population, the nature of English language education has been reflective of what Miller refers to more generally as 'literary whiteness' (2000:35). This means that the privileging of the Western, particularly British and North American, literary canon in the syllabus has served the function of endorsing its

cultural mores and values at the expense of other groups in society that also use the language. The post-1994 curriculum intended to resolve these issues of representation, and whether and how it has done so is an important point of departure in analysing how the continued use of Western literature in the English curriculum has been integrated with the embedded values of non-racism, equity and democracy.

Ms Fisher acknowledged that while she tried to make the content relatable to learners, she did not always succeed in this. She worried that learners were demotivated by the emphasis on classics such as Shakespeare, which they could relate to in terms of its themes (such as race, class and sexuality) but which did not speak to their own experiences and contexts – a view also expressed by learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class. Learners struggled with the antiquated language, with differing opinions on whether it was furnishing them with any new skills and yet, in Ms Bezuidenhout's class, seeming more supportive of learning Shakespeare than their prescribed South African novel, which they felt was not relatable because it was set in apartheid.

It would be erroneous to dismiss Ms Fisher's argument that black learners would be better served by more representative literature, but her use of the *Animal Farm* orals to get learners to reflect on their schooling and social lives shows how Western literature can be implemented in such a way as to apply its broader social, political or cultural themes to specific contexts in a way that stimulates critical and relevant thought. A pragmatic argument for a Westernised English curriculum would suggest that it is a common-sense move on the part of government to introduce learners to the globalised context in which they will operate as full future citizens. The complexity missing from this is the fact that both the literature and grammar textbooks of the prescribed English curriculum (or any language curriculum for that matter) offer particular representations of life, morality, political or religious belief, sexuality, and other identity conflicts or narratives that become normalised in both their representations and their silences. Crucially, it is not only the content itself which dictates a normative relationship to a particular set of cultures, but the manner in which this content is transmitted that facilitates its relationship to structures of power. An analysis of the prescribed English literature syllabus showed that it had a limited offering of both local and continental literary products, with only a third of

prescribed poetry being by African authors (CITE, 2015). While South African texts were included in the selections for drama and novel, at two of the three participant schools only one South African text was included in the Grade 11 English syllabus, with Lodge High choosing the alternative for both novel and drama (i.e. *Animal Farm* and Shakespeare).

The near-lack of representative content in the Lillie High syllabus saw learners immersed in the texts prescribed to them but not able to draw tangible links from those texts to their own realities and the things they witnessed in their daily lives. Learners and Mr Haxton agreed that the syllabus was not representative enough, but Mr Haxton did not seem aware of the extent to which issues of recognition in the literature affected learners' engagement with and absorption of prescribed texts. Learners agreed that the Western orientation of the literature was not relatable, and that it did not enable them to engage with their own identities as South Africans. Moreover, they challenged the choices of South African literature available to them, finding that it remained trapped within the narrative of apartheid and the struggle; Emma suggested that there were multiple stories to be told and valued in South Africa, while Michael argued that the South African narrative seemed to end in 1994, with little literature being offered to learners that reflected the complexity of contemporary circumstances. It was evident that learners wanted literature that spoke dynamically to the socio-economic, spatial and symbolic inequalities persisting in contemporary South Africa, without resorting to the apartheid narrative as a simplistic explanation for these. In one sense they agreed with their peers at Juniper High that the apartheid narrative was a stale lens through which to view their own experiences, with the difference being that while learners at Lillie wished to learn about difference and inequality as it persisted in the present day, learners at Juniper seemed to want to distance themselves from a troubled history by diminishing the relevance of apartheid in their everyday experiences (Bock & Hunt, 2015). The implications of the discourses and narratives embedded in content knowledge are addressed in the section to follow.

### ***Discourses and values in curriculum representation***

As noted in the introduction to this section, the curriculum's impact in the classroom derives from, and is influenced by, a range of contingent factors that produce the learning environment. This learning environment is further transformed by the application of curriculum knowledge within a particular social, spatial and economic context. Bourdieu and Passeron assert that:

‘One of the least noticed effects of compulsory schooling is that it succeeds in obtaining from the dominated classes a recognition of legitimate knowledge and know-how... entailing the devaluation of the knowledge and know-how they effectively command (e.g. customary law, home medicine, craft techniques, folk art and language...) and so providing a market for material and especially symbolic products of which the means of production (not least, higher education) are virtually monopolized by the dominant classes’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990:42).

While this perspective is limiting in that it does not account for the individual agency of learners, teachers and parents (however this may be constrained by structural and symbolic inequalities), it distils the relationship between education and the economic market, which Bourdieu (1991) reminds us is mediated and negotiated through linguistic codes and the differing levels of access they provide into the market. The language education learners receive is framed within a curriculum that seeks to produce and reproduce particular values, behaviours and attitudes, meaning that linguistic acquisition is accompanied by a measure of cultural education as well. This cultural education is not unidirectional and derives from several sources that interact in multiple and contradicting ways with the authorised knowledge and culture embedded within the formal curriculum. This is echoed by Soudien when he explains an inherited characteristic of the colonial and imperial mass education system: ‘Using the same curriculum, the children of the privileged, invariably ‘white’, and the children of the subordinate, invariably those of colour, learn the politics of position’ (Soudien, 2012:85). Transposed onto democratic South Africa this curriculum, though with the new intention of resolving the legacy of prejudice and structural inequality, is implemented in unequal settings which reflect this legacy and visibly problematize its lofty ideals (Soudien, 2012; Bray, 2010).

It is in this sense that the link between the relevance and uptake of the curriculum, and its relationship to social cohesion, becomes apparent. Because the understanding of social cohesion in this study emphasises social justice and equity as foundational to the question of a substantive social compact (Barolsky, 2013; Sayed et al, 2015), how recognition and representation function within the curriculum can aid in understanding how a lack of equity and just representation of different groups can influence learner values, beliefs and performance. As has been highlighted in the study, English holds a contested position within South African education and society. Several authors reference the fact that English education is valued specifically for its historic and ongoing relationship to social mobility, particularly local and global economic and knowledge markets (Alexander, 2012; Soudien, 2012; Brock-Utne, 2003; Banda, 2000). This resonates with Bourdieu's argument that the enshrining of a dominant language as a medium of instruction creates a market of symbolic products and competencies that subordinate groups aspire to and that dominant groups have privileged access to (Bourdieu, 1991; Bray et al, 2010). Thus, through their English education learners are introduced to the linguistic and often cultural normativity that best predisposes them towards greater social mobility. This is why Granville et al (1997) suggest that the choices parents and learners make when deciding on English-medium instruction are pragmatically-motivated, because they recognise that, despite an official climate of multilingualism, fluency in English is a key driver of access to their aspirations.

This does not exclusively, as Bourdieu claims, result in devaluation, but it is critical to recognise that devaluation may form part of the process of linguistic acquisition when learners' own languages or linguistic forms are not granted sufficient esteem to mitigate the emphasis placed on their performance in English. As Ms Fisher argued, black learners are expected to speak English in order to prove their intelligence, which undermines their own cultural and linguistic knowledge. Taken alongside a curriculum that was consistently agreed to not be representative, this undermining is concretised by literary representations that do not align with learners' own lived experiences or expose them to content that allows them to grapple with their broader social identities.

Operating within the confines of this curriculum, teachers attempting to deal with issues of social cohesion in the classroom have the responsibility of managing

diversity and inequality both internal and external to the learning environment. Kincheloe, et al (2011) argue that critical teachers must be able to facilitate reading not only the words in texts but the 'the unstated dominant ideologies hidden between the sentences as well' (Kincheloe et al, 2011). In Ms Bezuidenhout's case, a reading of a speech by Nelson Mandela might necessitate a discussion of the political and economic context at the time of his release, the factors influencing shifts in the ANC's ideological position, and what that particular speech represents within the broader narrative of the textbook and the curriculum itself, as an affirmation of later Constitutional values and a plea for racial harmony. Ms Fisher's reading of Mandela's favourite poem *Invictus* also required more context than she provided. The poem's emphasis on personal conviction and strength in the face of adversity is admirable but for its acontextual application in a learning environment where many learners and their families experienced the remnants of their historic underdevelopment on a daily basis. It is crucial to recognise that by constantly enforcing the idea that learners could be whatever they wanted in spite of the significant social and economic challenges they faced, Ms Fisher was creating an unhealthy perception that learners' successes and failures were solely a result of their own behaviour, which could negatively impact their ability to critique the constraints placed on their agency (Bray et al, 2010:305). For Mr Haxton and the drama *Amadeus*, reading a text based on the life of an iconic 'classical' composer throws up multiple questions about the value-judgments and historical factors underpinning the definition of what constitutes a particular cultural heritage, especially when that heritage is rendered normative by political, social and cultural relationships of power. It would have been useful for Mr Haxton to reflect on this in his teaching. Evident in these hypothetical approaches, and reflective of Kincheloe et al (2011) and Giroux's (1992) arguments, is an expectation of teachers to be well-trained and well-informed, committed to a critical, socially just pedagogy that enables learners to challenge their own values and ideas, those they are being taught, and those being enforced by the school itself.

The study thus far has presented a number of arguments that it would be useful to summarise here. Firstly, English language teaching has been shown to be contextually associated with its colonial history as a language of power and social mobility (Alexander, 1989). This continued and was bolstered under apartheid when



the state tried to impose Afrikaans on black learners as a medium of instruction; English was seen as the more feasible (because more widely understood) and less politically charged alternative, which set up its position in the linguistic landscape of South Africa for years to come (ref).

Government statistics show that despite less than 10% of all learners being English home language speakers in 2007, 65% were being taught in the language at the time (DBE, 2010). However, when that 65% is disaggregated, it shows a sharp increase in the percentage of learners being taught in the language post-Foundational Phase – averaging about 80% of all learners in each grade (DBE, 2010:16). English language classes are therefore a critical site for transmitting values and ideas about linguistic identities, the value of particular languages and, by extension, the value of the people who use them (Philips, 2004). Moreover, critical language pedagogy needs to make visible the power dynamics underlying the symbolic value of particular codes and the social, historical and economic factors underpinning their use, while also offering learners alternative ways of thinking and doing that disrupt the devaluation of particular knowledge and identities.

This is where the teacher is of vital importance. Teacher conduct and professionalism influences the success of the learning environment in a compact with learner behaviour. However, it was shown that positive relationships with learners were not a guarantor of meaningful investment in learning, in the same way that strong content knowledge or professional development on the part of the teacher did not necessarily translate into good or relatable teaching. This was further affected by the learning environment itself. Participant teachers – and quite likely many teachers in South Africa generally – had to manage differing combinations of linguistic and social identities in the course of their work. Schools such as Lillie and Lodge, which had historically excluded learners who were now attending the school, had to adjust to accommodate linguistic difference in different ways: for Lillie High, through assimilating learners into English as the *lingua franca* from the start, and for Lodge through learning to deal with linguistic difference more urgently due to the multiple and varying language proficiencies that learners had. Interestingly, Juniper High retained its mono-racial character but had to prepare learners to enter social and economic spaces where, they acknowledged, their hybridised use of English and Afrikaans was largely devalued. In this sense, the relations between school

context and culture could significantly affect the transmission of socially cohesive attitudes, leading to the discussion presented under the following theme.

