

**Language and Identity in the Academic  
Performance and Portraiture of Black BEd  
Foundation Phase students**

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**2015**

**Language and Identity in the Academic Performance  
and Portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase  
students**

by

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Faculty of Education  
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**PRETORIA  
OCTOBER 2015**

## DEDICATION AND TRIBUTE

I dedicate this thesis to my late father, Dr David Buti Maseko, who set a stalwart and sterling example as a 1<sup>st</sup> generation university graduate, by demonstrating that an impoverished and disadvantaged background does not have to dictate one's destiny. I salute him, for the fortitude and resilience he evinced, by defying the odds, to pursue a career in Medicine and earn the MBBCh degree through which he philanthropically served his people, thereby gaining the honour of having a school named after him, namely, Ngaka (Dr) Maseko High School. This PhD is a tribute to his memory and a token of appreciation and applause for the inspiration, legacy and gift of education he has bestowed on us, his posterity. I am exceedingly grateful for the short yet full life that left such an indelible mark...He died at only 37 years old while on a philanthropic trip in the Winterveld area on the outskirts of Pretoria. He will always be fondly remembered by posterity as a trailblazer...Until we meet again on the other side...

This is also in loving memory of another life that left this realm too soon... my brother, Kenneth Masite Maseko and others who have gone before this thesis could see the light of day...

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---

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To family, friends, colleagues and the long list of all the people, who, in some way, played a pivotal role in making this research journey possible, I thank you profusely. I join my hands in a gesture of applause and special appreciation. Abundant blessings to you all!

---oOo---

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

---

I, Patricia Barbara Neo Maseko, declare that this thesis titled *Language and identity in the academic performance and portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase students* which I hereby submit for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor in Early Childhood Education, is my own unaided work which has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

---

Patricia Barbara Neo Maseko

September 2015

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## DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

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### CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

This is to certify that I, Dr. S. I. Dube (Ph.D., Religion and Literature, University of Toronto), edited the following dissertation paying particular attention to the language used. No changes were made that would affect the meaning intended by the author.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN THE ACADEMIC PORTRAITURE AND  
PERFORMANCE OF BLACK B.ED FOUNDATION PHASE STUDENTS

By, PATRICIA BARBARA NEO MASEKO

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Philosophiae Doctor

[EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION]

Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria

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Date: 30 September, 2015

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Early Childhood Education

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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BFP	Black African B Ed Foundation Phase
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CT3S	Critical Theory Synergised Student Support
DBET	Department of Basic Education and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EU	European Union
FP	Foundation Phase
HL	Home Language
L2	English as a Second Language
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MT	Mother Tongue
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OLE	Optimal Learning Environment
PDI	Previously Disadvantaged Individual
PIE=AR	Pragmatic Idealism in Education = Appropriate Responsiveness
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
3xPoET	3 Pillars of Educational Transformation
SACE	South African Council of Education
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SKAVS	Skills, Attitudes, Knowledge and Values

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## ABSTRACT

### **Language and Identity in the Academic Performance and Portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase students**

This thesis was an exploration of the convergence of the phenomena of language and identity in relation to Black African BEd Foundation Phase (BFP) L2 students within the context of a historically white institution. The study looked at the implications for epistemological access and ontological development, in relation to these phenomena, within a transformative and critical emancipatory ideological orientation. With this in mind, the review of the literature focused on language and identity, using the theoretical lens of the Transformative Paradigm theoretical framework and the associated lenses of Transformative Learning, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) theory. The study adopted a Qualitative Research paradigmatic position which was in keeping with a bricoleuric multi-perspectival stance. To this end a representative sample of the cohort under study was examined from an interpretivist phenomenological perspective.

The data revealed the epistemological and ontological implications as well as the concomitant power relations of the hegemony and dominance of English as one of the two media of instruction, deconstruction and construction. The underlying intention was to make a contribution towards the development of strategies that will promote a culture of critical consciousness and reflectivity. This was done in pursuance of an agenda for transformative praxis and in consideration of critical emancipatory research theory where the participants in this study were regarded as co-constructors and co-negotiators.

Recommendations pertaining to the cohort's support are proffered based, inter alia, on their responses, the researchers' observations, and the researcher's experiential insights. It is envisaged that these recommendations will have positive ramifications for scholarly transformative and cyclical emancipatory agency which will, in turn, have a positive bearing on the participants' roles as Black South African Foundation Phase education practitioners.

## LIST OF KEY WORDS

- Identity
- Language
- Black BEd Foundation Phase students
- Transformative Paradigm
- Critical Theory
- Critical Emancipatory Research
- Critical consciousness
- Convergence
- Transformative Paradigm
- Transformative praxis

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# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW AND ORIENTATION

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis will focus on the convergence of the phenomena of language and identity, with specific regard to their bearing on the academic performance and portraiture of Black African BEd Foundation Phase at the University of Pretoria. In this study, the convergence of these phenomena is seen to have epistemological and ontological implications. Furthermore, in view of the associations of these phenomena with cognitive and affective factors, the study uses as a point of departure, the assertion that a university education should raise the intellectual and moral tone of individuals. In this case the individuals are members of the cohort referred to above. The premise of this study thus connects to the view that the academia should give due consideration to emotional, moral and intellectual formation rather than mere memorizing of information (Bignold, 2012). This is an echo of the opinion expressed by Newman (1852 in Ker, 1976), in consonance with the positional orientation of this study. Despite the distance in space and time, the study finds apt resonance in the stance that:

A university's training aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste...at giving sobriety to the ideas of the age. It is education which gives a clear and conscious view of one's own opinions and judgements, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them and a force in urging them (Newman, 1852 in Ker, 1976:154).

The above quotation is an apt encapsulation of this study's underlying thematic concerns and transformational agenda pertaining to language and identity as convergent components in academic performance and portraiture. These phenomena are, for purposes of the arguments presented in this study, associated with intellectual and affective factors. In spite of the significant time and spatial difference Newman's ideas bear relevance and are valid for the assumptions and orientation of this thesis.

The study is positioned within a transformative and emancipatory theoretical framework that foregrounds the role of language and identity as factors that have a significant bearing on the academic performance of Black African BEd Foundation Phase students (henceforth BFP students or the BFP cohort) at the University of Pretoria. In this study, the term “Black” is also used in reference to “L2 speakers of English” because English is not their first language. A further delineation of this cohort is that they come from schools that are situated in rural, peri-urban or urban areas which were designated as Black African residential areas under apartheid rule.

The medium of instruction is, more often than not, in principle, English but in practice, learners are taught in their respective Home Languages, as is confirmed by the data in Chapter 4. The primary intention was to interrogate the assumption, and respond to the questions relating to the convergence of identity and language as key factors in this cohort’s academic performance and portraiture. This was viewed with specific reference to their status as students in a historically white institution, in this instance, the University of Pretoria. It should be pointed out that performance, within this study, refers specifically to both the ability to participate actively in a team or group discussions and the ability to communicate effectively within academic contexts.

The intersection of language and identity, including the extent to which they posit themselves as inter-connected threads that are significant factors in performance formed the fulcrum of this study. In the study, language was linked to epistemological access – which is associated with the ability to reflect an understanding of concepts, while identity was connected to the cohort’s ontological development and identity formation. The convergence of language and identity into an intertwined strand is, for purposes of this study, referred to as ‘epistology’. This study brought to the fore the creation of the phenomenon of epistology in the academic performance and academic portraiture of this cohort. I proffer this strand as a novel idea pertaining to the role of the interconnectedness of language and identity in academic performance and portraiture in relation to the cohort under study. A further discussion and visual imaging of the construct of epistology and its association with the creation of learning environments will be presented later in the study.

The study endeavours to make a contribution to the corpus of knowledge that is dedicated to breaking the vicious cycle of multi-dimensional under-performance through a collaborative approach involving key role-players. The under-performance is linked to several key factors which will, however, not form part of the key focus of the study. The issues raised in this study bear relevance, in light of, inter alia, the observation that South Africa has been ranked 37<sup>th</sup> out of a 45 nation sample in a study on Early Childhood Education. The 2012 study, conducted by the Economist Intelligence unit, was commissioned by the Lien Foundation (2012) and used quality indicators such as the overall level of training of teachers and curriculum design as measures.

It is worth noting, for illustrative purposes that, in contrast, Finland ranked 1<sup>st</sup> based on the attention it paid to these aforesaid indicators. The Finnish success story is brought into focus, albeit implicitly, as a reference point with regard to the cyclical impact of education. Sahlberg (2007) shows how Finland rose from an agrarian economy that had a poor economic rating to a nation that has been ranked 4 times as the world's most competitive economy. Finland has been lauded for turning round its agrarian and declining economy to become one of the leading economically viable nations with a notable knowledge economy (Sahlberg, 2007). This has been ascribed to the high regard for quality education in general and a specific focus on multi-layered and multi-pronged high quality in Foundation Phase Education.

It could be rightly argued that the Finnish success story is a debatable example of comparison for the South African context. However, this example is used for illustrative purposes only and the intention is neither to make a case for its wholesale adoption nor is it an advocacy to parrot or mimic it. The reason for mentioning it here is to elicit and prompt a response that will result in the interrogation of the factors that account for the Finnish success and find parallel areas that could facilitate at least partial replication in the South African context. The lecture by Jukka Alava, former director and emeritus professor in the Institute of Educational Leadership at the University of Jyväskylä, is instructive in this regard. In this lecture themed, "Education in Finland: working in a paradise or wasteland", held at the University of Pretoria in October 2014, (In-tuition, 2014:23) he gave an overview of Finland's proverbial rising from the ashes. The turn-around strategy involved placing

a high premium on education and reinforcing that agenda by elevating the teaching profession to a place of prominence.

The link between education and the economy was not part of the direct focus of the study. However, it is worth noting that the improvement of maintenance of quality education standards has implications for the overall well-being of society. Jansen (2011:100), in his critique of South Africa' education system, draws attention to the disparity between the substantial investment in the education system – which at the time of writing constituted 20% of government spending – and the relatively low outputs. He voices the concern that, despite a significant investment in education, “...the evidence is consistent over a number of years that the South African education system is one of the least productive in the southern African region.” According to him, there are common indicators that show a repeat pattern of low productivity, and these include grade repetition and high dropout rates. However, in his critique of the South African education system Jansen (2011) makes mention of instances of schools that demonstrated good practice. This is in tacit support of the case the study is making for transformative praxis and critical consciousness on the part education practitioners. He points out several key constituents of the systems that reflect efficacy such as discipline and the maintenance of good quality standards. In another study, (Jansen and Taylor, 2003) the South African state's efforts of educational reform in post-apartheid South Africa are lauded thus implicitly pointing towards the potential for a successful transformative turn-around strategy.

The concern for quality education is not just a concern for the improvement of education for education's sake, but also because of an underlying assumption that quality education has cyclical positive implications for the improvement of students' living conditions and, ultimately, for the improvement of academic performance (Jensen,2009). The sentiment that the improvement of education is regarded as pivotal for development has, by implication, been echoed by the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande in his (9<sup>th</sup> December 2014) address to Deans and Heads of Schools of Education when he pointed out:

Of all the faculties at universities education faculties directly support other education sub-sectors through the teachers you produce and develop for these sectors, and through your research, knowledge production and community engagement activities in these sub-sectors.