## **5.2 Social Cohesion & Managing Diversity**

This theme deals with multiple issues relating to social dynamics, inequalities, shared culture and belonging. Of particular interest is the link between the primary research question and the second sub-question, linking teachers' approaches to teaching for social cohesion with learners' own attitudes, values and beliefs. It is useful to orient the discussion around social cohesion in the South African context by referring to Barolsky's contention that in order to reconcile multiple and conflicting identities, histories and cultures, discourses of social cohesion in South Africa have relied on consensus-building of a common national identity as a necessary driver of nation-building (2013:195). This identity is intended to be inclusive of difference under shared values of respect, human rights and dignity. Learners were well-versed in the discourse of nation-building and democracy and able to articulate these values readily in the classroom, but of interest here is whether, and how, they located themselves within these values and reconciled them to their own experiences. The framing of a modern, individualist conception of rights-bearing citizens invested in positive nationhood is at odds with the legacy of group identities in South Africa that represent historic patterns of segregation and inequality (Barolsky, 2013; Staeheli & Hammett, 2013), meaning that learners encountered these Constitutional values in tension with their own experiences of often still insular communities and schooling contexts. As Barolsky argues, South Africans retain loyalty to linguistic, racial and ethnic identities despite now couching these in relation to a broader South African identity (2013:192). In order to understand the issues confronting social cohesion in the country, and more specifically in the classroom, it is important to bear this context in mind when analysing how learners and teachers navigated their own identities in relation to the values embedded in the curriculum.

### **5.2.1 Schooling context, language and aspiration**

This section will reflect on the social and linguistic identities embedded within the school contexts of the participant teachers, before moving on to discuss how these factors influenced internal dynamics within the classroom. The expressions of learners and teachers in their classrooms reflected broader attitudes and narratives of difference, marginality, and the tensions resulting from the 'new' South Africa. What those attitudes revealed was an urgent need for education to disrupt and call into question assumptions about the bounded nature of identities and the discourses that hold them in place (Soudien, 2012:7). Language, as a conduit of culture, serves to establish the landscapes of meaning that characterise and crystallise difference, capturing it within the linguistic markets that negotiate belonging in the cultural field (Desai, 2001). As Bourdieu argues, people bring the life-worlds of their social and cultural groups to bear on their interactions with others; these interactions enact the relational status of the languages and codes people use into asymmetrical exchanges of power (Bourdieu, 1991).

It was useful to consider the difference between language as a standard form and distinct codes or dialects drawn from a single language because this was a recurrent issue flagged by learners and teachers in the different schools. Mr Haxton, while identifying the value of multilingualism more generally, also expressed the belief that there were different kinds of English that could be valued. However it was not certain what these 'Englishes' were and how they were valued; more to the point, it was unclear how learners across the participant schools encountered these forms of English when their syllabus for the most part reflected (and thus, explicitly afforded value to) the standardised version of the language.

This indicates how mechanisms of reproduction became evident across the participant schools that resonated with their historical positions. As historical bastions of white, English-speaking culture, schools such as Lillie High both reflected and established linguistic and cultural standards that white learners were socialised into before taking on positions of power and prestige in a political economy that explicitly favoured them. These schools provided the cultural capital that facilitated orientation to the labour market in ways that improved learners' chances of succeeding at tertiary study or other post-school training, and accessing better work opportunities (Soudien, 2012; Bray et al, 2010). Most learners at Lillie High came

from many of the historically white and affluent suburbs across the southern peninsula, as well as some learners from historically black and coloured areas. Its reputation for academic excellence – and thus a high degree of social mobility due to its connection, as a feeder school, to universities in the Cape Town area – made it sought after for parents looking to secure a good education for their children. Learners entering the school were thus oriented to the notion that the school only picked the best, and so were inducted into a set of expectations that emphasised proper conduct, high achievement and extracurricular participation as indicative of their calibre

The relationship between education and economic access, also flagged by Bourdieu (1991), was thus further organised along lines of language and race in South Africa (Sayed et al, 2013; Soudien, 2012), such that historically black schools often remain at a significant symbolic, economic and linguistic disadvantage to their white counterparts. As Philips argues, marginalised groups often speak marginalised codes, with the converse being that prestigious codes are often legitimised through education and given social, political and economic force (Philips, 2004:475). It is this relationship between class, race and language forms that has been of primary interest to this study; in the South African context, people fought for equal education not 'for the acknowledgement of their own histories but for their inclusion in the educational universe of the dominant classes' (Soudien, 2012:84), due to their role as vestibules for entry into higher social and economic fields.

Soudien (2012) and Fataar (2015) take this issue of class and education further in their discussions of how new patterns of inequality are formed within black South African communities as learners from poorer backgrounds are left in weaker local schools. Parents with greater financial resources (i.e. not necessarily middle-class, but able to work with available and potential resources) largely elect to send their children to schools outside the community, diverting these resources from local schools and exacerbating the problem of deprivation in these environments (Soudien, 2012:118; Fataar, 2015:33). In this way, internal class and social dynamics have been more forcefully reproduced and entrenched through the mechanism of school choice; learners at Lodge High acknowledged the great lengths they took to attend school each day with the implicit view that schools closer to them would not offer them the same education and 'opportunity' – specifically,

improved access to post-school education or work that was often mitigated by the reputation of the schools learners came from. Interestingly, Lodge High was also indicative of the middle-class coloured predisposition towards English instead of Afrikaans, due to both its political history (and the rejection of Afrikaans by political actors and organisations particularly after 1976) and its recognition of the language's strategic value (Stone, 2004:386; Bray et al 2010:130). While learners did code-switch and occasionally use slang, this was less common than at Juniper High, and the academic standards to which learners were held emphasised their performance in English as a driver of access to good tertiary education and work opportunities.

The disadvantage experienced by black schools is thus not completely monolithic, and manifested in complex arrangements based on racial classification, economic status, spatial location, community dynamics, and political organisation. Lodge and Juniper were both historically coloured schools, though with differing identities. As a school tied to a particular political and academic history, Lodge High was the more desirable of the two institutions, and an alternative to ex-Model C schools for black and coloured parents due to their expectation of a similar standard of academic excellence. Because of its location within a suburb that had been designated 'white' following forced removals, Lodge High's learners have historically come from diverse parts of the city to attend school there, and so have not all shared a common experience of a local neighbourhood and social culture. Their ties to each other were formed on the basis of their individual choices to attend the school. Fataar considers this 'translocalism' to be indicative of black learners actualising their aspirations through accessing schools considered better than those in their local environments, and in so doing developing a sense of spatial mobility that offers the possibility of transcending isolated home settings (Fataar, 2015:69). Learners described travelling up to two hours every morning just to get to school, which indicates in practical terms the level of investment they were willing to make to access what they considered to be a better education.

Even though Juniper was located in a mixed-income neighbourhood, the school had a working-class identity due to both its attendance by learners from less advantaged backgrounds, and its non-attendance by local learners who elected to go to schools

such as Lodge and Lillie. Many learners commuted from other areas, such as Mitchell's Plain and Hanover Park, likely also for some of the reasons described by Fataar (2015) above. These learners were moving across similar spaces to access their schooling, but in doing so were also moving out of the deep confines of neighbourhoods that were more removed from social and economic spaces in the city and its surrounds than those in which their schools were located (Fataar, 2015). This was often also related to issues of safety, flagged by learners at Lodge High during the orals. Crime, gangsterism and deprivation motivated parents to send their children to schools that were removed from local negative influences, even where they encountered others in the schooling context (Bray et al, 2010; Fataar, 2015). Many learners from local, working-class families also attended Juniper, solidifying the school's identity as a working-class school and alienating learners from peers in the neighbourhood who attended more expensive schools in wealthier suburbs. This alienation was coupled with a broader sense of social alienation that was evidenced in discussions around race and language.

It is also necessary to reiterate and expand on the fact of pragmatic choice for learners electing to be educated at English-medium schools. The discussion of Fanon (1952) and Adele Jinadu (1976) in the literature review provided an historical account of the dynamics underpinning the power of English in former colonies as a facilitator of social and economic access, with the assumption that black learners were devaluing their own languages in their pursuit of this form of social capital. However, echoing Adele Jinadu (1976), the findings showed that learner relationships to English and their own languages were more complex, and that even where they recognised the value of English for their aspirations, this was always not accompanied by a disvaluing of their own languages and codes, instead showing sensitive management of their multiple identities and contexts. English was often recognised by black learners for its instrumental value, or, as Mamadou explained, an addition to an already broad linguistic repertoire that enabled them to communicate comfortably in many spaces with different people. What needs to be problematized is their common-sense assumption that English was a neutral communication tool when their responses indicated that it was often the only means through which they could engage in school and socialise effectively. Sumaya's assertion that "English is a universal language" is indicative of how pervasively this

neutrality had taken root. In a context in which language and race have been historically linked, the assumption that all people can or should speak English – especially a particular form of the language – contributes to the marginalisation of black South Africans who are excluded from economic and social arrangements on the basis of limited proficiency and the effects of this on education (Desai, 2001; Setati et al, 2002).

This background is necessary to understanding the dynamic ways in which differing identities interact with both dominant and local linguistic codes. Arguably, the continued association of ‘good’ English with whiteness had the effect of devaluing black linguistic and cultural forms and promoting assimilation to the dominant form of the language in order to be successful (Murray, 2004). How the participant teachers managed this issue is critical to interrogating learners’ relationships to their own identities and how these interacted with their experiences of language education.

### **5.2.2 Respect and internal cohesion**

The environment fostered by teachers and maintained in compact with learners is a crucial determinant of the extent to which effective learning takes place, while also reflecting external social and economic dynamics that influence or threaten classroom stability and interpersonal relationships (Giroux, 1989, 1992; Soudien, 2012). Learners do respond to the values and behaviour emphasised and modelled by their teachers, while also introducing their own to the space.

#### ***Discipline and social relations***

Learners in Ms Fisher’s class acknowledged that they misbehaved at times (putting this down to occasional restlessness), but their observed behaviour indicated a high level of mutual respect and responsibility towards each other, and towards her. It is likely that this was due to her approach of treating learners as partners in their learning and giving them some degree of responsibility in their work (Bray et al, 2010:193). Learners appreciated that she treated them as mature individuals, with the result that this encouraged them to behave maturely in order to retain the atmosphere of the class.

Because learners were at a relatively senior level, teacher interactions with them were likely to be a bit more relaxed and convivial based on this assumption that they were maturing and capable of handling this shift in the relationship. Ms Bezuidenhout's approach is indicative of this; she emphasised her good relationship with them and seemed to treat them as mature individuals as well. This was affected by learners' impression of her approach as one that encouraged friendship with the teacher, which undermined her authority in facilitating actual learning. While it was evident that learners respected her, and that she respected them, this cannot be considered to be mutual respect because it was not established on a shared understanding of the nature of the relationship. Learners also failed to display respect for each other, by behaving disruptively when peers were trying to work and interrupting people who were speaking individually, often to contradict what they were saying. This existing internal fragility was further negated by instances in which Ms Bezuidenhout displayed distinctly disrespectful behaviour – such as swearing at learners out of frustration. Learners in turn swore when speaking in class and disrupted her planned lessons in order to avoid having to do actual work. This distinction between learners in Ms Fisher and Mr Haxton's classes, and learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class, is significant. Learners who were treated as mature partners in their learning were likely to behave maturely and engage seriously in class. Learners who felt that the teacher was like a friend to them responded to her as one, eroding the relationship of learning that was intended to be the focus of the class, and undermining their peers' efforts to learn in the process. It highlights a similar argument made in the previous theme – that more effective learning took place when teachers managed the boundaries between familiarity and authority. The discussion under Theme 1 further described how important teacher support was to instilling and effecting disciplinary mechanisms in the class and creating a sense of responsibility in learners towards themselves and maintaining a positive class environment. It thus is a reasonable conclusion that learners conducted themselves better in contexts in which there was an evident consolidation of the relationship between teachers, school management and school culture, and where they knew their teachers would be supported in pursuing disciplinary action for those who misbehaved. The internal cohesion of the school itself thus contributed to a culture of accountability that influenced learner behaviour.