It should be borne in mind that the aim of improving education standards for the Foundation Phase pre-service student cohort is not an end in itself. It is a means towards the end of improving quality standards of education while being cognisant of the pivotal role that Foundation Phase Education plays in the education system as a whole. In his speech, Nzimande (2014) highlighted the need for focusing on the shape and quality of teacher education. He further expressed concern at the shortage of Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers. He stressed that it was important to not only draw attention to the need to increase the number of student enrolments but to concomitantly place a high premium on "...what actually happens in teacher education programmes and the quality of the teachers produced through these programmes". The issue of shape and quality is particularly pertinent to this study because of its emancipatory concern in contributing to the strengthening of the Foundation Phase Education process.

The link between education and the economy is reinforced through the assertions by Jensen (2009) and Bernstein (1990) respectively that socio-economic factors play a significant role in performance. Even though this was not the direct focus of this study it bears relevance, because of the profile of the BFP cohort. Bernstein's (1990) observation regarding the complex interrelationship between different aspects of society, the implications for the distribution of resources, and the effects of low socio-economic status on academic performance is brought into view in this study (Jensen, 2009). In spite of the significant strides that have been made in school enrolments there is a concern that the situation remains critical in many parts of the African continent. The EFA Global Monitoring report (2011:3) adds to the concern by pointing out the effects of poor nutrition on learners in the Sub-Saharan region which, in turn, has negative implications for scholastic performance. The report also draws attention to how "prospects for entry, progression and completion of primary school are closely linked to household circumstances" and the fact that, "children who are poor, rural or from ethnic or linguistic minorities face higher risk of dropping out". Even though this was said with specific reference to the situation in Senegal it is reflective of the South African context.

The injunction of the report on all counts pertaining to these anomalous situations is that there is a need to tackle them on several fronts. These include the implementation of policies that are aimed at reducing poverty-related factors and

problems linked to education quality and increasing the income of poor families (Global monitoring report, 2011:3). The report further makes a case for relevant literacy programmes that are supported by strong leadership as well as appropriate methods and language of instruction. Namibia is cited as a case in point of a country that has, to its credit, put in place plans for aligning literacy programmes with local needs, contextually appropriate curriculum development, design of fit-for-purpose learning material and training of instructors as well as decentralised evaluation.

The argument here is that one cannot refer to the improvement of education standards without referring to the factors that have a negative impact on performance. It is argued during the course of this study that the quality of teacher training, with specific reference to the components of language and identity, is critical because of the role of these factors in the academic performance of the cohort under study. It is envisaged that the findings of this study will contribute towards a means that will make a significant contribution towards this emancipatory end.

However, it is fair to point out that in spite of the negativity and apparent gloom surrounding the status of education in South Africa there are significant positive changes that have been made in post-Apartheid South Africa, as reported for example, in a report about education reform by Jansen & Taylor (2003). In this case study of education reform the focus is on three interventions, namely, education finance reform, curriculum reform and the teacher rationalization process. The purpose of the report was to contribute towards the knowledge base of education reforms, with specific reference to developing countries. In this report, the state of South Africa is lauded for succeeding in generating appropriate governing frameworks and centralising the education system, despite the complexities of the unequal society it inherited. The report points out the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework as a means to facilitate and effect systemic and systems change. The Department of Education and Department of Labour (2002:131) stipulates in this regard that:

The National Qualifications Framework was established as an emblem and an instrument of the single national high-quality education and training system that democratic South Africa aspired to create. Thousands of South Africans have participated in its shaping and development. In a remarkably

short space of time the NQF has become woven into the fabric of the South African learning system.

A further commendation is made regarding South Africa's success in (at the time of the report) achieving among the highest participation rates in African education. Special attention is also drawn to the high participation rates for girls, as opposed to other countries in the continent. This achievement is laudable particularly in the light of the challenges in the previous era and infrastructural challenges. These are alluded to in this chapter (See 1.9). The expenditure on education, in an effort to overcome these challenges, is mentioned in a different discussion by Jansen (2011) albeit in a tone of disillusionment. Regardless of this, however, the report on education reform by Jansen & Taylor (2002) provides significant evidence of the good intention to make strides in education. This study is, in some way, an effort to contribute towards those initial thoughts of reform.

## **1.2 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE**

As already pointed out, one of the study's underlying agenda was to contribute towards the transformation of the Foundation Phase Education landscape as it pertains specifically to BFP students and their status in a historically white institution. The intention was to look at the convergence between language and identity and how such convergence contributes to the epistemological access and ontological development of the students as part of their academic progression, and with particular implications for their professional development.

The cascading effect of the transformation mentioned above – in terms of the potential to influence Foundation Phase Education teaching and learning – is brought into tangential focus. Academic identity that is geared towards professional identity formation is also mentioned, albeit briefly. The study has strong critical pedagogy and transformative learning leanings, which are in keeping with Mezirow's (2000) view that transformative learning is a means towards meaning shifting that involves profound personal change Mezirow (2000). A further reason for the stance adopted in this study is the view of the Black identity as it pertains to this cohort. Studies such as the ones conducted by, for example, Stewart (2002,2008) provide evidence of the identity-related challenges and struggles of Black students who have to negotiate meaning on various fronts within the unfamiliar contexts of white

institutions. Even though these studies pertained to the American context they bear relevance for the South African context and specifically for the cohort that is the subject of this study. In both contexts, that is American and South African, there is a need for an emancipatory approach that will counteract the negative effects of the afore-mentioned identity struggles and their effect on the portraiture and performance of these Black cohorts.

The study's research agenda was positioned as part of a collective responsiveness towards the national mandate to address the dearth of appropriately qualified Black Foundation Phase Education teachers, by providing quality teacher education programmes. This clarion call resulted in an inter-institutional EU-funded collaborative research initiative that had, as its primary objective, the development and strengthening of Foundation Phase teacher education programmes.

In a study conducted by Green, Parker, Dawn and Hall (2011) they highlighted the fact that the demand for qualified Foundation Phase teachers exceeds the supply. As will be pointed out later, this fact has circular implications for academic performance and, thus, falls within the radar of this study, albeit obliquely. It should also be pointed out that this study does not discount the multi-layered work that has been done thus far in teacher education programmes, nor does it purport to provide a panacea for the multifaceted problems that are a feature of teacher education in general and Foundation Phase education, in particular. As revealed through the findings and recommendations, the intention of the study is to make a contribution towards providing emancipatory and transformative solutions for the language and identity-related challenges of the BFP cohort.

The study used the call by the DHET to develop and strengthen the Foundation Phase BEd as a point of departure for examining the factors that have a bearing on the improvement of the academic performance of the Black Foundation Phase cohort that is examined here. While the ultimate aim of the DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training) is to improve the entire Foundation Phase teaching spectrum this does not necessarily fall within the immediate ambit of this study. There is, however, an underlying contention in this study that the improvement of the academic performance of Foundation Phase teachers will invariably contribute to the improvement of the quality of the FP teachers and, consequently, the performance of learners in the Foundation Phase. In turn, it is envisaged that these improvements

will have a positive impact on Basic education with positive ramifications for education as a whole. Such an assumption in interrelated societal transformation through improvements in education is supported by others such as Jensen (2009) & Jansen (2011).

The views of Bernstein (1990) regarding the role of meaning-making systems and pedagogical codes of transmission and acquisition in education, also informed the study's investigation. Furthermore, the study's rationale was informed by the need to contribute towards the increase and successful completion of studies of these students. As such, the thesis can be positioned within the context of empowerment and critical emancipatory theory (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2007; Mahlomaholo, 2009). That is to say, the study was partially couched within a critical emancipatory research orientation, which also has as its aims both a focus on transformative endeavour and an achievement of emancipatory consciousness-raising (Grinberg, 2003; Mahlomaholo, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008). As will be explained during the course of the thematic discussion, this study adopts the theoretical orientation of a bricolage.

Of further pertinence to this study, therefore, is the view that “bricoleurs, as critical researchers, take into account the epistemological and ontological diversity of the social fabric [while acknowledging] that ontology and epistemology are linked inextricably in ways that shape the task of the researcher” (Kincheloe et al., 2007:170). Thus, in this study there is a leaning towards the theoretical modus operandi of a bricolage meaning that there is a measure of theoretical negotiation in pursuit of the best theoretical position of attaining the fulfilment of the underlying emancipatory agenda of the study. This explains the use of the Transformative Paradigm as an overarching theoretical framework in tandem with its associated theories.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

As pointed out, (in 1.2 above) this study was undertaken as part of a collaborative and collective effort by national institutions of higher education and in response to the mandate by the DHET to improve and develop BEd Foundation Phase Programmes. In this study language is regarded as a cognitive factor which has implications for epistemological access. Identity is regarded as an affective factor

with implications for ontological development and the acquisition of appropriate graduate attributes. For purposes of this study, both these factors were envisioned as forming a nexus that has a bearing on the academic performance and portraiture of the cohort. This ultimately has implications for throughput in relation to the cohort under study. The significance of the study thus lies in its potential to make a contribution in this regard.

At the time of conceptualisation of this study, the University of Pretoria, stipulated a dual language mode of instruction:

Afrikaans and English are to be used and developed as academic languages in order to achieve excellence in academic communication (University of Pretoria Language policy document number R16/10).

The students that were the focus of this study attended English medium classes. The primary distinguishing feature of these students was that they were L2 speakers of English; that is, English was their second or even third language. The study looked at the implications of language, as a cognitive factor, for their academic performance, particularly in modules where lexical/semantic comprehension of the text contributed significantly towards meaning-making and epistemological access. The study, therefore, pursued the argument that language should not be regarded in the narrow sense of knowledge of the structures and vocabulary of English or vehicle for communicating academic discourse, but as an ideological construct which has implications for the students' identity as members of the academic community.

The importance of the study hinges on its intention to contribute towards the academic success of student teachers, with specific reference to the BFP cohort, by looking at identity and language as significant factors in their academic success and professional progression. Of further significance is its potential to add significant value to the vision to improve the capacity and quality of both initial and continuing teacher education and development programmes.

It should be pointed out though that the thrust of the study lies, primarily, in its envisaged contribution towards enhancing the quality of initial teacher education as it pertains specifically to the convergence of language and identity in the academic success of Black BEd Foundation Phase (BFP) students.

## 1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

More often than not, the students who form part of the study's cohort are L2 speakers of English who are also first generation university students. These two factors are related to language and identity, respectively. According to the Bernsteinian (1990) frame of reference, there is a codification system that disadvantages those who enter the system of higher education from low socio-economic backgrounds while privileging those from higher income groups (Bernstein, 1990; Jensen, 2009). In other words, if a student was raised in an environment where English was the lingua franca it would be easier for him/her to assimilate information that is codified in English. What this means is that students who have had prior exposure to English and who are, therefore, L1 speakers of English will be in a better position to cope with English in a context where it is used as a medium of instruction. In contrast, students who have had limited prior exposure to English would be challenged when they had to access/retrieve information in the unfamiliar (to them) code of academic language (Bernstein, 1990).

This language limitation is also related to the system of meritocracy in education (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004), a further fixture and feature that affects performance. This means that those who have not had the advantage of exposure to codes that are compatible with the codes used in the academia will often fall into what is often referred to as the at-risk category. This categorisation in itself carries the potential of stigmatising the very students it is meant to help. A further compounding variable in the at-risk-students situational canvas is, alluded to earlier, "chronic economic deprivation can create environments that undermine the development of self and the capacity for self-determination" (Jensen, 2009:8). That is to say, the language limitations identified above have direct implications for identity and self-esteem; implications which further impact student performance.