### ***Language and negotiating stereotype***

Bucholtz and Hall argue that *adequation and distinction* enable the establishment of boundaries between and within groups based on the codes that they use (2004:383). Individuals negotiate relations of similarity (adequation) and difference (distinction) in their application of different linguistic codes in particular settings in ways reflective of their shifting identities. Learners at Juniper High also responded decisively to iterations of codes or accents that they recognised as different to their own, whether exhibiting deference to an authoritative white narrator or laughing uncontrollably at the accent of a black politician. They associated ‘high’ English with white people, and poor command of the language with black people, situating themselves as distinct from other black South Africans and aspiring to the linguistic proficiency of white English speakers. They affirmed this in their self-identification as coloured, particularly referenced by their disavowal of the negative stereotypes associated with coloured people as an attack on “us”.

In this way learners were consolidating a group identity based on normative attitudes and beliefs about the nature of social groups in South Africa, all the while appealing to values of non-racism and colour-blindness. This is a necessary point to make due to Bucholtz and Hall’s assertion that linguistic (and social) identities are authorised by powerful stakeholders – such as government – through official discourse, policy and practice, while others are delegitimised through deliberate intervention or non-action (2004:386). For learners in public schools, their interaction with the formal curriculum is intended to orient them to Constitutional values and produce citizens who are empathetic, non-discriminatory and committed to the pursuit of democracy. Learners in Ms Bezuidenhout’s class felt that their identities as coloured people were being socially delegitimised alongside their induction into the official values embedded in their schooling, creating dissonant attitudes of alienation, hope and insularity.

The above discussion shows the complex relationship between school and learner contexts, curriculum, language identity and social dynamics, and how these contribute to the formation of particular beliefs and behaviours in the classroom.

Teachers contributed greatly to this formation due to their central role in the transmission of knowledge, with the result that everyday classroom interactions were a complex navigation of multiple factors influencing relationships and behaviour. When Mr Haxton explained that the English department at Lillie High was completely comprised of white teachers, he was expressing that the normalised teacher identity at the school was white (there were a few black teachers at the school, but a significantly small number). This did influence the types of content learners were offered and possibly how it was taught; Mr Haxton flagged the issue of works such as Monty Python only relating to a small number of (white and male) learners while being something teachers were comfortable teaching because it functioned within their own cultural frames of reference. The outcome he explained was that black and female learners often did not engage with this content when it was taught and did not 'get' the humour. Mr Haxton's positionality was emphasised and legitimised by the school's historical identity, investing him with a sense of intellectual authority that affirmed his teaching.

This was similar to Ms Fisher, whose holistic approach seemed to be congruent with Lodge High's focus on developing rounded, conscious citizens in continuation of the school's historic position as a site of academic and social prestige for coloured families. However, it is uncertain how, if at all, her position as a white woman from a more privileged background influenced learners' willingness to behave and do well in her class. What is evident is that this difference from learners' own lived experiences, while mediated by her desire to be sensitive and understanding, had an effect on the way content was taught, particularly in relation to their experiences of inequalities, economic difficulty and personal agency. Ms Fisher argued that she tried to face difficult social issues that arose in the course of her teaching, but did not seem to engage with the nature of her teaching as a social issue relating to the historical, structural and material differences underpinning her relationship to learners.

### **5.2.3 Implications of curriculum knowledge for social cohesion**

The curriculum was a fundamental conduit of the value afforded to English as a cultural product. As Soudien argues, the substance of the post-1994 curriculum did

not change significantly, though with a new orientation to Constitutional values (Soudien, 2012:196). How difference is represented and managed in the English curriculum affects the associations learners make with the cultural boundaries of the language and their ability to locate themselves within it. Although the issue of how teachers approached the curriculum was discussed in Theme 1, several comments must be made regarding the implications of curriculum knowledge for issues of social cohesion.

### ***'Literary whiteness' and representation***

It is important to question whether the objective approach advocated within Mr Haxton's teaching was appropriate given his operation within a culturally normative environment. Values of whiteness are insidious because they are neutralised, normalised and thus rendered almost invisible to scrutiny, with the result that 'objective' standards of things such as excellence, neatness, good behaviour, beauty and sophistication are often implicitly reflective of white cultural norms (Hook, 2011; Soudien, 2012; Makoe & McKinney, 2014; Fataar, 2015; Rottman, 2015). The school environment of Lillie still largely reflected its historically white character; the English department of the school was exclusively white, and the literature offered to learners was largely by white, non-South African authors. Without needing to express an ideological position, the school was privileging a particular identity that arguably necessitated the intervention of its teachers in managing this identity in relation to the diversity of its student body. In not doing so, Mr Haxton was failing to interrogate the cultural politics embedded in what learners were learning to value and legitimate in their experiences of authorised knowledge.

Learners also resisted the content that they were encountering in their schooling in particular ways. It was suggested by learners at both Lillie and Juniper that the content was not dynamic and relatable, both in reference to the predominantly Western literature offered and the rare examples of South African works they encountered. Regarding the latter, Michael at Lillie High argued that when learners did encounter South African literature it largely revolved around apartheid and the success of the liberation struggle in officially ending it, and did not deal with contemporary circumstances, such as the issues of inequality and segregation that persist in myriad forms. The consensus-building strategy of government discourses since 1994 is reflected in these literature choices and the excerpts used for activities

in grammar textbooks. While these are intended to represent the Constitutional values underpinning the curriculum, learner responses indicated that the narrative had become static in the face of their own realities – whether in relation to their experiences of the untransformed nature of society, or their desires for alternative narratives that did not reduce the complexity of the country's history to issues of race.

Mr Haxton identified the problems faced by learners who did not identify with the English cultural mores and humour embedded in works such as Monty Python, noting that it was mainly white boys who enjoyed such texts. This is indicative of how culture often serves as a proxy for race in issues of representation in literature (Mazrui, 1996), meaning that the cultural referents contained in literary products authorise and legitimise particular identities while alienating others. As an aside, this was further echoed by the tendency on Mr Haxton's part to refer to learners on the basis of cultural markers, e.g. language or religion: "Xhosa boys", "Jewish girl", knowing that in using these terms a specific racial belonging was deliberately being implied. This was confirmed when he referred to "coloured boys" rather than referencing their languages or religions, which were often the same as white learners. It is not alarmist to consider this approach dangerous because it replaces racial identifications with cultural ones with the intention of acknowledging difference, and in so doing affirms the logic that races have particular essences that justify their distinctions from each other (Rattansi, 2007:105).

In the course of observations, during informal discussions with the teachers, the question of alternative forms of literature for English learning was posed to the participant teachers. The issue of culture was further flagged by Mr Haxton when he noted that white teachers would be reluctant to use rap music as a form of literature because of its association with black cultural forms. Particular forms of rap speak quite strongly to issues of material deprivation, racism, alienation and experiences of life in economically depressed environments, which is why young people from these spaces often gravitate towards it as a form of music that recognises and legitimates their experience (Kirkland, 2008; Yarwood, 2011). Narratives of alienation, struggle and self-making also make rap popular with youth from less structurally deprived spaces. In recognising that learners engaging with politicised music are often also taking on new forms of literacy, Kirkland suggests that these need to be recognised

and appreciated for their divergence from traditional literary forms and their articulation of complex, nuanced and agential identities (Kirkland, 2008:72). While also a discourse of disruption and resistance against racism and marginality, rap further reflects embedded gender, sexual and other social dynamics within black (including coloured in South Africa) communities. This makes it a useful tool in teaching critical literacy because while it can affirm learner identities it also requires them to challenge their attitudes and beliefs (Hyun, 2006), and critique the musical forms that they value.

Philips argues that black learners are affected by the hostility that white schools show towards their cultural and linguistic repertoires (2004), but Soudien expands this to suggest that in the South African context all schools are designed with the intention of subordinating black South African children (2012:120). This is because of the historically relational nature of schooling quality in the country that establishes white schools as the most resourced, privileged and powerful, invested as they originally were with the symbolic capital of racial domination. The devaluing of black language and culture operates at two levels within the school: through disapproval of particular codes or dialects and through silencing of topics, narratives, and values associated with these codes in everyday practices of the school (Philips, 2004). The result is the devaluing of these forms as relevant and legitimate knowledge that can contribute to learner development. Echoing Craig's argument that Shakespeare was not relevant to his future, a learner in one of Kirkland's classes poignantly said: "Our world ain't the same. It's changin' everyday... and we still readin' about dead White folk every day. What you mean, *ain't nobody else said nothin' important in, what, four hundred years* [own emphasis]?" (Kirkland, 2008:73). Advocated here is not a form of cultural relativism that discards everything about the present curriculum to replace it with something else; what is required is a sensitive, nuanced and inclusive approach to thinking about what constitutes good literature, for whom, and in what context.

#### **5.2.4 Identity, social cohesion and belonging**

The views and attitudes presented by learners offered key insights into how young South Africans constructed themselves in relation to a national identity as they move

within spaces that still bear the legacy of racial, economic, and other forms of segregation and marginalisation. Alongside the attitudes developed in their interactions with friends and family, and their experiences of daily life, learners were also socialised within the particular socio-economic (as historical) context of their schools, with their views endorsed or challenged by teachers in the course of lessons and discussions. Bock and Hunt (2015) discuss attitudes to race and belonging among youth at two South African universities and show the complexity with which they negotiate discourses of non-racism and nation-building. They argue that a form of liberalism has taken root that professes 'colour-blindness' and a refusal to 'see race' even where race-thinking permeates attitudes and behaviours in diverse ways (Bock & Hunt, 2015:142). They point to the ways in which their respondents resorted to coded speech in order to describe racial biases and attitudes, while at the same time speaking frankly in homogenous groups due to an assumption of safety and shared understanding when in the company of people of a shared racial identification (Bock & Hunt, 2015).

This was particularly indicative of the Juniper High context, the only mono-racial environment of the three participant schools. The responses from learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class will be explored in particular depth here for two reasons: firstly, they present an interesting case study of the identity practices of a group of coloured youth in a school setting, while also more generally showing how discourses of nation-building and social cohesion embedded in South African education take on new and contradicting forms when transposed onto learners' own attitudes and beliefs.

### ***Alienation and prejudice in the new South Africa***

A common theme arising from observations of Ms Bezuidenhout's class was a sense of alienation and marginality on the basis of race, with particular emphasis on expressions of anti-blackness. Several theorists argue that attitudes of marginality and victimhood have become pervasive within elements of the coloured community, entrenching a reified, exclusionary racial identity more antagonistic to black than white as they view themselves being deliberately marginalised and maligned by a black government (Erasmus & Pieterse, 1999; Adhikari, 2005; Soudien, 2012; Bock

& Hunt, 2015). This became evident in the views learners expressed, ironically in the midst of a conversation regarding language policy at Stellenbosch University. Many learners agreed that it would be pragmatic to offer English and Afrikaans only at these institutions, using a common (but fallacious) argument that there were too many indigenous languages to implement everywhere (Webb, 1999; Banda, 2000). It is reasonable to assume that this narrow view was a result of learners all being able to speak English, with most, if not all of them also being able to speak Afrikaans. Their proximity to the two dominant official languages thus made learners intolerant of the language needs of black students at universities such as Stellenbosch, particularly because they expected that the shift towards more official use of African languages would decentre their own linguistic repertoires and render them vulnerable. Despite recognising that African languages were a necessary tool for social life in an African country, learners did not attempt to remedy their linguistic limitations due to their assumptions that African languages were not valuable resources.

This was also noted by coloured learners in Ms Fisher's class, who valued learning 'international' languages such as French or Spanish over local or regional languages. These 'international' languages were certainly privileged at Lillie High, where French and Italian were offered as subjects alongside only one African language. Black learners at Lodge – both local and of foreign descent – disagreed with their peers in the focus group, arguing for a need for more indigenous languages that would be useful in a South African context. It is indicative of their attitudes to multilingualism as a contextual resource that these learners argued against the privileging of contextually irrelevant languages in a society in which linguistic diversity provided ample opportunity for learning local languages.

Arguably two crucial factors influencing coloured learners' appeals to what I call *colour-blind cosmopolitanism* was their sense of racial alienation and marginality, and their identification with Western (particularly black and North American) popular culture. As Possnock suggests, cosmopolitan identities are usually a result of a refusal to identify primarily with a local or national subjectivity and instead to pursue and embody multiple forms of belonging (Possnock, 2000:802). Hook (2011) disputes the benevolence of cosmopolitanism in South African identity formation, arguing that in the context of fractured, contested and dissonant identities, appeals

to a cosmopolitan identity leaves 'wounds' resulting from appeals to difference and Otherness open. Rather than reconciling one's multiple and often contradictory positions in the world, and accepting an identity that is a fractured and fluid unity of self, Hook argues that the cosmopolitan subject attempts to avoid grappling with the complexities of the identities they invoke or are inscribed with by appealing to a facile universalism that enables ignorance and alienation from their lived reality (Hook, 2011). In short, cosmopolitanism is a premature form of identification in circumstances where individuals have not sufficiently dealt with the meaning of the identities they have been socialised into, and have forged for themselves.

This means that appeals to the universality of English, and an impression of tertiary study as a globalising, international space, represent attempts to carve out cosmopolitan identities that transcend the racialised world that learners inhabit (Staeheli & Hammett, 2013). Accompanying this is a sense that apartheid has ended and as a result race should no longer matter, indicated in Juniper learners' strong agreements with elements of the Mandela speech that spoke to this assertion, and their behaviourist interpretations of social cohesion as reflected primary in positive attitudes and recognition of belonging to 'the human race'. In the focus group, Sumaya stated: "[M]y view on the world is, we can unite, we are one, everyone is equal because we're all the same." It was interesting that this view was shared by Chad, a coloured learner in Mr Haxton's class, who said that he felt he could not identify with stories about apartheid because he did not experience it. Considering that these learners attended vastly different schools – with learners at Juniper literally living within the remnants of apartheid's structural effects on their school and community – it was fascinating that they shared such similar perspectives. Bock and Hunt suggest that this demonstrates a desire to create distance from a history of victimhood and disempowerment, desiring instead to 'move on' (2015:150). Taken further, it would not be amiss to infer that these learners sought to distinguish themselves from black people, who they viewed as unfairly instrumentalising victimhood in order to make claims against and benefit from the state.

The issue of colour-blindness was dealt with in intensely conflicting and inconsistent ways as a result. It would be too simplistic to argue that learners at Juniper were simply just racist and ignorant even where their statements reflected deep-seated racism and prejudice, especially because it was likely that their views came out more



strongly *because* they were situated in a homogenous racial environment (Bock & Hunt, 2015). A more constructive approach would be to interrogate *how* they came to hold these dissonant perspectives and *why* they were so widespread. Bock and Hunt provide a critical discussion of this: they argue that the general society-wide silence on issues of race – being as these are reduced to vague questions of ‘diversity’, the ‘Rainbow Nation’ and culture or ethnicity - confines these conversations to intimate spheres where prejudiced views can be expressed and legitimated without critique, and where learners internalise a mind-set of historically constructed prejudice that becomes the lens through which they view peers of other races (Bock & Hunt, 2015). There are deep historical reasons for the antagonisms between black and coloured South Africans, particularly because the hierarchal nature of the apartheid state positioned coloured and Indian people above black people, with white at the very top.

The result of this middling position was the conferral of certain privileges and authority and a distancing from blackness due to its low social and economic status (Bloom, 1962; Adhikari, 2005; Kometsi, 2007). The end of apartheid and the seeming ‘reversal’ in power from white to black created a precarious political position for those coloured people who had invested in the anti-blackness of the apartheid regime and exhibited these attitudes in their interactions with black people. Black students in Bock and Hunt’s research referred to coloured people as racial opportunists who ‘played white’ in order to access privileges under the apartheid regime, and in post-apartheid South Africa claim a black identity in order to do the same (Bock & Hunt, 2015:148). This was an interesting take on the common expression of marginality, in coloured communities, that ‘we were not white enough then, and we are not black enough now’ (Adhikari, 2005).

Although learners assumed this marginality they rarely recognised, or were unaware, that it was in part historically self-inscribed. The result was that they were particularly sensitive when it came to racism, but especially racism that they felt negatively affected their social and economic prospects. Sumaya’s rant about “Call you a Boer, call you a coloured, call you a *kaffir*, it’s the same thing” revealed a troubling conflation of racial with expressly derogatory classifications. It was disturbing that she did not or would not recognise the derogatory legacy of the term *kaffir*, and instead cast coloured people as equivalent victims of the insult she denied to people

attacked by this particular slur. This was reflective of a more general trend in the classroom: learners commonly expressed feelings of marginality and alienation but were unwilling to accept that others could feel or experience the same. They objected to stereotypes of their racial group while stereotyping black people and framing these as accepted truths. Alongside their own, deep-seated prejudices, learners consistently appealed to values of democracy and non-racism, without recognising the inherent contradiction in their views. This cognitive dissonance showed that the top-down implementation of Constitutional values does not always take root, especially when the relationship of these values to learners' own identities is never interrogated and lifted out. In this sense a disjuncture is created between official values and learner values, where the two exist within the same individual but somehow rarely meet and come into direct conflict (Rattansi, 2007).

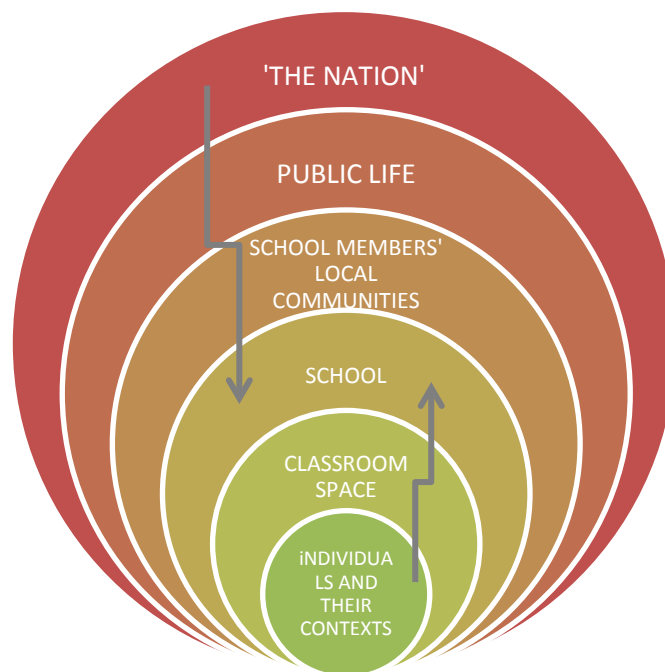
### **5.3 Narratives of 'social cohesion'**

It is useful to conclude this chapter with several remarks about how the views, behaviours and values of learners in the participant schools revealed particular patterns or narratives of socially cohesive attitudes reflective of schooling culture and context, learner identities and knowledges, and how they located themselves as South Africans. These narratives draw together the themes of linguistic identity and social cohesion by showing how these contributed to and reflected the factors identified above.

Definitions of social cohesion are multiple and varied, ranging from behaviourist and attitudinal approaches to those advocating substantive social justice as the foundation of creating a lasting social compact (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Barolsky, 2013; Sayed et al, 2015). Public schools are important sites of transmitting values of social cohesion because the majority of the country's children are educated and socialised through them. This study has shown how linguistic and social identities are influenced by language education in three different public schools, with resulting effects on how learners develop confidence, find their voices, and afford value to the languages they speak (and thus the spaces they can access). Each case study school seemed to operate on the basis of a particular narrative of social cohesion,

derived from a negotiation of the multiple layers of complexity that characterise the school as a social space.

**Figure 8**



The graphic above illustrates how the school is at the intersection of multiple facets of social life that negotiate, exchange and develop meaning around belonging on a daily basis. It captures the complexity of the teacher's task in mediating the exchanges between each layer in order to facilitate learning. South Africa's social context affects and acts on these layers because every level of social space has both a historical and contemporary identity that is particularly racialised, classed, and geographically located (alongside further boundaries of gender, religion, culture and language). This deep segregation affected the narratives of social cohesion that schools could produce and inscribe.

The influence of the relationship between individual contexts, school culture and wider society on learning was an unexpected finding of the study that provided new insights into the nature of this complexity. Further research is needed on how a school culture is negotiated and how this negotiation infuses learning with meanings and approaches to social cohesion, but it is still useful to reflect on how this operated in the participant schools. These impressions were not based on the quality of teaching or on learners being particularly well behaved, but rather on the

environment and relationships that were facilitated in the classroom and how these reflected broader ideas of what constituted a positive social compact. Several theorists suggest definitions of 'narrative' as the accounts of agents located within processes of change or development (Bruner, 1991; Sewell Jr., 1992; Steinmetz, 1992). Narratives are located within relationships to time and space that invest them with particular meanings (Bruner, 1991). These meanings are constantly negotiated, affirmed or challenged by the agents who encounter them in the process of change. Further, the reality that meanings are contextually produced and negotiated means that narratives are invested with normative conceptions of the world (Bruner, 1991; Steinmetz, 1992). Arguably, the participants in this research developed narratives of social cohesion through ongoing engagement with their own experiences, the school culture and context, and its location within broader social dynamics. This echoes Bruner's (1991) assertion that the accrual of individual narratives and experiences contributes to the development of collective narratives, histories and cultures.

Ms Fisher's classroom typified what could be classed as a 'deep' narrative of social cohesion. Clear rules of engagement, based on mutual respect and kindness, were evident in the observations; learners were supportive of each other and supported by the teacher. Because of the school's struggle history and legacy, learners were also inculcated into a particular political tradition and ethos alongside strong values of discipline and academic achievement. The implication of this political history is important: the school's history implicitly validated the humanity and agency of black South Africans through its role in the struggle, meaning that learners entered a context that resisted apartheid narratives of their inferiority and believed in their ability to be excellent. While at the social level there were some divisions along lines of race, country of origin and religion, learners still expressed strong bonds in spite of these differences and treated each other respectfully and considerately. There was thus a strong alignment between Constitutional values, the school's political ethos and learner contexts, which likely contributed to the creation of holistic social agents. It was interesting to note that learners from other African countries, especially vulnerable because of widespread xenophobic attitudes in South Africa and exclusionary practices in schools (Neocosmos, 2010; Sayed et al, 2015), expressed a sense of familial belonging with their peers. Invoking this sense of familyhood was a sensitive discursive move; families are complex and imperfect units, with conflict

and differences, but connected by deeper bonds that are able to transcend and negotiate these differences for mutual benefit. Learners indicated this in their awareness of inequalities and historic divisions, and while they did not always manage these sensitively, they exhibited a willingness to learn and transform their beliefs.

This was a more difficult process for learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class, who presented what could be called 'conflicting' or 'dissonant' narratives of social cohesion. Findings illustrated that learners struggled with their racial identities and both invoked and tried to discard these in their responses. Their appeals to what this study called *colourblind cosmopolitanism* juxtaposed with the often stereotypical attitudes they exhibited towards racial difference, likely confirming Hook's (2011) suggestion that cosmopolitanism is a premature and insufficient response to dealing with the trauma contained in fractured, historical identities. The victimhood stemming from this trauma was evident in learner attitudes; while they sought to distance themselves from the apartheid legacy, they continued to appeal to its racial logic and the sense of marginality experienced in coloured communities as a result of racial and social liminality. They were also resistant to acknowledge this victimisation in others, leading to highly disturbing exchanges that showed the depth of the dissonant relationship between learners' own values and those they knew they were expected to embody as non-racial South African citizens. The school's context and low status, alongside the challenges to consistent and focused learning in the classroom, inserted these attitudes into a learning environment that confirmed learners' feelings of alienation and marginality.