There is little documented evidence regarding the convergence of identity and language as factors that contribute towards the performance of the BFP cohort within the referential frame of "epistology." This construct will, however, be discussed at a later stage in this thesis. A further compounding factor is the fact that the academic performance of these students has often been approached and 'diagnosed' from what Gee (1990) and Street (1995) refer to as the autonomous model. A distinction is made between the autonomous model and the ideological

model, with the former referring to ‘individual cognition...and the intrinsic characteristics that literacy is assumed to have...’ and the latter referring to “literacy as a set of practices that are grounded in specific contexts and linked to power structures in society” (Street, 2001:433).

According to the autonomous model, language and literacy are regarded as merely print encoding and decoding processes with little thought to the other factors that come into play (Boughey, 2000, 2005; Morrow, 2007). Gee (1990) and Street (1995) critique the autonomous model of looking at language proficiency through a remedial lens where students are pathologised and regarded as being in need of remediation. Boughey (2005) argues that, since the diagnosis is somewhat erroneous the intervention will also be flawed and inappropriate.

The study problematized the convergence of language and identity by situating it within the developmental context of the strengthening of the BEd Foundation Phase as it pertains specifically to the Black cohort. This underlying developmental concern necessitated a transformational approach towards the convergence of language and identity in the academia with specific reference to the BFP student cohort. As a result, the study argues that paying attention to the convergence in academic performance and the graduate attributes that are appropriate for pre-service teachers is pertinent to education transformation discourse in general. In a nutshell, in view of the transformational agenda of this thesis there is an inherent attempt to proffer insights into solutions for the problems that have been identified as being linked to epistemology and ontology.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The key question arising from this problem statement is this:

*How do language and identity, as convergent components, affect the academic portraiture and performance of Black BEd Foundation Phase (L2) students?*

The sub-questions emanating from this are:

- How do Black BEd Foundation Phase students cope with English as a medium of instruction in an institution of higher learning?



- How does language influence cognition (knowledge reception and production) with reference to the BFP cohort?
- What effect does a student's Black African, L2 speaker of English identity have on their performance?

## **1.6 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

The research aimed to contribute towards the improvement of the Foundation Phase Education programme, as per the dictates of the EU/DHET research initiative by:

- examining a representative sample of the cohort under study to determine the extent to which language and identity bear relevance for their academic success;
- exploring the reality and implications of the dominance of English as one of the two media of instruction, deconstruction and construction at the University of Pretoria;
- presenting recommendations that will contribute to the development of strategies that will have a bearing on the retention and successful completion of the BEd programme by the Black BEd Foundation Phase students and;
- making a contribution towards the promotion of a culture of continuous and consistent multi-layered reflectivity and critical consciousness that will culminate in a scholarly and equitable critique.

## **1.7 ASSUMPTIONS**

The assumptions presented here could constitute potential bias (Padgett, 1998). The first of the concomitant assumptions of the study is that language and identity jointly have implications for the academic performance of the students since they find themselves in unfamiliar territory which can, at times, be regarded as hostile and which carries the underlying threat of othering them (Boughey, 2005).

A second assumption accruing from this concerns the unequal power relations that are embodied in communication, thus pointing towards inequity (Janks, 2010).

Bourdieu (1997) maintains that the opportunities learners get to speak and the variety of English they speak is determined by the dominant culture which, in this case, is the culture of the institution. Bakhtin's (1981) theory of language also complements ontological theories of learning because speakers find themselves in various contexts in which they have to constantly negotiate meaning in an unfamiliar linguistic context. His theory of language supports the perception that speech utterances are more than conveyed content, because they also position the speaker in relation to the context and other socio-cultural groups. As such, the value of speech cannot be understood simply outside of the context and culture within which that speech is constructed and the individuals who make the utterances.

Furthermore, it should be noted that culture also has to do with the institutional culture, which is about the way of doing things in academia. There is often a dissonance between the students' culture (way of being and way of doing things) and the culture of academia. The culture of academia and its ways of doing things also fall within the construct of codification as conceived by Bernstein (1990). In a sense, there is often added pressure to contend with the institutional standards of operation where the students who falls under the investigative lens of this study are 'othered' (Bougey, 2005; Blommaert, 2010), directly or indirectly through their interactions. Such perceptions of institutional pressures have implications for students' own motivation which, in turn, has a bearing on their performance (Bandura, 1999).

Third, the Black students who demonstrate adequate communicative competence in English are not necessarily in a better position academically. That is, even if they are able to communicate in English, it is often at a rudimentary level (at least by certain academic standards). Cummins (1996) refers to this level of mastery as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills), which does not necessarily position the students to write texts that comply with the expected academic writing standards, for example. In order for them to engage with academic texts at the expected level they should, instead, have CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) which they often do not have. The fact that they do not usually have the tools and the code to engage critically with academic discourse often places them at an academic disadvantage (Bernstein, 1990). In tacit cognisance of the anomalous situation of students not being in a position of constructing texts that comply with academic

writing standards, Rall (2002) makes a case for the need to explicitly teach students the contextually appropriate conventions of academic writing.

The fourth, and last, implicit assumption is that students' academic portraiture is informed by affective factors related to identity. To some extent, the negative perceptions that are held about teachers, particularly in the Black communities that these students come from, can be regarded as a contributory factor to identity related perceptions. This, however, is based on information that was gathered anecdotally and does not fall within the ambit of the study's scrutiny. The PIRLS (2006) report is cited as an affirmation of the need for qualified and effective teachers. This thus, further points out the importance of developing student factors, such as the ability to adapt to a new institutional culture and competence in using both their home languages and academic English.

In addition, there is an emphasis on the significance of creating enabling environment that will promote academic performance as well as social and emotional engagement. A concomitant assumption is the issue of a cyclical impact (Teese & Polesel, 2003) that results in a shortage of pre-service students, which, in turn, leads to a dearth of qualified Foundation Phase teachers. In other words, the shortage in pre-service BEd Foundation Phase students will invariably result in a shortage in teachers of that phase which will, subsequently affect the quality of Foundation Phase provisioning.

Cyclical impact expresses the fact that quality of education has economic implications, which eventually perpetuate the vicious cycle of disadvantages arising from codification (Tease & Polesel, 2003; Bernstein, 1990; Jensen, 2009). This study posits the view that the provision of quality Foundation Phase teacher education has the potential to improve the Foundation Phase Education in general, which in turn, can contribute towards the breaking of the negative cyclical ramifications of codification. In order to appropriately position this study's position and orientation, however, it is important to provide a contextual backdrop.

## **1.8 ASSOCIATED KEY CONSTRUCTS**

The key constructs as they are conceptualised and used within this study are discussed here.

### **1.8.1 ACADEMIC PORTRAITURE**

In the context of this study the term carries connotations of the portrayal and delineation of students by themselves or others within academia. Portraiture also has to do with a depiction that arises out of the piecing together of themes. In the case of the BFP pre-service cohort it refers to how this cohort views themselves as gleaned from their narratives.

The construct of portraiture is in close alignment with the concept of bricolage (Kincheloe et al., 2007) where the researcher is viewed as a bricoleur who can be regarded as a employs various methodological and theoretical negotiator in pursuit of a specific ideal while also making provision for the emergence of new insights. That is, how this cohort is portrayed within academia is linked to academic identity (Mahlomaholo, 2009) which, as a result of praxis orientation (Freire & Shor, 1987) also has ramifications for professional identity as well.

### **1.8.2 PRAXIS**

Freire's (1970:36) conceptualisation of education finds apt exemplification in this study given its emancipatory leanings as he conceives of 'education as a practice of freedom' and praxis as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. His postulations hold that knowledge should be linked to 'dialogue that is characterised by participatory open communication focused around critical enquiry... [and] is a social praxis' (Freire, 1970:36). In other words, for Freire, praxis involves a critical consciousness through which one demonstrates the ability for reflexive thinking that leads to commensurate action. This is how praxis is utilised within this study.

### **1.8.3 CRITICAL PEDAGOGY**

Critical Pedagogy refers to a praxis-oriented teaching and learning approach in which students are encouraged to be reflective and to critique meaning. In this theoretical approach there is a concerted effort at inculcating a constructivist critical consciousness in students (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and low socio-economic contexts) that is strongly connected to the notion of praxis.

The view held by Breuing (2011) is that critical pedagogy should strengthen pronouncement of its social justice orientation in tandem with its constructivist orientation. Furthermore, Rall (2002:3) contends that:

the power of critical pedagogy rests in its hope for social transformation, a transformation that takes place when the oppressed [read in the study's context as previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs)] are empowered through education to see themselves as actors in the world.

This view ties in with study's orientation regarding the need for individual transformation (in this instance, with specific reference to the BFP cohort) which carries ramifications for societal transformation. There is a further resonance with the study's perspective that Critical Pedagogy should be regarded as a vehicle for students' attainment of critical consciousness (Servage, 2008).

#### **1.8.4 CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

This is a term that is associated by Freire (1970). He believed that education should serve an emancipatory role of empowering students to make a critical and conscious link between education and social contexts. Rall's (2002) view, however, is that critical thinking should not be misconstrued as critical consciousness. He points out that the difference lies in making a distinction between what is useful (critical thinking as used in academic discourse) and what is valuable (critical consciousness – in its application for emancipatory purposes). It should be pointed out that these terms are not treated as mutually exclusive in this study. They are regarded as compatible and should co-exist in the sense that provision should be made for addressing both in the context of transforming the Foundation Phase Education landscape.

#### **1.8.5 CRITICAL MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

The development of moral maturity alongside the capacity to think critically and weigh various life options at a cognitive level is, in this study, referred to as critical moral consciousness. Mustakova-Possardt (2004) makes an advocacy for the need to integrate the spiritual dimension as, envisioned within the construct of critical moral consciousness, the organising principle of life. Her opinion is that this principle should be engaged, on an on-going basis in the pursuit of ideals of moral rectitude. For purposes of this study, critical moral consciousness is associated strongly with

ontological development and the ability to make decisions that will contribute towards one's academic development.

### **1.8.6 Critical Literacy**

This construct is taken from Freire's (1970) conceptualisation of reading both the word and the world. This means that literacy should be extended to go beyond the mere interpretation of text, but to also look at the dialogical dimensions and power relations (Bourdieu 1991). In this regard Bizell (1992) argues that teaching academic discourse can be equated with liberatory education in the Freirian sense. The aforementioned view is connected to the notion of critical literacy as not being just about the text on the page but the issues that are connected to or that emanate from the social world. Within the context of this study the term is associated with the overarching lens of the Transformative Paradigm and the associated theories of Transformative Learning, Critical Emancipatory Research Theory, and Critical Pedagogy.

### **1.8.7 TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING**

The definition of learning as 'the construction of meaning by the learner him/herself who then uses it to create something new' (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2009: CD), is an appropriate point of departure for understanding the construct of transformative learning as it pertains to this study. Transformative learning is premised on the idea that learning should go beyond the surface and superficial knowledge acquisition and move towards emancipatory thinking that entails the constructive critique of commonly-held beliefs and ways of operation (Mezirow, 1991; 1995, 2000). Brookfield (2003) believes that for critical pedagogy to have an impact transformative learning is required.

Since this study focused on teachers in the making, transformative learning ultimately also had implications for Transformative Professional Development (Servage, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Sullivan & Glanz, 2006). It should be noted that the approach of transformative learning requires systems thinking (Bausch, 2011) in which there is realisation among all the role-players that there is a need to create *optimal learning environments* (OLE's -own coinage) that will facilitate this transformation (Mezirow, 2005). The concept of intelligent

accountability, which results in professional responsibility, is strongly linked to the envisaged transformation (Fullan, 2005) that needs to be dealt with at an individual student level. In pursuance of the study's orientation the concept of transformation is associated with Okri's (2015) vision of the renaissance being ultimately about individual transformation.

### **1.8.8 CODIFICATION**

According to Bernstein (1990:13), class relations “generate... [and] legitimate certain forms of communication which transmit dominant and dominated codes.” The code of the academia thus becomes part of the dominant code which is used as a regulatory measure of quality and a means of power. The aforementioned regulatory measure is connected to the academia's meritocratic system (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004), which usually does not take into account or concern itself with the issue of prior exposure. Those who have not had exposure to the dominant code, by virtue of their class and or socio-economic backgrounds, are implicitly or explicitly regarded as inferior (Boughey, 2005).

This traditional operational academic framework privileges an autonomous model which, according to Street (1995), is based on the perception that literacy comprises simply of encoding and decoding neutral text. This implies that texts can be read without any consideration of context. This framework is regarded as limiting in this study and that it does not take into account the role of the extra-textual factors. According to Street (1995) and Morrow (2007), systemic provision should be made to accommodate those whose frames of reference have not privileged them with the familiarity of the traditional academic context.

Codification, then, refers to the exclusionary codes that are used in academia. This codification has implications for both language (derivation of meaning from the text) and identity (context and perceptions about self in relation to the text) which, according to this study, also has implications for academic performance. Bernstein (1990) argues that the concept of code is a regulator of cognitive orientation and

dispositions, identities and practices which are formed in official and local pedagogizing agencies; namely, the school and the family.

### **1.8.9 CYCLICAL IMPACT**

Cyclical impact expresses the fact that quality of education has economic implications, which ultimately perpetuate the vicious cycle of disadvantages arising from codification (Tease & Polesel, 2003; Bernstein, 1990; Jensen, 2009). This study posits the view that the provision of quality Foundation Phase teacher education has the potential to improve the Foundation Phase Education in general, which in turn, can contribute towards the breaking of the negative cyclical ramifications that are a result of codification.

### **1.8.10 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS**

This term was coined by Wally Morrow (2007) to express the concern that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not able to make the requisite academic progress within an education system that is structured according to an autonomous model (Gee, 1990). According to this model, students are expected to succeed based on their own intuitive efforts within a system that values particular ways of doing things, without taking into consideration the need to create enabling environments that facilitate access to both productive and receptive forms of knowledge generation. As such, epistemological access has to do with learning how to become a successful participant within a particular academic context through a combination of hard work and pedagogically appropriate support. Morrow's (2007:77) conceptualisation of this construct is particularly pertinent to the purposes of this study and the BFP cohort examined in it, because, in his view, the aim of teacher education should ultimately be to enable epistemological access to knowledge in the modern world.

### **1.8.11 ONTOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Packer's (2001) concept of genetic ontology is relevant and useful for the transformative agenda of this study since he points out that learning has ontological implications because it has to do with the construction of identities through certain activities. He identifies six tropes of genetic ontology, which entails a process through which there is a mutualistic and reciprocal construction of individuals by their



world or social contexts, while they in turn transform the world. He adopts an active transformist stance (which is also the ideological orientation of this study), which suggests that people come to know themselves and who they are in the world for purposes of transforming the world. This self-knowledge also involves asking oneself normative questions about how one ought to live, including embracing new possibilities of living and thus resulting in ontological development (Deleuze, 1990).

### **1.8.12 EPISTOLOGY**

This is a term that accrues from the convergence of language and identity as conceptualised in this study. The word is a pastiche of **epistemology** and **ontology**. It is used to convey the idea that language and identity are intertwined and interconnected. A theoretical conceptualisation and pragmatic application of this interconnectedness can contribute towards epistemological access and the ontological development of students.

### **1.8.13 OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (OLEs)**

The creation of optimal learning environments entails taking into account all the pedagogically sound and intellectually credible elements that are conducive to transformative learning. This includes adopting a social justice approach that, according to Griffiths (2003), involves preparing teachers for agency in combating inequality in schools and society through contextually appropriate pedagogy.

### **1.8.14 BRICOLAGE**

In this study, bricolage is an emancipatory research construct which allows for multi-disciplinary and multi-pronged research that has, as its underlying agenda, the achievement of critical consciousness, transformation, and change agency. In such an orientation there is a predisposition to pursue a particular ideal. The pursued ideal in this study is that of change agency, while at the same time recognising that there is a consciousness that 'new knowledge' may emerge from the research. In this way, the notion of the bricolage makes provision for paradigm shifts that give rise to new

perspectives aimed at making a contribution towards the emergence of innovative insights that will provide multi-perspectival solutions.

Furthermore, bricolage gives rise to the bricoleur's perspective, which 'takes into account the fluidity of the social fabric that shapes human identities.' Kincheloe (2008:323) conceives of bricolage as, "multi-methodological, multi-theoretical and multi-logical forms of social enquiry into the social, cultural, political, psychological and educational domains." Bricoleurs are also referred to as "methodological negotiators" (Kincheloe, 2008:325; Kincheloe et al., 2007:168).

## **1.9 ABRIDGED BACKGROUND OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The background of teacher education in South Africa will be looked at to contextualise some of the assertions and assumptions that are made in this study. De Vos, 2005:11 (in de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Delpont, Schultz & Patel, 2005) provides an account of the background that will be used as part of the contextual backdrop for the theoretical orientation of the study.

### **1.9.1 THE CATEGORISATION OF EDUCATION**

According to this account the control of teacher education was centralised in 1910 with a political agenda in which the then provinces were responsible for primary and secondary school education while the Union's Department of Education had control of universities and technical colleges. When the Nationalist regime came into leadership in 1948 the political agenda of the apartheid regime unfolded into the categorisation of the legislative and administration of education into four major race groups, namely, Black, White, Coloured and Indian (Booyse & Kruger, 2000:399). On the 31 May 1961 the Union became the Republic of South Africa. Following on this a policy decision, as enshrined in the National Education Policy Act of 1967, determined that white education should be entrenched in Apartheid ideology.

### **1.9.2 THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRIVILEGING WHITE EDUCATION**

The segregation policy, in essence meant that provision was made for privileging white education through, for example, Act No 73 of 1969 which was implemented in 1972. This apartheid-ideological act prescribed that white pre-service teachers

should receive a university education as opposite to their counterparts in other race groups. The result was an outcry among the blacks which ultimately led to the unrest activities that culminated with the uprisings of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1976. Several manifestations of the mounting anger of blacks against Apartheid unfolded throughout a volatile period of demonstrations of disgruntlement between 1980 and 1990. The slogan “Liberation before Education” marked an era of a breakdown in black education, which subsequently led to the formation of the National Education Crisis Committee.

With the legalisation of many anti-apartheid organisations in February 1990, there was a change. The decade of upheavals had, however, left its mark on black education with the result that the Teachers’ League of South Africa (1991) declared the education of teachers as problematic. The teacher’s ability to respond appropriately to situational challenges hinged upon the paradigms they were schooled in. The upshot was that they were not adequately prepared to handle the challenges of an inequitable and dysfunctional education system. This resulted in them not being able, “to supplant gutterised schooling with a democratically oriented education, both in content and in the values with which teaching is invested” (Teacher’s League of South Africa, 1991:1).

### **1.9.3 CRITICAL CHANGE AGENCY PRESENTED AS A COUNTER- STRATEGY**

The critical paradigm presented itself as appropriate for responsive change agency (Rajah, 1993:101) for the above situation. This view is premised upon the assertion that, “teacher education curricula within the critical paradigm will not only resonate with the concept of universities undergoing transformation but will also make a contribution to the vision of a new social order characterised by justice, equality and non-exploitative economic relations.” In addition, Davies (1991) points to the need for an internalised and systematic body of knowledge that characterises professional teacher education. This is in sync with the study’s orientation of the inculcation of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) that has implications for transformative praxis (Mezirow, 2000; Brookfield, 2003).

With regard to the background of teacher education, institutionalised apartheid education ended after the first democratic elections of South Africa in 1994. The teacher was centralised as the main change agent and the need to improve and

transform the education system became a priority (Bergh, 1999:6). Attempts were made to equip the teacher to be able to deal with multiple situational challenges such as multi-cultural and multi-lingual contexts. This was done, primarily through provisions such as the Education renewal strategy of June 1991 and policies such as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) under the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and Curriculum 2005 (Booyse & Kruger, 2002:411).

The teacher was also expected to be instrumental in building a culture of teaching and learning and to work under anomalous condition of under-developed and under-resourced schools. In addition, “responsiveness was required to deal with social problems such as youth at risk, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and violence” (Bergh, 1999:6). This vision of teacher education was connected to the following values:

- an integrated approach to education and training;
- an emphasis on human development and
- the notion of life-long learning

This vision is in tandem with the study’s critical emancipatory agenda. The underlying question that begs an answer here, though is, “Has systemic provision been made to adequately respond to these situational challenges”? This question, will, for now and within the context of this study, however, assume the stance of a rhetorical question.

### **1.10 CURRENT SITUATIONAL REALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION**

A further case and cause for transformation lies at the heart of the dissonance between the overall state of the education system and the total spend on the education system. Jansen (2011:99) in his expose of the South African education system laments the fact that “... there are few more frustrating puzzles in continental Africa than the South African education system”. He points out that there is no other African country that spends as much as 5.4% of public expenditure as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) on education. He continues to paint a portraiture of the South African education landscape by enumerating the budgetary allocation to different facets of education which ultimately results in, “education expenditure taking the largest slice of government spending, hovering around 20% and growing steadily from R140 billion in 2008/9 to a planned R165 billion in 2010.” Even though

budgetary matters do not necessarily fall within the focus of this study, these staggering figures, no doubt, point towards the need for a return on investment. He raises a cause for concern that:

Every national and regional test of comparison on basic competencies in reading, literacy and numeracy consistently places South Africa at the bottom ends of the performance levels.

He further notes, with concern, that the “percentage of South African students exceeding performance at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of developed countries stands at 10% for literacy and only 6% for mathematics and science...” Below is a paraphrase of some of the reasons Jansen (2011:105) posits for this anomalous state of affairs in South African education.

#### **1.10.1 SYSTEMATIC ROUTINES AND RITUALS**

Jansen (2011) draws attention to the lack of systematic routines and rituals that commonly characterise productive well-functioning schools, in many parts of the world, including a small number of schools in middle class white or middle class integrated schools. He credits the old regime for the ability to put in place and structures and control measures to ensure that schools started and ended on time. He further lists a number of features that are associated with change agency, critical consciousness and transformative praxis within this study (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004; Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 2000; Kincheloe, 2008). These include the effective monitoring of class attendance, regular scheduling and feedback of formative tests with appropriate disciplinary repertoires to deter non-conformance or deviance.

The rewarding and awarding of compliance with stipulated standards is pin-pointed as appropriate recognition. Jansen (2011) adds that administrative factors such as the planning of budget and the maintenance of school premises are significant considerations in facilitating a productive teaching and learning culture. This, he says, distinguishes between the minority of performing schools and the majority of non-performing schools in the South African school education landscape.