Learners in Mr Haxton's class, compared to their peers at the other participant schools, did not receive as much opportunity to engage with broader social issues, often because their learning materials were so removed from the South African experience. Arguably, the emphasis on achievement at Lillie High fostered an 'alternative' narrative of social cohesion, more specifically 'social cohesion through excellence'. Any social or political identity the school may have had was secondary to its culture of academic and extramural excellence; learners excelled individually, became part of and contributed to communities of excellence in ways that it was assumed would transcend difference. The collective identity of the school was built on this culture and, while advocating equality and human dignity, did not fully

recognise the effects of structural and symbolic differences on learner experiences at the school. Both Mr Haxton and his learners were aware of the inequalities that persisted in society, but this was never allowed to come out in class because they were rarely exposed to content that enabled them to collectively engage with these issues. The conflation of excellence with whiteness (Soudien, 2012) also further served to neutralise the assimilation process for those learners who were historically excluded from the school.

These narratives should not be seen as attempts to place each school in silos, and in fact elements of each narrative could be seen in different schools. For example, the alternative narrative of social cohesion at Lillie High, in its behavioural-attitudinal orientation, could also be seen as dissonant when one considers the reality that learners did not enter the school from the same backgrounds and yet were still expected to display particular, *raced* qualities in order to gain access – this while the school considered itself to have a respect for diversity. What is important to take from the above examples is that alongside holding particular institutional identities, schools also transmit particular narratives of belonging, inequality, and social justice in the exchanges between teachers and learners in the context of the school environment and culture. As this chapter argued, linguistic identities are contextually located, negotiated and experienced, often influenced by broader social dynamics that reproduce specific values, attitudes and beliefs.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

This study has sought to understand how teachers manage linguistic and social identities in the process of English language teaching in a manner that deals with challenges to social cohesion. It has argued that language is central to issues of belonging in South Africa, and that the pursuit of social cohesion as a desirable characteristic of society is contingent on language education that recognises the inequalities underpinning linguistic diversity in the country. Three research questions were posed in attempt to capture how these issues are dealt with in teacher practice.

1. How do Grade 11 English teachers address issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion in their teaching methods?
  - 1.1 What skills and values are transmitted by Grade 11 teachers in their teaching?
  - 1.2 What are the effects of their teaching on learners' linguistic identities and on creating social cohesion?

Data was gathered in response to these questions using the methods of observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. These findings were discussed in the respective chapter and particular existing and emerging themes drawn out in the analysis. It became apparent that context remained a significant factor in how the participant teachers engaged in their practice, even where school contexts have adapted to the post-1994 dispensation. The historical characteristics of the participant schools had both changed and amplified in the time since the end of apartheid, with the result that they could not be understood through the same analytical lens as schools of the past. Nevertheless, the continuing effects of both local and school contexts on contemporary education practice was a salient influence on the strategies teachers used to inculcate particular attitudes towards English language study, as well as on how learners captured the value and usefulness of their own linguistic repertoires.

This chapter will discuss the key findings from the study and the significance and implications of these for research and practice. It will also reflect on the process of

the research journey and the challenges of the study that became apparent. Further, avenues for further research will be discussed with the view to considering how particular phenomena and ideas can be developed and interrogated in future studies.

### **6.1 Key ideas emerging from research findings**

Chapter 4 presented the findings for the study in relation to the research questions. Reflections on and extracts from the data were used to develop broad impressions of each participant classroom and school context, learner relationships and teacher practices. Evident in the initial findings was the effect of the relationship between school culture, resources and teacher support on the practices of participant teachers. Further, it was shown that participant teachers operated within different linguistic contexts, offering a range of insights into how diversity was managed in relation to issues both internal and external to the classroom context. Two analytical tables were developed which suggested methods through which teachers could be seen to be dealing with issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion in their practices, and the findings from these were instrumental in developing the arguments in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 captured the contingent factors affecting teacher practice from the discussion of findings, using these factors to ground the analysis of how teachers managed issues of linguistic identity and social cohesion in their practices. It argued that particular narratives of social cohesion were evident in the processes of teaching and learning in each participant classroom, and further that this was indicative of the contexts in which teachers and learners had to grapple with the symbolic value of English in relation to their own positionalities. It located the issue of language within broader experiences of inequality, division and prejudice in the everyday interactions of the participant classrooms.

A particular narrative thread in this study has been the salience of language for the question of difference in South Africa. The literature showed the colonial roots of the relationship between language and power, casting this within a critical theoretical discussion of how this relationship functions within education (Giroux, 1981;



Alexander, 1989; Bourdieu, 1991; McGroarty, 2008). It was evident from the findings that this history continues to influence which languages (and thus identities) are valued or discarded, and which languages are viewed as useful; learners invested English with a particular race and class identity, evident in their associations of professionalism and high-status work with English language proficiency, and their association of this proficiency with whiteness. This despite the relative disadvantage of many learners at a school such as Lillie High, who were socially monolingual and thus linguistically limited compared to their bi- or multilingual peers. It was interesting to note their experiences alongside those of learners such as Rafael and Mamadou, who spoke several languages out of necessity and felt that this was an enriching skill to be in possession of. They emphasised the contextual value of multilingualism, and, unlike their peers at Lodge and Juniper High, did not share the view that English was the only language of importance for meaningful interactions. Indeed, it was perhaps their experiences of life and transition through different African countries that invested these two learners with critical insight into the importance of speaking regional and local language varieties as a pertinent and contextual skill.

By investing English with a particular identity, learners were also acknowledging that language dynamics also crucially influence on what terms speakers of different languages have to negotiate belonging and access to particular spaces or identities (Makoe & McKinney, 2014; Fataar, 2015). Learners 'played' with language through practices such as code-switching, slang and accent usage, engaging in strategies of adoption and alienation as they navigated their relationship to the dominant code. Through these strategies they made claims to English as a language they could have ownership over, and could successfully negotiate meaning within. This was, however, affected by an embedded sense of the superiority of the 'standard' form of the language for mediating access into particular social, academic and economic spaces (Levinsohn, 2007). Thus, because language education involves a particular orientation to a language and its social worth, teachers needed to appropriately manage difference (or homogeneity) in their classrooms in order for meaningful and critical language learning to take place. Their practices were necessarily context-specific, responding to the particular needs of learners with particular linguistic, and often linguistic-as-social, identities. By linguistic-as-social it is meant that learners and teachers associated the codes they spoke with belonging to particular social

groups, which were often racial or ethnic in nature. Learners in Ms Bezuidenhout's class, for example, associated their local dialect with being coloured, and a particular form of English as being 'white'. Teachers at Lillie High set an English test question that explicitly devalued language associated with coloured slang, while learners at Lodge High expressed desires to learn 'international', as European, languages. This is indicative of Bourdieu's (1991) assertion that while linguistic and social difference cannot be conflated, linguistic practices can create or disrupt allegiances to particular social identities.

This association of language usage with social group and position became evident as a necessary element of critical language teaching. Teacher knowledge, positionality and values directly impacts on how they approach content. This is also shaped by the school contexts in which teachers operate (including the level of institutional and academic support they receive). How aware teachers are of the identities, value-judgments and histories embedded in the content they teach to learners will affect their ability to transmit this knowledge critically and with due respect for how this influences learners' own identity formation (Giroux, 1978, 1981). They have to negotiate the content of the curriculum alongside learners' own identities and histories in order for effective learning to take place (Hyun, 2006), particularly in instances where content knowledge may implicitly or explicitly undervalue particular learners' experiences.

It became evident that the values of the Constitution, as found in the curriculum, need to be more decisively engaged with and critiqued in learning materials because of how this reflects particular arrangements of cultural and historic value (Giroux, 1981; Msila, 2007). Learners are aware of the values of democratic South Africa, but they are also acutely aware of the circumstances they come from and how these reflect continuities from the past. Teachers attempted to deal with this complexity in their practices but were constrained by the lack of diversity within learning materials and learners' resistance against the Constitutional narratives embedded in the curriculum. This resistance was particularly complicated. While learners adopted and often embraced these values, they were also aware of the distance of these values from their own realities. This created challenges for how they resolved this disjuncture in their learning, and how their teachers were able to use curriculum knowledge to encourage socially cohesive attitudes.

A major factor in learner resistance was the almost singular narrative of racial difference that they felt constituted much of their education. Learners expressed fatigue with the apartheid narrative and tried to think of new ways to encapsulate belonging, although their expressions of these sometimes demonstrated a narrow or limited understanding of racism and prejudice as purely behavioural and not structural in its nature (and thus effects). Thinking about social cohesion in South Africa must be transversal and cannot be confined to the single narrative of racial difference (or race-class relationships) that characterises much of current discourse (Soudien, 2012). It is necessary to understand how spatial segregation has affected whole communities and groups of people in ways that potentially reify assumptions and interpretations of difference while also limiting possibilities for fostering socially cohesive attitudes in shared spaces like schools. The teacher's role is central to this because teacher practices and capacities can critically influence learners' ability and willingness to engage on often sensitive and contentious issues during every-day learning. Participant teachers tried to grapple with this responsibility in their practices, and it was shown that they had differing levels of success.

Arguably English language education *for social cohesion* must interrogate the structural and historical reasons underpinning the continued privileging of particular linguistic forms over others, while encouraging contemporary linguistic praxis that is critical, contextual and inclusive. While learners may be inculcated into the rules of the dominant code, teachers should be encouraging them to develop this through using their own linguistic repertoires as a learning tool, so as to afford it with intellectual and thus symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1991; Godley & Minnici, 2008). Further, teacher knowledge of the curriculum, and the avenues available to them for engaging with more representative and alternative forms of literature, should be treated as a critical resource: one that enables them to provide learners with new articulations of knowledge and cultural value, while also challenging them to critique accounts of their own realities and experiences.

## **6.2 Implications for policy and practice**

### **Policy**

The findings presented two particular implications for language policy at the levels of communication and curriculum. This study historicised the nature of language dynamics in South Africa within a discussion of how this was enacted through particular policy arrangements, and how these arrangements had to be resolved and reconciled following the end of apartheid (Wheeler, 1961; Reagan, 1987; Alexander, 1989; Mda, 1997). Research has consistently shown the continued undervaluing of indigenous languages despite policy arrangements that have attempted to grant parity of esteem to them. The lack of political will to invest these languages with transferable value (Webb, 1999; Levinsohn, 2007; Sayed et al, 2015) has the effect of relegating them to the social dimension and denying that they are capable of being intellectually and economically useful (Bourdieu, 1991). Arguably language policy continues to capture languages as distinctly bounded entities, and neglects to take into account alternative approaches that may both value linguistic diversity and respond to the challenges of efficiency that usually accompany critiques of South Africa's multilingual policy. For example, Alexander (1989; 2013) and Kwaah Prah (2007) both discuss the possibility of clustering South Africa's indigenous languages into several standardised forms that enable their use as languages of learning and commerce while allowing for local linguistic diversity and issues of efficiency in resourcing for language education. These suggestions do, however, challenge existing tensions between linguistic-as-social groups, and further illustrate the importance of political will in securing support for new and transformative language arrangements.

The fact that the majority of South Africa's learners are educated through the medium of English (DBE, 2010), means that the status of the language as a medium of instruction requires constant interrogation. The reality that the prestigious form of the language is associated with a racial and class identity presents a particular challenge for policy in that both the school-level articulation of language policy, and engagement with the language as a subject, needs to grapple with how this symbolic value is interpreted by learners with differing linguistic identities. How are speakers of prestigious codes taught to respect and use other languages in social and educational settings? How is their association of value with particular languages

indicative of the value they afford to particular groups of people (Philips, 2004)? Further, how do speakers of marginalised codes use their agency in negotiating the symbolic value of the medium of instruction (and MOI as language subject)? What can these strategies of negotiation tell us about their experiences of belonging and social inclusion? The ways that schools articulate the terms on which learners may express themselves are indicative of particular linguistic normativities. How teachers use language to negotiate learning can further highlight, or challenge, the importance of these normativities for learners. Schools can choose their language policies within the ambit of Constitutional values, but it is how these policies are enforced through every-day and classroom interactions that provide learners with impressions of what constitutes appropriate and contextual language use.