#### **1.10.2 THE KNOWLEDGE PROBLEM**

Jansen (2011) points out that teachers and principals do not have the requisite knowledge for impacting knowledge for change agency, as conceptualised in this

study. This, in spite of the significant expenditure on teacher and leadership training as well as incentives that are provided by the South African Council of Education (SACE). Jansen's (2011) contention is that the training focuses on generic training which does little to address the knowledge needs pertaining to various knowledge areas such as, inter alia, applied psychology, managerial knowledge and epistemic knowledge. Content and pedagogical knowledge are highlighted as the most problematic areas which are reflected through the recurrence of the same systematic errors in Grade 12 subject scripts. This, according to Jansen, is indicative of a problem in teacher knowledge in those subjects. He subsequently draws attention to the Government's tacit confirmation of this reality through what he refers to as, "the infantilisation of teachers, through the provision of rudimentary "how to" booklets for teachers." The inference that is made from this is that, even though teachers were qualified education practitioners they, in certain instances, did not have the requisite knowledge to teach.

Jansen (2011) then continues to discuss three more reasons which he highlights as namely, bureaucratic ineptitude, lack of accountability and a lack of capacity and expertise. He further argues that at the time, they did not have the capacity to handle the system-level change of complex school systems. This view is confirmed a by the Teacher's League of South Africa (1991). Under bureaucratic ineptitude he stresses the disjuncture between policy formulation and policy implementation and the ramifications for delivery. With regard to accountability, he argues that there is a need to balance the ample support with accountability for performance. He proceeds by drawing attention to the historical context (which was discussed earlier in this chapter) of the 1976 uprisings, resulting in "a school system in which resistance and contempt for township schools remains endemic in such schools" (Jansen, 2011:101). He makes a thought-provoking observation that teachers who teach in township schools demonstrate their disregard for township schools by placing their own children in suburban schools.

The relevance of the aforementioned factors for this thesis is that they illustrate and reinforce the case for a transformative agenda that will ensure that the education system, starting at the root of teacher training, is rid of the elements of dysfunction. Jansen's critique is relevant for this study by virtue of the fact that it serves as a mirror for the situational realities pertaining to the education landscape and the

study's mandate to contribute towards the strengthening of the Foundation Phase teacher training sector. The ideological positioning for change agency, and the aim to contribute towards ensuring that the EU/DHET research mandate – for both qualitative and quantitative development and strengthening of BEd Foundation Phase programmes are additional factors for consideration.

The study foregrounds the problem that forms the basis for the enquiry, namely, that the students who form part of this cohort are, more often than not L2 speakers of English who often simultaneously fall under the category of being 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students. They often enter the system of higher education from low socio-economic backgrounds.

### **1.11 THESIS FOCUS AREAS**

This was a qualitative research study that used a phenomenological approach because of the two phenomena under study, that is, language and identity. The overarching theoretical lens for this study was the Transformative Paradigm. Critical Pedagogy, Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) theory, and Transformative Learning were used further as part of the conceptual and theoretical framework. The study used a bricoleur's perspectival position, in which an attempt was made to find answers to the critical questions posed and solutions for the problems identified in pursuit of a transformative and critical emancipatory agenda.

The bricoleur's perspective employs the concept of bricolage as a research and multi-disciplinary research paradigm. In bricolage there is a tacit understanding that "knowledge can never stand alone or be complete in and of itself" (Kincheloe, 2008:328). As alluded to earlier bricolage constitutes an acceptance of existing modes of enquiry and pre-constructed paradigms while also making provision for an investigative process that will yield new constructions and understandings of the phenomena under scrutiny.

### **1.12 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative Interpretivism was chosen as a research approach that would be appropriate for this study's research agenda. The methodological issues pertaining to the collection of data are dealt with in-depth in Chapter 3. To that end, the chapter brings into focus the relationship of the researcher to subjects of the research.

Where, inter alia, issues of values in relation to the design of the research are also looked at.

### **1.12.1 DATA COLLECTION**

Data was collected through individual structured and semi-structured interviews, with the aim of validating or refuting the claims made about the convergence of language and identity in the academic performance and portraiture of the BFP cohort.

In this study, the narrative perspective was derived from the interviews in accordance with Bamberg and Georgakopoulous's (2008:13) view that, "in narratives specific linguistic choices can be linked with larger social identities". In such a view, narratives are also regarded as a basic mode of verbal expression which includes a person's sense of self and identity (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1993). The relevance of these assertions, for this study, lies in the connection that is made between language and identity at both an individual and social level. At an individual level, students' identities are linked to others' and their own perception about themselves; whereas at a social level, students are part of the BFP cohort that evinces certain distinguishing features that are pertinent to the assumptions that are made in this study, as will be explored later in the study.

Desk Top Research was used to harvest meta-data that served as evidential support of certain claims that were made in this study. The meta-data was further used for exploratory, as opposed to interrogatory purposes.

### **1.12.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data was analysed through reading and re-reading the empirical materials to try to pin down key themes so as to establish the veracity and validity of the assumptions made in this study. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) was used to facilitate analysis of the narrative texts that were drawn from the interviews.

There was substantiation through member check, where the data was checked, read, and re-read to establish its veracity (Shenton, 2004). The texts and interpretations were also confirmed through the relevant literature (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Desk Top Research was used for validation purposes.



### **1.12.3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

In order to substantiate some of the assumptions of the study, representative and purposive sampling was used. The sample population comprised of 9 Black African Foundation Phase students (3x1<sup>st</sup> year, 3x2<sup>nd</sup> year and 3x3<sup>rd</sup> year) who were selected according to the following broad criteria:

- Students of the BEd degree with a Foundation Phase specialisation.
- Should not be 1<sup>st</sup> Language speakers of English.
- Their pre-university education should have been at a school that is situated in an area that is categorised as disadvantaged, but with no special distinction of peri-urban, urban or rural.

### **1.13 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS**

The study is segmented into seven chapters as presented below.

#### **Chapter 1: Overview & Orientation**

In Chapter 1 the overview and orientation of the study is provided. In this chapter, the various elements that form the basis and premise of the study are discussed to provide context for the study. This chapter also provides an explanation and justification of paradigmatic orientations and discussion of theories, concepts and constructs.

#### **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature & Conceptual Framework**

The establishment of the study's conceptual framework through exploration of the relevant literature is the primary focus of Chapter 2. The chapter explores the literature and arguments presented in that literature that pertain to the study, with the aim of either lending credence to the assumptions previously made or providing new insights and perspectives.

#### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter brings into focus the research questions, assumptions and aims of the study with the view to validating the research design. Attention is also paid to the methodological issues pertaining to the data collection process. The design of the

research is also explored in alignment with the assumptions, literature review, and theoretical underpinnings of the study as a whole.

#### **Chapter 4: Reporting and Analysis of the Data**

In this chapter the collected data are discussed and analysed. The themes, sub-themes and categories that emanated from the data are presented and examined in relation to their relevance to the phenomena of language, identity, academic portraiture, and performance of the BFP cohort.

#### **Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings**

This chapter highlights the findings in relation to the themes and relevant literature. In addition, the study's research questions are responded to.

#### **Chapter 6: Recommendations**

The recommendations that are derived from the results and findings of the research, as well as the researcher's insights, are discussed in this chapter. Suggestions for future studies pertaining to the transformative and emancipatory agenda with respect to the BFP are also brought into focus in this chapter.

#### **Chapter 7: Review and Summation of the Study**

This chapter constitutes a summary of the thesis. As part of the summation of the study, reflective space is provided for the researcher to trace the trajectory of her research journey. The lessons learnt and the insights gained about the phenomena presented in this study are highlighted and discussed here with a view to provide perspectives for praxis as it pertains to the Black BEd Foundation Phase students situated at a historically white institution, namely, the University of Pretoria.

#### **1.14 CLOSING COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW**

In this chapter I looked at the elements that form the basis of this study. I also posited the view that language, as a cognitive factor, has implications for epistemological access, while identity, as an affective factor, has implications for the ontological development of the Black BEd Foundation Phase cohort as students at a previously white institution, the University of Pretoria. I further stated that the study

was intended as a response to the EU/DHET mandate to strengthen the qualitative offering of the BEd Foundation Phase programme. I pointed out that because of the paradigmatic dictates of the study and the theoretical concerns pertaining to the pre-service teachers, the fulcrum of the study would have critical emancipatory and transformative leaning. The inference that can be made here is that the quality of Foundation Phase education has cyclical ramifications that are worth taking into account.

The next chapter will constitute a review of the literature that informs the contextual and conceptual framework upon which this study is premised.

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## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at the literature that takes into account the study's ideological and philosophical orientation, as informed by its transformative conceptual framework. The study is located within a trans-disciplinary literature of transformative learning, (Mezirow, 1991; 1995; 2000; 2005) identity studies (Taylor, 1992; Mayes, 2010; Stewart, 2002; 2008) and language in education (Morrow, 2007; 2009). Ayers' (2004:1) view that, "teaching, at its best, is an enterprise that helps human beings to reach the full measure of their humanity", sets the scene of the essence of the study's thematic concerns. Ayers' (2004) view is also in alignment with the Newmanian (1852, in Ker, 1976) view that the role of a university is to raise the intellectual and moral tone of society.

With regard to establishing context, a review of the literature is important because it provides an insight into the constructs and elements that form part of this thesis in order to facilitate a context-specific understanding of the issues raised. It should be noted that even though the constructs are discussed separately they should, however, be regarded as intertwined strands. What this means is that the construct of language will, out of necessity, feature in the discussion of the construct of identity as part of the ontological development process. This next section focuses on the notion of identity as it relates to the academic portraiture of the cohort under study and the concomitant ideological implications for language.

#### 2.2 THE CONSTRUCT OF IDENTITY WITHIN THE STUDY

The study defined identity as 'individual characteristics by which a person ...is recognised (Collins, 2010) and that which is not static and uni-dimensional but dynamic, multiple and a site of struggle' (Weedon, 1997; Norton, 2000). The cognitive psychology definition of identity as relating to 'self-image, self-esteem, self-

reflection, awareness of self and individuality' (Leary & Tangney, 2003; Mayes, 2010) was also pertinent to this study. Identity was further linked to the term becoming and 'self-actualisation' as conceptualised by Maslow (1998) in his hierarchy of needs. With regard to the Black African cohort under study identity presents itself as multi-dimensional and complex, particularly as it relates to their position in a previously and predominantly white institution. According to Chikering & Riessener (1993) the Black student identity is riddled with psycho-social identity struggles that are compounded by contexts such as previously white educational environments that may be dismissive, oblivious to or ill-informed about the multiple facets of the Black socio-cultural identity (McEwen, Roper, Bryant & Langa; 1990). In this regard, Du Bois' (1903/1993:2) view, although expressed several years ago, is instructive and pertinent for this study. In his opinion there is a need to ensure that both the old (pre-university) and new (the university context) identities are maintained in the complex process of becoming a better self in pursuit of self-realization & identity integration and self-conscious identity that blends the multiple facets of identity. Within the context of this study this means, therefore that ontological development entails a transformational merging of the multiple selves. The studies referred to above point towards the need to make curricular provision for cross-cultural psycho-social development that reflects an understanding of self as composed of multiple facets and identities (Stewart, 2008).

Taylor (1992) connects identity to the ability to formulate an appropriate definition of who you are. He goes on to state that the response to the question of one's identity is found through situating oneself in a particular space which could be related to one's career, professional, or relational connection. In this formulation of identity other's views of oneself contribute to how one perceives oneself within these settings. Taylor (1992:25) posits the following view:

...our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by mis-recognition by others and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people around them mirror back to them a confining, demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.

The above assertion had relevance for this study because of the assumptions made about the BFP cohort. For example, the students' relationships with their peers, how they are perceived as members of the academic community and by other members

of the institution formed part of the way they defined their identity. Taylor (1992) creates a connection between identity and recognition and identity and socio-cultural positions when he conceives of identity as the dialogical ability to recognize ourselves at both private and public levels. He also states that the issues of where we come from and where we situate ourselves in terms of values and standards are understood dialogically.

The dialogical dimension he accords to identity is dependent on how those we hold in high esteem perceive us. According to him, this means that, essentially, our ability to see ourselves hinges on how others see us. Our sense of worth and, thus, sense of identity and who we are, are determined by the extent to which we are recognized by others. In essence, because identity is constituted dialogically by what others think about us, we frame our identities in accordance with others' opinions about us (Taylor, 1992; Heritage, 1997; Coupland, 2001; Hermans, 2001; Mayes, 2010). Bakhtin's (1981) theory of language complements this view when he argues that speech utterances do not merely communicate information or knowledge, but they position speakers in relation to other speakers. He refers to this as verbal positioning. These utterances also play a role in the social positioning of the speaker. For the study's context, the social also includes the various learning communities that are found in academia.

Furthermore, Lave (1988) and Packer (2001) refer to an ontological account of learning in which learning entails both the content (subject matter) and context (development of identity). This highlights a major argument of this study that academia, as an institution, plays a significant role in influencing epistemological access. Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner & Cain (1998:3) define identity as a type of self-understanding where "people tell others who they are, but even more important they tell themselves and try to act as though they are who they say they are." According to these scholars, identities are subject to change, depending on the prevalent discursive power. The assumptions made in this study regarding the power relations that accrue due to the use of a particular language in the classroom or lecture hall setting, confirm the observations of Holland et al, (1998).

Of particular relevance for this study in relation to the effects of multiple identities, is the relationship between power and identity. Mayes (2010:194) suggests that, "power can be analysed as a dynamic construct that is realised as social identities

are constructed through interaction.” Heritage (1997:175-8), in further agreement, draws attention to the asymmetries that are borne out of interaction in institutional settings that have a bearing on identity. These include the following:

- Asymmetries of participation – which implies that the participants in an institutional conversation do not participate in the same way. For example, as demonstrated by the data in this study, normative classroom discourses and dynamics regulated the extent of student participation.
- Interactional and institutional know-how – which refers to the standardised procedures and materials that are used in institutions. This alludes to the idea, for example, of writing academic essays that comply with academic writing standards which, as participants noted, were hugely problematic for them.
- Epistemological caution and asymmetries of knowledge – which refers to the academy’s way of dealing and interacting with knowledge. The jargon and terminology that is often used in academia can serve as a barrier to comprehension.
- Rights of access to knowledge – which has to do with a speaker’s ability to appropriately express his/her views, including the ability, then, to exert argumentation and rhetorical skills that are required for knowledge distribution.

These asymmetries have an impact on the kinds of identities participants construct in social and institutional interaction (Heritage, 1997; Mayes, 2010; Coupland, 2001). A further dimension of identity is presented by Mustakova-Possardt (2004:248) when she draws attention to the following:

Moral identity anchored in universal moral values and moral character predominates over and mediates the sense of identity derived from various social configurations such as class, race, gender, ethnic or other group membership. Identity rooted in moral models and concepts, however simply understood, is the source of a moral imperative, that is, an inner need to do the morally right thing. Moral imperative is stronger than self-interest and strengthens and expands in the course of life, leading to the progressive integration of self and morality.

This refers to an awareness of the need for the development of moral maturity alongside the capacity to think critically and weigh various life options at a cognitive level. Mustakova-Possardt (2004) makes a case for the need to integrate the spiritual dimension as, envisioned within the construct of critical moral consciousness, the organising principle of life. Stewart (2002; 2008) tacitly supports this view in studies in which she investigated Black identities within a white institutional education context. Here she discovered that students who seemed to have a more stable sense of spirituality demonstrated better coping capabilities in navigating and negotiating their way through complex identity mazes.

For purposes of this study, critical moral consciousness is strongly associated with the ability to make decisions that will contribute towards one's academic development (Mustakova-Possardt). The relevance of the above for this study lies in the study's preoccupation with the moral development of an academic identity that is compatible with the ideals of social transformation, as well as the ontological development of the Black pre-service Foundation Phase teachers. There is an explicit assumption that critical moral consciousness will facilitate the actualisation of this ideal of social transformation.

In inadvertent consonance with this idea of critical moral consciousness presented above, Okri (2015) stated, in the speech he delivered at Unisa's Institute of African Renaissance Studies (IARS), that there can be no true renaissance until a people have unflinchingly faced the truth of their condition. The rhetorical question he posed in this regard: "How can we grow and develop until we tell the truth about where we are?" His contention that there is a need to face our truth at the level of both the external conditions of our society and the individual internal level, are pertinent to a transformational agenda. Furthermore, his assertion that, "part of a people's truth is that they are capable of becoming" is an unintended support for the study's concern with ontological development. The same sentiments can be echoed about his contention that the renaissance he envisages, "...cannot be achieved without spiritual rebirth ...a true renaissance is the discovery of selfhood [which] has to be something deeper [so as to] sustain a new creation of a new being."

What the above observations highlight in relation to this study are the ideas of critical emancipation and the inculcation of a culture of critical consciousness. The argument presented in this study is that the constructs of critical consciousness and



critical moral consciousness have a role to play in turning the tide of the status quo of anomalies that manifest themselves in various ways. According to the assumptions posited in this thesis, Foundation Phase education, which forms the basis of general education, has the potential to make a significant contribution in the shift towards societal moral rectitude.

To lend further credence to the argument regarding the need for the development of critical moral consciousness in the teaching of Foundation Education teachers it is important to note the examples that follow. According to the SACE 2012/13 parliamentary report, there were a total of 556 complaints against teachers for various alleged offenses or breaches between 1 April 2012-30 & March 2013, (News 24:2013). SACE further reports that 75 educators were removed from the educator's register in 2009. These reports, as noted above, lend validity to the assertion that there is a need for the inculcation of critical moral consciousness in the BEd Foundation Phase cohort, especially considering that this is the cohort that is in a position of effecting paradigmatic shifts on students from a very young age. This assumption of effectiveness is tacitly confirmed by Clark (2004:80) when he points out that, the teaching profession is one of the most ethically demanding and requires that teachers should reflect on whether they conduct themselves in a morally exemplary way.

James and Pollard (2006:4) further support the view regarding the moral significance held by teachers when they state that:

Teaching and learning are what ultimately make a difference in the mind of the learner and thus affect knowledge, skills, attitudes and capacity of young people to contribute to contemporary societies.

Further to the individual characteristic definition of identity, this study also relied on an institutional concept of identity. Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) hold, learning implies a change in identity and that it is the institution's responsibility to explore how this change occurs. The study used this view of identity to frame its definition of academic identity in particular. Such a move is consistent with and supportive of the cognitive psychology definition which takes into account individuality, self, character, personality, existence, recognition, originality and separateness as part of identity (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In this sense, the concept of

identity also includes values, morals and the “will to learn” (Barnett, 2007:101-102). Barnett goes on further goes on to say that both the dispositions and qualities of students position them for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. From an institutional development perspective there is, thus, an inherent interest in identity development on the basis of gains to be made from an asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). To that end, institutions of learning have a vested interest in a holistic approach to ontological development, which includes focusing on the acquisition of the graduate attributes that are necessary for becoming a morally sound teacher.

Mahlomaholo’s (2009) conceptualisation of academic identity further buttresses the study’s construction of academic identity as also both individual and institutional or social. He holds the view that academic identity comprises values, feelings, language, behavioural modes that are sustained by academics. That is, as cultural capital, students’ academic identity bears relevance for their professional identity. In the context of this study, such cultural capital includes intangible forms of value such as intellectual capital, meta-cognition, ideas and concepts.

With regard to professional identity, Cattley (2007) is of the contention that the pre-service teacher’s professional identity can emerge through reflective writing and teaching practice based on the emerging recognition of the self as a teacher. The concept of Transformative learning is, arguably, what facilitates this relation between professional identity and the individual identity. It is a concept couched within the Transformative Learning theory which holds the view that:

reconstructing or transforming perspectives is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world [and positioning] ourselves to change these structures...and finally making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1991:167)

In another instance, Mezirow (2003:98) further asserts that “discourse or dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs is a core tenet of the transformative learning theory.” He is also of the view that transformative learning brings about a meaning shift which involves profound personal change and therefore has implications for identity in general (Mezirow, 2003).

In view of the study's assumption about identity and the bearing it has on academic portraiture, the above observations are worth noting as they highlight the study's concern with identity as linked to both academic performance in both the pre-service arena and the professional field.

## **2.3 THE CONSTRUCT OF LANGUAGE WITHIN THE STUDY**

For purposes of this discussion language was regarded as a key factor in facilitating epistemological access; this was in addition to language being regarded as situated utterances, through which speakers struggle to create meaning (Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu; 1991; 1997). In this latter conceptualisation of language, speakers are considered to be in a constant conflict situation where words are value-laden and influenced by particular pre-dispositions and paradigms. That is, language was regarded as not only a means of receiving and producing information, but also a vehicle for accessing and navigating one's way through the discourse of academia. To that end, language is both a vehicle for accessing knowledge (the currency of academia) and a means for negotiating the discourse of academia (Christie, 2002; Halliday, 1989). The issue of language in the classroom or lecture hall and the extent to which this affects the academic performance of students, was taken as a pivotal element of the study.

Within the context of this study, language was also associated with the kind of literacy practices which should take into account the role of agency, negotiated meanings, and diversity (Mac Naughton, 2009:70). Bernstein's (1990) notion of the transmission and acquisition of pedagogical knowledge through language mastery also formed a key factor in the understanding of language privileged by this study, especially with regards to language as academic code that is used in educational transmission and transformation.

### **2.3.1 LITERACY PRACTICES**

Barton and Hamilton (2000:7) note that "in the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy." More specifically, they argue that:

To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness, to understand what one reads and to write what one

understands...Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables...but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context.

They further link values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships with practice – a link that lends credence to the assumption made in this study about the interconnectedness of language and identity with performance, as they are conceived of in this study.

Barton and Hamilton (2000:17) further outline six propositions about the nature of literacy and its relationship to practice that are pertinent to this study:

- Literacy, in broad terms, is best understood as a set of social practices that can be inferred from events which are mediated by written text.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships and some literacies become more dominant, visible, and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacies are historically situated.
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

The above construction of literacy as a particular form of language is in line with the critical pedagogy ideology espoused by Freire (1970). Freire posits that texts should be read within their situational context. This means that there are extra textual factors, such as social background and institutional norms, which have a bearing on the way texts are read at any given point in time.

Since the focus of this study is the L2 cohort that is comprised of Black Foundation Phase students, in an institution of higher learning, this means that the literacy practices of these students is ideologically informed by a particular historical context, as alluded to in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of this thesis. Furthermore, given that this historical context espouses a particular academic language with its attendant practices, there is a connection between the literacy practices of these students and the academic

discourse used to articulate their experiences. Bakhtin's (1981) theory of language complements such ontological theories of learning since, as he argues, speakers find themselves in various contexts in which they have to constantly negotiate meaning. His theory of language supports the argument that speech utterances are more than conveyed content but they position the speaker in relation to the context and other socio-cultural groups.