Further, at the level of MOI as subject, the content of the curriculum needs to be more seriously interrogated for the particular norms, values and knowledges that are privileged within it. While schools should have the freedom to set internal exercises and assessments – especially in the interests of context-sensitive learning – curriculum policy should provide models for a more discerning review process in the formulation of these resources. Because different schools operate within different linguistic contexts, the positionality of the school must always be clarified with respect to its relationship to the dominant code. For example, teachers at schools such as Lillie High may reproduce patterns of linguistic disvaluation when they dismiss local linguistic forms through teaching or assessment. A critical review model for internal learning materials would encourage teachers to find more creative ways of incorporating issues of linguistic difference while, in fact, problematizing the dominant form and challenging learners' assumptions about its ubiquity and importance.

This also has salience for the literature component of the curriculum. Despite there being a selection of works available for study in the FET phase, learners and teachers at the participant schools described them as largely unrepresentative, not interesting, and static in their narratives. While teachers often conveyed open and dynamic approaches to literature learners were uncomfortable with renderings of the past in local works, and expressed frustrations with the singularity of the narratives of apartheid and racism. They expressed attitudes and impressions of everyday experiences that indicated a desire to grapple with the complicated nature of South

Africa's history and determine new ways of conceiving of belonging. This would have been significantly bolstered by an exposure to literature that personalised these struggles for learners, and probed the difficult and often traumatic relationships that people have with the past. Important to this literature is a sense of agency, which arguably learners felt was lacking from narratives that consistently seemed to compartmentalise their experiences of life as racial beings. Soudien argues that agency is the result of the individual 'living in creative tension with the compulsion of [their] time and place' (2012:31). What this means for a more inclusive literature syllabus is a recognition of the relationships between learners' linguistic and social identities and experiences, their positionalities and their contexts. While literature must be representative, it must also encourage and facilitate criticality, and a crucial element of this criticality is a sense of reflexivity regarding one's position in the world (Kirkland, 2008). Learners thus need to be equipped to critique their own experiences and circumstances alongside critiquing the dominant culture, and be provided with opportunities to draw on their own cultural texts as resources for learning. The discussion provided an example of how rap music can constitute a critical and relevant form of literature for (especially) black South African youth, but it is important to note that these forms should not be simply included as add-ons to an existing canon that largely privileges Western literary forms. Rather, modules on narrative musical forms, such as rap, and local or indigenous (textual or oral) literary traditions, such as praise poetry, can contribute to disrupting the established normativity of particular kinds of English and provide teachers with opportunities to draw on learners' own cultural capital as learning tools.

### **Practice**

Teachers and their practices were the crucial focus of this study. Each participant teacher had developed an approach that was based on their personal dispositions and experiences, their positionality, their education, and the school context. Despite the particularity of their identities as teachers, they were also broadly captured within particular social identities that became evident in their practice. One of the key findings with respect to practice was that the knowledges, experiences and attitudes of teachers needs to be more closely interrogated, as part of both training and ongoing development, so as to equip them to recognise and manage their own biases and assumptions in the course of their teaching. This is especially true of

schools such as Juniper and Lillie High, which have largely retained school cultures representative of their historic racial identities. Even while demographic diversity may be growing at Lillie, the school continues to reproduce its historically Western, English identity. Juniper High remains a homogenous racial environment, with the result that like Lillie High, its teachers need to grapple with the Other in a context in which the Other is not present, through their own personal and professional conduct.

Following this, teachers need to be trained to manage difference effectively, in whichever forms it is and is not present in the learning context. Their practices need to disrupt established and local ideas, attitudes and stereotypes through sensitive and dynamic approaches to content knowledge, to learner interactions and capacities, and to assessment. In contexts such as Lillie and Juniper High, this also means using opportunities to interrogate locally-produced, conflicting and stereotypical renderings of difference that derive from limited or static experiences of it. For schools such as Lillie and Lodge, this further entails managing the diversity of learners in classroom spaces, particularly negotiating the inclusion and belonging of those learners who were historically excluded from attending the school. Teacher capacity is a crucial determinant of the success of the curriculum in its classroom implementation; it is contingent on the ability of teachers to negotiate the meanings embedded in content knowledge and bring these into dialogue with learner experiences (Giroux, 1981; Hyun, 2006; Sayed et al, 2015). The effect of school culture on teacher practices is further discussed in the section on further research, but it is necessary to add here that these practices are also developed within the schooling context, and as such are also a result of peer relationships, philosophical, political and ethical concerns of the school, its academic culture and institutional identity. This influences curriculum implementation due to the particular cultural norms and values that teachers work under in different school settings and how these enable or constrain progressive approaches to handling diversity.

### **6.3 Significance of study**

The study shows the relationship that linguistic identity has to issues of race, class, inequality, and belonging in South Africa – all issues that critically impact the ability for social cohesion to take root. Linguistic arrangements implicitly reflect issues of

belonging because they dictate whose codes and modes of expression are formalised as the medium of expression for national social life. It thus also identifies the cultures to which marginalised people must assimilate in order to be successful. The study argued that speakers of marginalised codes manage their aspirations and linguistic identities in creative and complex ways, especially as they were educated into the dominant code through English language teaching.

Following this, the study identifies the importance of critical, sensitive, and contextually-relevant English language teaching practices for dealing with the symbolic value accorded to the language and providing learners with opportunities to appreciate, develop and use multilingualism. It further argues that teaching practices are also framed by the curriculum, and that curriculum knowledge needs to be more representative of and sensitive to the inequalities underpinning linguistic, social and economic differences between learners.

A recurring issue in the study was the issue of school culture and how this influenced the culture of learning in the participant classrooms. The research drew on several studies of schooling and growing up in post-apartheid South Africa (Bray et al, 2010; Soudien, 2012; Fataar, 2015), drawing together critical perspectives on how schooling constitutes a significant element of young people's social lives. It was intended to contribute to this body of work by interrogating the specificity of a language and its subject knowledge as an area in which attitudes to belonging, nationhood and symbolic value are developed.

#### **6.4 Avenues for further research**

Two areas of further research relate to the particularities of schooling context. Firstly, there is very little research available on how school cultures are developed, sustained and challenged in the contemporary South African context. Recent protests around exclusionary school practices show that this is a salient issue for many young people attending schools in different socio-economic and geographic spaces. The fact that South African schooling historically served to under-develop a significant proportion of the population means that this legacy of inequality needs to be more forcefully interrogated at the level of how schools entrench cultures of



excellence, good behaviour and belonging. Research is needed that grapples with how difference is constituted at multiple levels within schools. Issues of race remain salient, but an emphasis on race neglects issues of class and inequality, of religion, political orientation, gender and sexuality, and other elements of learner and teacher identity that impact on their interactions and on learning.

Further, the issue of commuter schools is an important area of enquiry for researchers seeking to understand how contemporary forces shape schooling in South Africa. Because many learners are leaving their immediate surrounds to access schooling, it is critical to understand how the schools that receive them are responding to new identities, beliefs and experiences in their practices. Moreover, it remains to be seen how particular relationships to urban and social life are created in the process of moving through space in order to attend school. Arguably, learners are claiming a right to belonging within spaces they have previously been denied entry into, and are thus engaged in complex processes of identity formation and meaning construction as they negotiate the terms on which they are able to access their aspirations. The phenomenon of commuter schools deserves further attention for how this disrupts the deterministic assumptions made about the racialised nature of South African schooling. It is pertinent to investigate these schools as a dynamic of their own, for understanding how identities become transformed, developed, contested and affirmed in spaces that transcend the spatial legacy of apartheid planning.

Another critical area of research relates to issues of language identity. These need to be more thoroughly investigated in relation to how linguistic identity influences social divisions and inequities, and attitudes to belonging. It is insufficient to flag the symbolic value of English without demonstrating its empirical effects on relations between people, particularly in the educational interactions that are structured for learners' linguistic acquisition. Further, it is also necessary to investigate new paths for multilingualism and language in education, and determine the processes by which adequate buy-in can be sought for genuinely transformative language policy. Issues of representation in curriculum also warrant further research, with more decisive interventions into the kinds of literature that would characterise a critical, representative and dynamic syllabus.

## **6.5 Reflections on research journey**

Issues of race were initially central to my original, and very broad, topic of research, but it became evident that a more incisive point of entry was needed for grappling with issues of belonging in South African education. The issue of language was suggested by my supervisors following further discussion into the kinds of experiences I wanted to uncover. As a tutor in my time at another university, I had a conversation with black students in my group who lacked confidence in expressing themselves around their peers and thought they were academically weak in comparison, despite displaying critical insights in their written work (which, the department emphasised, was not to be graded on the basis of fluency in the English language, but on 'clarity of argument' – which was often affected by fluency). The students were worried that they did not 'sound' as intelligent as their (mostly white and/or English-speaking) peers in the group, who expressed themselves quite freely in discussions. I was intrigued by the depth to which language differences influenced belonging in particular spaces, and how language afforded voice and legitimacy to particular individuals. My own experiences as an English speaker had created a bias that was subsequently challenged by this exchange.

This experience also stimulated my interest in language in education, and how particular linguistic arrangements privilege particular learners at the expense of others. Arguably the English-speaking students were at a decided advantage in being able to learn about a complex field of study in their first language, and were better placed to articulate their opinions verbally and in writing. This brought the question of English into sharper focus: how was multilingualism being structurally and symbolically accommodated in educational contexts when most of these contexts privileged English speakers?

The personal interest I had in this question initially obscured the depth of inquiry that would be needed to answer it. It became necessary to grapple with the details of the issue in order to establish specific research questions, methods and instruments, to determine the theoretical underpinnings of the study and source literature relevant to the topic. It was my first time conducting independent research, and I learned about many elements of the process through trial and error, and with constant peer support. Conversations with peers about particular ideas or theories provided

valuable insights and interpretations, and further required me to develop a more refined understanding of the purpose of the study throughout the research process.

I learnt valuable lessons related to time management and developing relationships. Arguably the participant schools could have been contacted prior to seeking ethics approval to begin the process of establishing familiarity with teachers.

It was necessary to learn to how to manage relationships as part of the research process because a failure to do so would compromise the cooperativeness of participants and the quality of findings. My relationships with participant teachers were generally quite reserved, but still friendly, and I recognised the value maintaining this distance had for resisting the development of biases towards particular teachers.

Education is an important space of social change, but is also a space for creativity and dynamism. Conducting this research exposed me to the multiple layers of complexity that comprise everyday schooling experiences, and the crucial and subtle ways in which schooling shapes learner identities, voices and spaces of belonging. It also nuanced the issue of race in my own understandings by showing how race is constructed in and through language, and mitigated through the adoption of particular linguistic identities. Race in South Africa is captured alongside contingent factors such as gender, language, class and location, which is why this study emphasised the inability to generalise (and essentialise) about entire groups of people. It is in the details of difference that points of contestation, rupture, and renewal are manifested, and new lines of commonality and community drawn.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: WCED Ethical Clearance (and renewal)

[Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20150727-1709

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Tarryn De Kock  
10 Bottom Road  
Zeekoevlei  
7941

**Dear Ms Tarryn De Kock**

#### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL: LINGUISTIC IDENTITY AND SOCIAL COHESION IN THREE WESTERN CAPE SCHOOLS**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **11 August 2015 till 30 September 2015**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services**  
**Western Cape Education Department**  
**Private Bag X9114**  
**CAPE TOWN**  
**8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

**Directorate: Research**

**DATE: 28 July 2015**

[Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 467 9272

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12. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
13. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
14. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
15. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
16. The Study is to be conducted from **15 February 2016 till 22 April 2016**
17. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
18. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
19. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
20. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
21. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
22. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:  
**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

**Directorate: Research**

**DATE: 11 February 2016**

## **APPENDIX B: CPUT Ethical Clearance**



### FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS FOR ORIGINAL RESEARCH

This form is to be completed by the student, member of staff and other researchers intending to undertake research in the Faculty. It is to be completed for any piece of research the aim of which is to make an original contribution to the public body of knowledge.