In other words, the language through which these students encounter and present themselves cannot be understood outside of the context and culture within which they are constructed as the individuals who make the utterances. In this sense, language also comprises the institutional culture of academia in which the students find themselves. Furthermore, there is often a dissonance between the students' cultural language (way of being and way of doing things) and academia's cultural language. As such, there is an added pressure to contend with and conform to the standards of operation where their portraiture bears connotations of being othered and pathologised (Boughey, 2005). This, in turn, as argued later, impacts on these students' performance (Steele, Aronson & Spencer 2002; Bandura, 1999).

In the light of this reality for possible linguistic dissonance, Bizell (1992:27) argues that academic discourse can actually be used to foster critical consciousness about language and its limiting capacity. According to her:

Basic writers [*read as L2 writers for this context*] are very much like Freire's peasants...by introducing students to academic discourse, students who take up the discourse empower themselves in an academic environment...Academic discourse can change the thinking of basic writers in much the same way that literacy, according to Freire (1970) changes the Brazilian peasants.

Such critical consciousness about language is especially possible if attention is paid to the distinction between literacy practices and mere literacy events (Perry, 2012). Where, literary practices are connected to power relations that cannot be measured, while literacy events refer to observable actions that can be measured and evaluated within a meritocratic system.

It should be pointed out here that more often than not, the academia pays attention to and relies on evaluating student performance based on literacy events. The reason for this is that student success is ascribed to hard work and compliance with

codification (Bernstein, 1990) norms. This is done without having, in tandem, a measure for taking into account and making provision for other factors like the socio – economic status of students and the bearing these extra-contextual factors have on student performance. That is, without having a different language for students to encounter and express their particular experiences. According to Bernstein (1990:13), class relations “generate [and] legitimate certain forms of communication which transmit dominant and dominated codes.” The academia’s code thus becomes part of the dominant code which is used as a regulatory measure of quality and means of power.

This conventional operational academic framework privileges an autonomous model which, according to Street (1995), is based on the perception that literacy comprises simply of encoding and decoding neutral text. This implies that texts can be read without any consideration of context. The autonomous framework is regarded as limiting in this study and that it does not take into account the role of ideological extra-contextual and extra-textual factors. According to Street (1995) and Morrow (2007), systemic provision should be made to accommodate those whose frames of reference have not privileged them with the familiarity of the traditional academic context.

Codification, then, refers to the exclusionary codes that are used in academia. This codification has implications for both language and identity which, according to this study, also has implications for academic performance within a system of meritocracy (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004).

This critique highlighting the limits of academic language is also in line with the theoretical thrust of this thesis’ critical pedagogical aim, A research aim that is not only focused on making sense of the written and spoken words but also takes into account the ideologies that are represented by the words uttered by the students (Kincheloe et al., 2007). This is an echo of Freire’s (1970) views about reading the world through the word. In other words, texts and academic discourses should be understood against the backdrop of the social contexts within which they are written and read.

## **2.4 THE INTER-PLAY BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY**

Bourdieu's (1991) conceptualization of language as more than a means of communication but also a mechanism of power aptly captures the study's stance regarding the connection between language and identity. He posits the opinion that different uses of language tend to reiterate the respective perspectival positions of each participant (Bourdieu, 1991). Bakhtin (1981) concurs through his contention that speech does more than communicate content. In this regard, Ferreira (2009) provides an apt description of language as an indispensable and inescapable part of our lives, and also a part of our identity as distinct human beings.

This presents a socio-cultural perspective on the link between the constructs of identity and language as a vehicle for literacy practices where identities are shaped and influenced by texts and texts are in turn shaped by contexts – that is, the individuals that read or write them and the circumstances under which this is done. The concept of critical moral consciousness is linked to this socio-cultural notion of identity in the study's stance on the connection between the cognitive (the mind) and the affective (the heart). According to Mustakova-Possardt (2004:245):

Critical [moral] consciousness is in essence optimal consciousness, characterised by the integration of the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of the human being. Levels and degrees of critical consciousness are the result of the lifelong synergistic interaction of moral motivation and structural cognitive development, leading to a progressively more harmonious working of mind and heart and an empowered unity of rational understanding, intuitive knowing and inner vision.

In conformance with the study's orientation Mustakova-Possardt (2004:246) further contends that:

Mature moral consciousness, central to negotiating the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is understood as a way of being, an optimal path of human development, which exhibits wholesome engagement with meaning and positive change in one's social world... [and it] is characterised by ever-expanding circles of agency.

Her conceptualisation of the construct of critical moral consciousness is that it entails four dimensions: moral motivation, a moral sense of identity, a sense of responsibility and agency, and a deep sense of relatedness on all levels of living and a sense of meaning and life purpose. In her study she presents a case for “re-

envisioning education in the direction of integrating mind and heart, developing both moral motivation and critical discernment” Mustakova-Possardt (2004:246).

The aforementioned is an apt encapsulation of the ideological orientation of this thesis, which is also in consonance with Okri’s (2015) views about the [African] renaissance as a construct that is associated with transformation at an individual level. It is also in alignment with the theoretical focus of critical pedagogical research which should, “have a mandate to represent a form of reading that understands not only the words of the page but the unstated dominant ideologies hidden between the sentences as well” (Kincheloe, 2007:165). This line of thinking conforms to the paradigmatic dictates of critical pedagogy that gravitates towards praxis. To this end, the study closely aligns itself with a transformative learning orientation that sees the learner as a constructor of meaning with the aim of creating something new (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2009).

Critical Pedagogy refers to a praxis-oriented teaching and learning approach in which students are encouraged to be reflective and to critique meaning and the popular notion of the teacher as the sage on the stage. In this approach there is a drive towards inculcating a constructivist critical consciousness in students (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and low socio-economic contexts) that is strongly aligned with the notion of praxis.

The view held by Breuing (2011) is that critical pedagogy should strengthen pronouncement of its social justice orientation in conjunction with its constructivist orientation. Furthermore, Rall (2002:3) contends that:

the power of critical pedagogy rests in its hope for social transformation, a transformation that takes place when the oppressed [read in the study’s context as previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs)] are empowered through education to see themselves as actors in the world.

The relationship between language and thought, the role of language in intellectual transformation (Vygotsky, 1971; Evans & Green, 2006) and their relevance for knowledge reception and production also fall under the lens of enquiry in this study. The contention that language should not just be regarded as a vehicle of thought but an instrument for shaping thought is seen as a confirmation of the Vygotskian (1971) view regarding the connection between language and thought. In this view, schools



require an elaborate dominant code for academic success. According to Bernstein (1990), this means that there are power relations which disadvantage those who have not been previously exposed to this code – as was often the case with the L2 cohort in this study. These students are disadvantaged when they enter the system where prior exposure to the dominant code (language of transmission) facilitates academic success. Bernstein's view is that in this context acquisition (which involves decoding and processing of information) is significantly hampered and has negative implications for academic performance, hence identity.

Kress and Hodge (1979) conceive of language as important for the storing of perceptions and thoughts, which play a significant role in knowledge reception and production processes. In this regard, language also plays a pivotal role in how individuals perceive others and themselves (their portraiture). In the relationship of the educator and student such perceptions have an effect on performance and ontological development. In further agreement, Gee (1992) holds the view that language should not be viewed in isolation but as attached to social relations and various physical and affective dimensions, including places in the world. In this conceptualisation, literacy, as one form of language use, reflects these various dimensions. He also conceives of the construct of discourses as an affirmation of the connection of language to social roles and contexts in ways that some post-structuralists have argued regarding the role of language in modern societies.

The significance of the connection between language and identity is further confirmed by Perry (2012:66) when she states that it is important to understand literacy and literacy practices in their various nuances and contexts. She presents the opinion that, "cognitive processes are shaped by the social contexts and practices in which they occur." Bandura (1999:249) echoes these sentiments through his social cognitive theory in which questions about the role of one's self identity in decision making processes are posed. He places an emphasis on the role of cognition on self-efficacy and the ability to self-regulate and further notes that people are not entirely at the mercy of the dictates of their social contexts and external influences:

People possess self-reflective and self-reactive capabilities that enable them to exercise some control over their thoughts, feelings, motivations and actions. In the exercise of self-directedness, people adopt certain standards of behaviour that

serve as guides and motivators to regulate their actions anticipatorily through self-reactive influence.

The above observations point towards the fact that individuals have a measure of agency that positions them as change agents who have the capacity to escape from deterministic precepts (Taylor, 1992). In other words, the position held in this study was that students should be empowered to not regard themselves as helpless victims of circumstances. Such a perspective is in congruence with the ideological orientation of critical pedagogy and transformative learning with their focus on the need for empowering students to fully become who they can and ought to become.

#### **2.4.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ACCESS AND CRITICAL LITERACY**

The association of language with epistemological access will be discussed so as to facilitate its conceptual understanding within the broader paradigmatic concern of this thesis. Towards this end, Mac Naughton's (2009) conceptualisation of three epistemological positions, namely conforming, reforming and transforming, will be brought into focus. The conforming position of knowledge posits the view that in order for optimal knowledge to be facilitated others should play a pivotal role. In this view the role of the individual is marginalised while that of the teacher/educator is fore-grounded and centralised. This is reminiscent of the ideological orientation of the teacher as the sage on the stage.

According to Mac Naughton (2009) the reforming view of knowledge is positioned within a Piagetian and Vygotskian constructivist paradigm. In this view there is an emphasis on holistic development where teacher/educator and learner/student collaborate to facilitate knowledge, with the teacher/educator playing the role of mediator of knowledge. The study aligns itself with this view.

The aforementioned is connected to the idea that critical literacy is more than the text on the page but the issues that are connected to or that emanate from the social world (Janks, Dixon, Ferreira, Granville, & Newfield, 2014). Within the context of this study the term is associated with the overarching lens of the Transformative Paradigm and the associated theories of Transformative Learning, Critical Emancipatory Research Theory, and Critical Pedagogy.

#### **2.4.2 TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE**

The transforming knowledge position (Mac Naughton, 2009) is closely aligned to critical emancipatory theory with a bricoleur perspective. This position holds the view that there are various ideas about learning. In this view there is a strong recognition that there are multiple ways of living and being in the world. There is an ‘anti-conformism’ bias and a leaning towards becoming fully human, which entails various multi-layered interactions that cover various aspects of being human (Mac Naughton, 2009). In this regard the study strongly associates itself with this view of knowledge construction. Epistemological access has to do with, “providing students with opportunities to understand the context in which particular domains of knowledge are constructed and to construct knowledge in these ways themselves” (McKenna, 2010:8). This would then assist them to navigate their way through, what is often to them, the complex maze of meaning-making, from a de-constructivist point of view – as receivers/readers/hearers of knowledge and constructivist perspective as producers/writers/speakers of knowledge.

Similar sentiments were implicitly expressed by Okri (2015) in his lecture pertaining to his conceptualisation of the Renaissance in Africa and its implications for multi-dimensional transcendence and individual transformation. This view ties in with the study’s orientation regarding the need for individual transformation (in this instance, with specific reference to the BFP cohort) which carries ramifications for societal transformation. There is a further resonance with the study’s perspective that Critical Pedagogy should be regarded as a vehicle for students’ attainment of critical consciousness (Servage, 2008).