For students this type of work will also have educational goals and will be linked to gaining credit - it is the type of work that will be the basis for a Masters/Doctoral thesis or any research project for which ethical clearance is deemed necessary:

Name(s) of applicant	Tarryn de Kock
Project Title	Linguistic Identity & Social Cohesion in three Western Cape Schools
Is this a staff research project?	No
Degree	M.Ed
Supervisor(s)	Prof. Yusuf Sayed
Funding sources	NRF

Attached: Information sheet  Consent form  Questionnaire  Other (Specify)

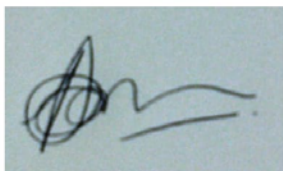
#### Questions for Consideration in the Summary

- (i) How will you recruit participants? Is there any possibility that participants might feel coerced to take part and if so how can you manage this issue?
- (ii) How will participants be made aware of what is involved in the research [prior to, during and after data collection]?
- (iii) How will you ensure that participants really do understand their rights?
- (iv) Attach your instrument for data collection (if applicable).
- (v) Is there a risk of harm to participants, to the participants' community, to the researcher/s, to the research community or to the University? If so how will these risks be managed?
- (vi) What plans do you have for managing the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in this study?
- (vii) Are there any potential conflicts of interest for you in undertaking this study?



(viii) How will the findings be used on completion of the study?			
(ix) Does this work raise any other ethical issues and if so, how will you manage these?			
(x) What training or experience do you bring to the project or will enable you to recognize and manage the potential ethical issues?			
<b>Research Checklist:</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1:	Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent? Examples include children, people with learning disabilities, or your own students. Animals?		X
2:	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? Examples include students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing homes — anyone who is under the legal care of another.	X	
3:	Will it be necessary for participants to participate in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time — for example, covert observation of people in non-public places?		X
4:	Will the study with the research subject involve discussion of sensitive topics? Examples would include questions on sexual activity or drug use.		X
5:	Will the study involve invasive, intrusive, or potentially harmful procedures of any kind (e.g. drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the study participants)?		X
6:	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing on sentient subjects?		X
7:	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
8:	Does your research involve environmental studies which could be contentious or use materials or processes that could damage the environment? Particularly the outcome of your research?		X

Tarryn de Kock (31 July 2015)



Prof Yusuf Sayed (31 July 2015)



**APPENDIX C: Semi-structured Interview Guide (Teachers)**

1. What do you think an English teacher should be equipped to do? What type of values should an English teacher have?
2. What types of values do you try to project in the classroom?
3. What is your view on the Language in Education Policy and the CAPS document? How do you try to interpret and implement these policies in the classroom?
4. What do you consider to be the needs of your students?
5. What are the important outcomes you expect of a language class?
6. What values and skills do you want your students to learn in your class?
7. Are your students able to relate to the course content? What type of content do you consider to be important for your students?
8. What are the challenges you face, socially and practically, in the classroom?
9. How do you deal with issues of race, class, and gender in the classroom and the course content?
10. How do you deal with students who are struggling?
11. What do you think is the role and value of English in South Africa? What is your view on education in other languages? Is multilingualism handled effectively? Why or why not?

**APPENDIX D: Observation Schedule (Class)**

## LESSON OBSERVATION

Name of Teacher/School:

Date:

Recording reference:

Time:		Duration of lesson:	
Teacher initials:		Gender:	
Total learners on register:	No of females:	No of males:	
Attendance ( <i>approx.</i> ):	No of females:	No of males:	

Classroom: (*Size? Condition? Decorations? Furniture? Windows? Technology/ resources? Cleanliness?*)

Seating arrangements: (*Location and condition of benches? Individual desks? Overcrowded?*)

Learner grouping: (*According to gender? Who sits at the front, back & side?*)

Textbooks and other materials such as pencils/pens, bags: (*Number? Who has/has not & who shares?*)

During the lesson, note the teacher and learner activities (and their timings), making comments in the third column, about the research issues noted below.

Mins	T (teacher) activity	L (learner) activity	Researcher comments & quotes from T or Ls

--	--	--	--

<b>TEACHER ACTIVITY</b>	
<b>Main language of instruction (&amp; other languages)</b>	
<b>Main teaching activities</b>	<i>Lecture, whole-class question and answer, individual questions.</i>
<b>Content</b>	<i>Practical, theoretical, a mix of theory and practice</i>
<b>Amount of lecturer talk</b>	<i>Monologue/ slightly interactive/ very interactive</i>
<b>Lecturer manner &amp; voice</b>	<i>Loud, soft, audible to all learners</i> <i>Neutral tone, friendly, aggressive</i>
<b>Use of board</b>	<i>Used a lot, a little, not at all?</i>
<b>Use of teaching aids</b>	<i>Textbooks, handouts, visual aids – give examples</i>
<b>Position of teacher</b>	<i>Fixed, moving around</i>
<b>Use of questions (if any)</b>	<i>Types of questions – closed or open, yes/no or why</i> <i>To class in general?</i> <i>To individuals (Gendered, raced?)</i>
<b>Feedback to learners</b>	<i>Correction, praise, responding to or ignoring contributions, correction of work</i>

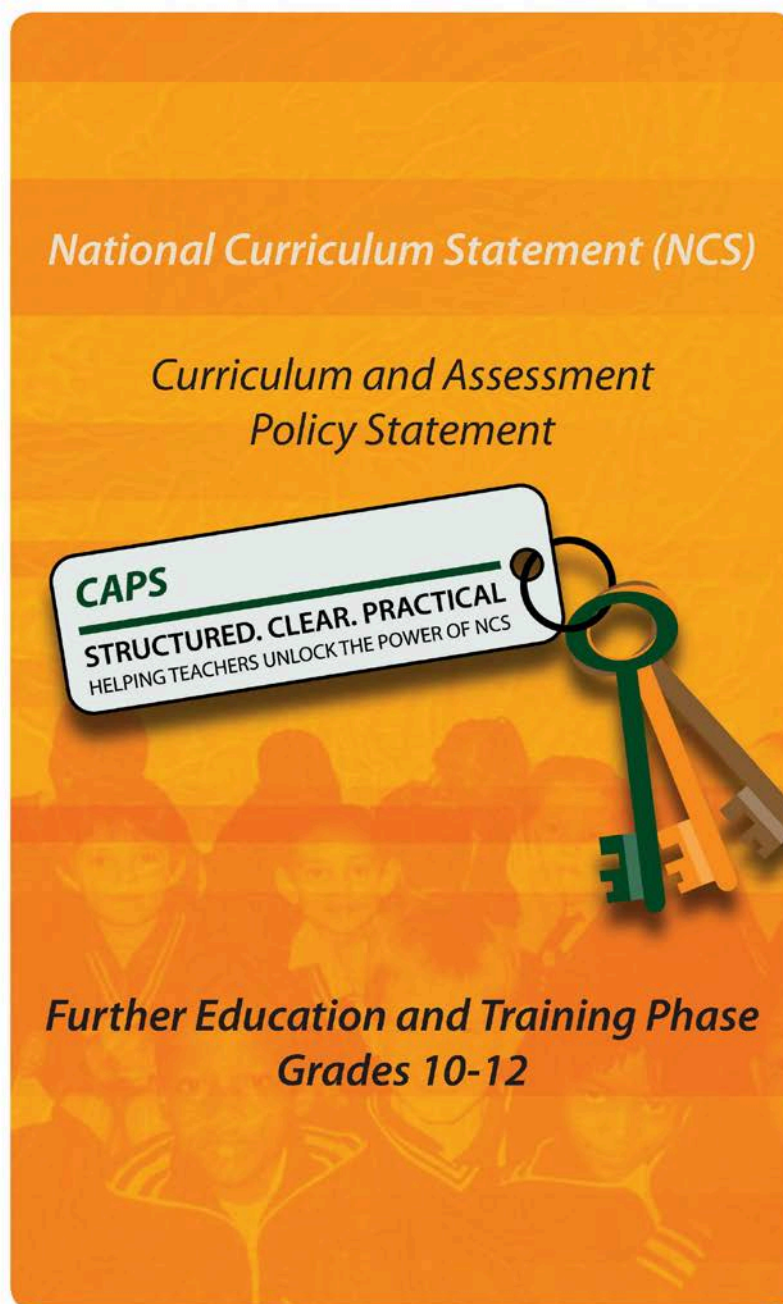
<b>Response to learner harassment, 'teasing'</b>	<i>Action? Ignored it? Didn't notice? Give examples:</i>

<b>LEARNER ACTIVITY</b>	
<b>Level of learner understanding</b>	<i>Low, moderate, high, difficult to say</i>  <i>Which learners seemed to understand most?</i>
<b>Learner oral participation</b> (e.g. answering/asking questions)	<i>Low, moderate, high</i>  <i>Which learners?</i>
<b>Learner note-taking</b>	<i>Did all, many, some learners take notes?</i>
<b>Learner attentiveness</b>	<i>Generally good, average, poor.</i>  <i>Which learners were <b>inattentive</b>?</i>  <i>How? (e.g. checking phones)</i>
<b>Learner-learner interaction</b> (informal e.g. borrowing books, pencils, chatting)	<i>Do individuals interact <b>within</b> or <b>across</b> gender groups?</i>
<b>Learner interaction between genders</b>  <i>How do girls and boys seem to get on in class? And out of class?</i>	<i>Good relations, some problems, minimal contact, difficult to say. Give examples</i>
<b>Any examples of 'teasing', bullying, harassment?</b> (in, or entering/leaving class?)	

**APPENDIX E: Focus Group Guide (Learners)**

1. What do you enjoy about English? What don't you enjoy? Why?
2. Do you think your teacher's teaching methods are effective? Why/why not?
3. Does your teacher make you feel empowered in terms of studying English? Why/why not?
4. What are the things your teacher considers to be important in the way you speak and write English? What does he/she discourage?
5. If English is your home language, how does your education in the language improve or challenge your usage of it? If English is not your home language, how does your education in the language improve or challenge your usage of your first language?
6. What do you consider to be important about learning or improving your English?
7. Are your set works the kind of texts that you would read on your own? Why or why not?

**APPENDIX F: Curriculum & Assessment Policy Statement FET English Home Language**



**basic education**

Department:  
 Basic Education  
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER



Our national curriculum is the culmination of our efforts over a period of seventeen years to transform the curriculum bequeathed to us by apartheid. From the start of democracy we have built our curriculum on the values that inspired our Constitution (Act 108 of 1996). The Preamble to the Constitution states that the aims of the Constitution are to:

- heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
  - improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person;
  - lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; and
- build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Education and the curriculum have an important role to play in realising these aims.

In 1997 we introduced outcomes-based education to overcome the curricular divisions of the past, but the experience of implementation prompted a review in 2000. This led to the first curriculum revision: the *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9* and the *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (2002)*.

Ongoing implementation challenges resulted in another review in 2009 and we revised the *Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002)* and the *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12* to produce this document.

From 2012 the two National Curriculum Statements, for *Grades R-9* and *Grades 10-12* respectively, are combined in a single document and will simply be known as the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12*. The *National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-12* builds on the previous curriculum but also updates it and aims to provide clearer specification of what is to be taught and learnt on a term-by-term basis.

The *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools and comprises of the following:

- (a) Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects listed in this document;
- (b) *National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12*; and
- (c) *National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12*.

**MRS ANGIE MOTSHEKGA, MP**  
**MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION**



## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

### 1.1 Background

The *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (NCS)* stipulates policy on curriculum and assessment in the schooling sector.

To improve implementation, the National Curriculum Statement was amended, with the amendments coming into effect in January 2012. A single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy document was developed for each subject to replace Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R-12.

### 1.2 Overview

- (a) The *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (January 2012)* represents a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African schools and comprises the following:
- (i) *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for each approved school subject;*
  - (ii) *The policy document, National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12; and*
  - (iii) *The policy document, National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12 (January 2012).*
- (b) The *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (January 2012)* replaces the two current national curricula statements, namely the
- (i) *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, Government Gazette No. 23406 of 31 May 2002, and*
  - (ii) *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 Government Gazettes, No. 25545 of 6 October 2003 and No. 27594 of 17 May 2005.*
- (c) The national curriculum statements contemplated in subparagraphs b(i) and (ii) comprise the following policy documents which will be incrementally repealed by the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (January 2012)* during the period 2012-2014:
- (i) *The Learning Area/Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for Grades R-9 and Grades 10-12;*
  - (ii) *The policy document, National Policy on assessment and qualifications for schools in the General Education and Training Band, promulgated in Government Notice No. 124 in Government Gazette No. 29626 of 12 February 2007;*
  - (iii) *The policy document, the National Senior Certificate: A qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), promulgated in Government Gazette No.27819 of 20 July 2005;*

## ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE GRADES 10-12

- (iv) *The policy document, An addendum to the policy document, the National Senior Certificate: A qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), regarding learners with special needs, published in Government Gazette, No.29466 of 11 December 2006, is incorporated in the policy document, National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12; and*
  - (v) *The policy document, An addendum to the policy document, the National Senior Certificate: A qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), regarding the National Protocol for Assessment (Grades R-12), promulgated in Government Notice No.1267 in Government Gazette No. 29467 of 11 December 2006.*
- (d) The policy document, *National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12*, and the sections on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy as contemplated in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this document constitute the norms and standards of the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12*. It will therefore, in terms of *section 6A of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996)*, form the basis for the Minister of Basic Education to determine minimum outcomes and standards, as well as the processes and procedures for the assessment of learner achievement to be applicable to public and independent schools.

### 1.3 General aims of the South African Curriculum

- (a) The *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* gives expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools. This curriculum aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives.
- (b) The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 serves the purposes of:
  - equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country;
  - providing access to higher education;
  - facilitating the transition of learners from education institutions to the workplace; and
  - providing employers with a sufficient profile of a learner's competences.
- (c) The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 is based on the following principles:
  - Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population;
  - Active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths;
  - High knowledge and high skills: the minimum standards of knowledge and skills to be achieved at each grade are specified and set high, achievable standards in all subjects;

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- Progression: content and context of each grade shows progression from simple to complex;
  - Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 is sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors;
  - Valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution; and
  - Credibility, quality and efficiency: providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries.
- (d) The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 aims to produce learners that are able to:
- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
  - work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
  - organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
  - collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
  - communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
  - use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
  - demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
- (e) Inclusivity should become a central part of the organisation, planning and teaching at each school. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity.

The key to managing inclusivity is ensuring that barriers are identified and addressed by all the relevant support structures within the school community, including teachers, District-Based Support Teams, Institutional-Level Support Teams, parents and Special Schools as Resource Centres. To address barriers in the classroom, teachers should use various curriculum differentiation strategies such as those included in the Department of Basic Education's *Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning* (2010).

## **APPENDIX G: Language in Education Policy**

### **LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY 14 JULY 1997**

1. The language in education policy documents which follow have been the subject of discussions and debate with a wide range of education stakeholders and role-players. They have also been the subject of formal public comment following their publication on 9 May 1997 (Government Notice No. 383, Vol. 17997).

2. Two policies are announced herewith, namely, the LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN TERMS OF SECTION 3(4)(m) OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT 27 OF 1996), and the NORMS AND STANDARDS REGARDING LANGUAGE POLICY PUBLISHED IN TERMS OF SECTION 6(1) OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT, 1996. While these two policies have different objectives, they complement each other and should at all times be read together rather than separately.

3. Section 4.4 of the Language in Education Policy relates to the current situation. The new curriculum, which will be implemented from 1998, onwards, will necessitate new measures which will be announced in due course.

4. LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY IN TERMS OF SECTION 3(4)(m) OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT 27 OF 1996)

5.

#### 1. PREAMBLE

2. This Language-in-Education Policy Document should be seen as part of a continuous process by which policy for language in education is being developed as part of a national language plan encompassing all sectors of society, including the deaf community. As such, it operates within the following paradigm:

1. In terms of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government, and thus the Department of Education, recognises that our cultural diversity is a valuable national asset and hence is tasked, amongst other things, to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country, including South African Sign Language and the languages referred to in the South African Constitution.

2. The inherited language-in-education policy in South Africa has been fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, and underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination. A number of these discriminatory policies have affected either the access of the learners to the education system or their success within it. 3. The new language in education policy is conceived of as an integral and necessary aspect of the new government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa. It is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged.

4. This approach is in line with the fact that both societal and individual multilingualism are the global norm today, especially on the African continent. As such, it assumes that the learning of more than one language should be general practice and principle in our society. That is to say, being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African. It is constructed also to counter any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism through mutual understanding.

5. A wide spectrum of opinions exists as to the locally viable approaches towards multilingual education, ranging from arguments in favour of the cognitive benefits and cost-effectiveness of teaching through one medium (home language) and learning additional language(s) as subjects, to those drawing on comparative international experience demonstrating that, under appropriate conditions, most learners benefit cognitively and emotionally from the type of structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two-way immersion) programmes. Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's position that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be seen as the normal orientation of our language-in-education policy. With regard to the delivery system, policy will progressively be guided by the results of comparative research, both locally and internationally.

6. The right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual. This right has, however, to be exercised within the overall framework of the obligation on the education system to promote multilingualism.

3. This paradigm also presupposes a more fluid relationship between languages and culture than is generally understood in the Eurocentric model which we have inherited in South Africa. It accepts a priori that there is no contradiction in a multicultural society between a core of common cultural traits, beliefs, practices, etc., and particular sectional or communal cultures. Indeed, the relationship between the two can and should be mutually reinforcing and, if properly managed, should give rise to and sustain genuine respect for the variability of the communities that constitute our emerging nation. 4. AIMS

5. The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education are:

1. to promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
2. to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education;
3. to promote and develop all the official languages;
4. to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including languages used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, and South African Sign Language, as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication;
5. to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching;
6. to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages.

6. POLICY: LANGUAGES AS SUBJECTS

7.

1. All learners shall offer at least one approved language as a subject in Grade 1 and Grade 2.
2. From Grade 3 (Std 1) onwards, all learners shall offer their language of learning and teaching and at least one additional approved language as subjects.
3. All language subjects shall receive equitable time and resource allocation.
4. The following promotion requirements apply to language subjects:

5.

1. In Grade 1 to Grade 4 (Std 2) promotion is based on performance in one language and Mathematics.
2. From Grade 5 (Std 3) onwards, one language must be passed.
3. From Grade 10 to Grade 12 two languages must be passed, one on first language level, and the other on at least second language level. At least one of these languages must be an official language.
4. Subject to national norms and standards as determined by the Minister of Education, the level of achievement required for promotion shall be determined by the provincial education departments.

8. POLICY: LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The language(s) of learning and teaching in a public school must be (an) official language(s).

6. NORMS AND STANDARDS REGARDING LANGUAGE POLICY PUBLISHED IN TERMS OF SECTION 6(1) OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT, 1996

7.

1. INTRODUCTION

2.

1. AIM OF THESE NORMS AND STANDARDS

2.

1. Recognising that diversity is a valuable asset, which the state is required to respect, the aim of these norms and standards is the promotion, fulfilment and development of the state's overarching language goals in school education in compliance with the Constitution, namely:

2.

1. the protection, promotion, fulfilment and extension of the individual's language rights and means of communication in education; and
2. the facilitation of national and international communication through promotion of bi- or multilingualism through cost-efficient and effective mechanisms;
3. to redress the neglect of the historically disadvantaged languages in school education.

3. DEFINITIONS

4. In these norms and standards, unless the context otherwise indicates, words and expressions contained in the definitions in the Act shall have corresponding meanings; and the following words and phrases shall have the following meanings:

1. "the Act" means the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996
2. "the Constitution" means the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996

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3."school district" means a geographical unit as determined by the relevant provincial legislation, or prevailing provincial practice

4."language" means all official languages recognised in the Constitution, and also South African Sign Language, as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication.

### 3.THE PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

4.

1.The parent exercises the minor learner's language rights on behalf of the minor learner. Learners who come of age, are hereafter referred to as the learner, which concept will include also the parent in the case of minor learners.

2.The learner must choose the language of teaching upon application for admission to a particular school.

3.Where a school uses the language of learning and teaching chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, the school must admit the learner.

4.Where no school in a school district offers the desired language as a medium of learning and teaching, the learner may request the provincial education department to make provision for instruction in the chosen language, and section 5.3.2 must apply. The provincial education department must make copies of the request available to all schools in the relevant school district.

### 5.THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL

6.

1.Subject to any law dealing with language in education and the Constitutional rights of learners, in determining the language policy of the school, the governing body must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism through using more than one language of learning and teaching, and/or by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, or through other means approved by the head of the provincial education department. (This does not apply to learners who are seriously challenged with regard to language development, intellectual development, as determined by the provincial department of education.)

2.Where there are less than 40 requests in Grades 1 to 6, or less than 35 requests in Grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade not already offered by a school in a particular school district, the head of the provincial department of education will determine how the needs of those learners will be met, taking into account

3.

1.the duty of the state and the right of the learners in terms of the Constitution, including

2.the need to achieve equity,

3.the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices,

4.practicability, and

5.the advice of the governing bodies and principals of the public schools concerned.

### 7.THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

8.

1.The provincial education department must keep a register of requests by learners for teaching in a language medium which cannot be accommodated by schools.

2.In the case of a new school, the governing body of the school in consultation with the relevant provincial authority determines the language policy of the new school in accordance with the regulations promulgated in terms of section 6(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996.

3.It is reasonably practicable to provide education in a particular language of learning and teaching if at least 40 in Grades 1 to 6 or 35 in Grades 7 to 12 learners in a particular grade request it in a particular school.

4.The provincial department must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources. It must also explore ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools and or school districts which cannot be provided with and or offer additional languages of teaching in the home language(s) of learners.

### 9.FURTHER STEPS

10.

1.Any interested learner, or governing body that is dissatisfied with any decision by the head of the provincial department of education, may appeal to the MEC within a period of 60 days.

2.Any interested learner, or governing body that is dissatisfied with any decision by the MEC, may approach

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the Pan South African Language Board to give advice on the constitutionality and/or legality of the decision taken, or may dispute the MEC's decision by referring the matter to the Arbitration Foundation of South Africa.

3.A dispute referred to the Arbitration Foundation of South Africa must be finally resolved in accordance with the Rules of the Arbitration Foundation of Southern Africa by an arbitrator or arbitrators appointed by the Foundation.

## **APPENDIX H: Textbook analysis guide**

The following guided the analysis of the textbook

- Book details such as titles, year of publication, authors, etc.
- Aims as set out by the author/s
- Aims in the box below as set out in the textbook.
- CAPS alignment
- The methodology/teaching approach embedded in the textbook: strategies such as group discussion, debate, peer teaching, etc
- Linguistic identity and social cohesion as reflected in analysis of key topics: grammatical and linguistic conventions, how linguistic differences are accommodated within the texts, how difference and identity are managed in learning material
- Approaches, schools of thoughts, whose knowledge is represented in the textbook: the representation of identities, the types of literature emphasised as important for learning, and the cultural traditions from which these derive