### **2.4.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH**

Even though this was not an explicitly stated intention the study also sought to examine the extent to which students envision themselves as co-constructors of academic and professional identities that will position them to be, “vociferous seekers of knowledge” (Carson, 2005) and knowledge – producers. In view of the inevitable ubiquitous technological presence, Koutropoulos (2011) states that the role of educators is to provide students with access to pedagogically appropriate ways of processing and assimilating knowledge in both technological and face-to-face spheres. This is in alignment with the issue of multi-modalities, where the focus is on modes of representation that are much broader than language alone (Kress & Hodge, 1979; Cope and Kalantzis; 2000). The study seeks to make a contribution

towards the BFP cohort ultimately becoming reflective Foundation Phase professionals who value critique and who are co-participants in teaching and learning environments that use technology in pedagogically appropriate ways (Servage, 2008).

The primary challenge is, therefore, a paradigmatic, perceptual and cognitive one which needs to be dealt with at an individual student level thus tacitly making a case for the transformational learning agenda. This notion of transformation ties in with the views expressed by Okri (2015) in his lecture when he waxed eloquent about the renaissance being ultimately about individual transformation.

The definition of learning as ‘the construction of meaning by the learner him/herself who then uses it to create something new’ (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2009: CD), is an appropriate point of departure for understanding the construct of transformative learning as it pertains to this study. Transformative learning is premised on the pedagogic position that learning should go beyond the surface and superficial knowledge acquisition and move towards emancipatory thinking that entails the constructive critique of commonly-held beliefs and ways of operation (Mezirow, 2000). Brookfield (2003) believes that for critical pedagogy to have an impact transformative learning is required. This view is in tacit tandem with this study’s ideological orientation, thus making it an apt exemplification of the transformative and emancipatory agenda of the study.

The study is an attempt to throw light on the systemic issues that have the potential to give rise to an anomalous situation and the interventions that will be appropriately responsive to the stated problem. A further intention is to contribute towards the creation of participatory learning environments in which assumptions and values about language, race and culture will be taken into account.

As alluded to earlier in this discussion, the autonomous model refers to “individual cognition...and the intrinsic characteristics that literacy is assumed to have...”; while the ideological model refers to “literacy as a set of practices that are grounded in specific contexts and linked to power structures in society” (Street, 2001:433). Street proposes an ideological model as an alternative to the autonomous model referred to above. In this model literacy is understood as a set of social practices, which take into account context rather than merely a set of skills. The relevance of this view for

this study is that the meaning that is derived from texts will, invariably, be connected to how individuals (in this case the BFP cohort] perceive themselves in relation to the value they place on those texts and themselves (Boughey, 2005). In addition their school contexts and prior exposure to the academic culture are critical factors that should be taken into account.

The afore-mentioned is in alignment with the theory of transformative learning in which the academia is seen to have an emancipatory mandate of equipping students with the ability to think for themselves (Taylor, 1992) and to not just be passive recipients in a pedagogical setting that relies primarily on a transmission mode as a vehicle for acquisition. According to this theory students should be empowered to critique knowledge in a reflective manner and they should be prepared to be reflective practitioners (Kincheloe et al, 2007). This is a critical pedagogy notion of learning being a process of transformation which also implies a change in identity (Mezirow, 2000). The academia is, therefore, strategically positioned to explore the manner in which this transformation is actualised and to expose students to a holistic epistemology (Miller, 1997), with the consciousness that, “teaching, at its best, is an enterprise that helps human beings to reach the full measure of their humanity” (Ayers, 2004:1).

In her PhD study, which is a case for a genre-based approach for teaching writing, Carstens (2009) by implication, argues that HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) have a responsibility to teach students to write academically. She cites Cope and Kalantzis (1993) to support this approach. In Bernsteinian (1990) terms, this would mean that the academia should use appropriate ways of familiarising the L2 cohort with and equipping them with knowledge of its codification systems while assisting them to read the word within the context of the world (Freire, 1970). Rall (2002:5) tacitly concurs while adding a further dimension by stating that:

It is obvious that our job is to teach or facilitate the learning of writing for our students but how and what we teach can affect more than merely our students' success in academia. Hence, we approach teaching with agendas larger than mere teaching of writing. In most cases our agendas are ideological...In other cases, though appearing to be benign and apolitical, our approach is nevertheless a reflection of what we...think is important and therefore a statement reflecting our position in the debate between traditional and progressive education.

It is hoped that the findings will provide appropriate insights into what this will entail for the context of the study and cohort under discussion. Rall (2002) further postulates that as important as it is to take into account Freirian pedagogy regarding the importance of critical consciousness there is also a need to foreground the significance of critical thinking in the construction and deconstruction of academic discourse. He critiques the emphasis on the social to the exclusion of the elements that are required to foster academic success in university such as argumentation, reasoning, evidence and support.

He does this by stating the need for making distinction between critical thinking and critical consciousness and by denoting critical thinking as useful and critical consciousness as valuable. He, however, acknowledges the similarities between the two. The point of convergence between these two constructs is that they both place an emphasis on the need for critiquing commonly held beliefs and assumptions. The difference, however, is that in the case of critical thinking the focus is on the skills of argumentation as they pertain to academic discourse, as mentioned earlier whereas critical consciousness includes the acquisition of skills and competencies that stretch beyond the confines of the academia. He therefore, argues for the need to merge the two: teaching critical thinking skills while also developing critical consciousness. Rall's (2002:3) assertion is that:

We obviously want our students to be capable of succeeding inside classrooms and outside classrooms. By teaching both critical thinking and critical consciousness, we help develop critical scholars and critical citizens both of which contribute to a fuller potential of humanity. This should be our goal as educators and more specifically as teachers of writing.

The implications of the above for this study are that the study concurs with Rall's (2002) views about the need for adopting a dual-pronged approach. For purposes of this study it means that there should be a pragmatic and balanced social justice approach. McLane and McNamee (1990) concur by postulating that reading and writing are ways of constructing and conveying meaning with written language and literacy. According to them, this is a multi-faceted phenomenon that involves more & understandings, attitudes, expectations and behaviours, as well as specific skills.

The aforementioned is in conformance with critical literacy tenets which contend that literacy has an ideological nature. Bizell (1992) argues that teaching academic

discourse can be likened to an emancipatory exercise. This view finds resonance in the notion of critical literacy as not being just about the text on the page but the issues that are connected to or that emanate from the social world. Within the context of this study the term is associated with the overarching lens of the Transformative Paradigm and the associated theories of Transformative Learning, Critical Emancipatory Research.

The view of agency and identity is supported by Freire (1970; 1994), who is generally regarded as the founder of critical pedagogy and critical consciousness. He states that literacy makes sense in the terms of consciousness. According to him the printed word should be connected to the world which involves the capacity for reflection about the world.

#### **2.4.4 IDENTITY AS PART OF ACADEMIC PORTRAITURE**

According to the Collins Thesaurus (2009), portraiture refers to the word picture of a person's appearance or character portrayal. In the context of this study the term carries connotations of the portrayal and delineation of students by themselves or others within academia. In the case of the BFP pre-service cohort it refers to how this cohort views themselves as gleaned from their narratives. In this study portraiture also has to do with how this cohort is portrayed within the academia. It is also linked to academic identity (Mahlomaholo, 2009) which, as a result of praxis orientation (Freire & Shor, 1987) has ramifications for professional identity as well.

Samuel (2000) concurs with the aforementioned, in his study of student teachers in the post-apartheid context, by stating that in a country like South Africa, the life of student teachers is often characterised by unfavourable conditions such as poverty and hardships that add pressure to the process of assuming a professional identity. His observation is that these identity challenges have the potential of perpetuation in the school contexts thus tacitly supporting the study's stance of the need for mediation that will prevent the perpetuation of anomalous conditions. He further notes that the South African professional environment in which these student teachers ultimately find themselves after completion is a cause for concern because of the multifarious challenging contexts. The data of Samuel's (2000:477) case study Samuel reflected that "tensions exist between the hope and ambitions that individuals have for themselves and what they feel they can achieve as a teacher".

This relates closely to the emancipatory approach the study is making an advocacy for.

In relation to the transformative agenda I assumed the stance of a tapestry weaver and craftsman in portraying the students a particular way, with the ultimate aim of presenting a portrait that would lead to transformative practice (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2002). Tied to portraiture is the concept of bricolage (Kincheloe et al., 2007) where the researcher is viewed in metaphorical terms as a bricoleur who employs various methodologies and theoretical perspectives in pursuit of a specific ideal while also making provision for the emergence of new insights.

In this study, bricolage is an emancipatory research construct which allows for multi-disciplinary and multi-pronged research that has, as its underlying agenda, the achievement of critical consciousness, transformation, and change agency. On the one hand, bricolage allows for the yielding of new insights while, on the other, pursuing pre-conceived ideals of emancipation and transformation. In such an orientation, there is a predisposition towards and pre-determined purpose to pursue a particular ideal. The pursued ideal in this study is that of change agency, while at the same time recognising that there is a consciousness that 'new knowledge' may emerge from the research. In this way, the notion of the bricolage makes provision for paradigm shifts that give rise to fresh perspectives aimed at making a contribution towards the emergence of innovative insights that will provide multi-perspectival solutions.

Furthermore, bricolage gives rise to the bricoleur's perspective. Kincheloe (2008:323) conceives of bricolage as, "multi-methodological, multi-theoretical and multi-logical forms of social enquiry into the social, cultural, political, psychological and educational domains." Bricoleurs are also referred to as "methodological negotiators" (Kincheloe, 2008:325; Kincheloe et al., 2007:168). Thus, bricolage involves a critical provision for research approaches that do not necessarily subscribe to traditional research agendas (Kincheloe et al., 2007:172).

Roget's 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thesaurus (2012) provides a list of synonyms for the word, "portraiture." The ones which capture the definition of this word as used in the study are "characterization, delineation, description, depiction, image, verbal picture and profile". Within this study, the way in which students perceive themselves and the



way in which they are perceived by others within the academia forms part of their portraiture and identity. Freire (1994) and Holland et al. (1998) tacitly affirm this when they assert that students who have always been assigned the position of less than will have a limited view of the options that are available to them. In other words labelling others as less than has the effect of pathologising and othering them (Boughey, 2005) which has the propensity of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The way in which students perceive themselves and the way in which they are perceived by others within the academia forms part of their portraiture and identity (Freire, 1994). Their portraiture thus has to do with their own identity conceptualisation and construction as influenced by various factors, such as their socio-economic and historical background. Since the focus of the study is on the BFP students there is an underlying implication that the teacher educator (the lecturer) has a role to play in the construction of the academic identity and ultimately their professional development. The inherent critical pedagogy imperative is that teacher educators have to know how their students make meaning (Kincheloe et al., 2007:165). This should facilitate an understanding of the forces that shape who the students are and how they can contribute towards their own emancipation from debilitating and constraining forces.

In this study language is seen as a higher instrument of thought which is used for shaping thought and a means towards intellectual transformation (Vygotsky, 1971). It is also used to facilitate the reception and production of information in the classroom. Epistemological access has to do with, positioning students to understand the contexts of the construction of particular domains of knowledge are constructed so as to be able to construct this knowledge for themselves. (McKenna, 2010) This is in keeping with the post-modernist notion of learning being a process of transformation which also implies a change in identity in professional identity formation and transformation (Mezirow, 2000). The academia is, therefore, strategically positioned to explore the manner in which this transformation is actualised and to expose students to a holistic epistemology (Miller, 1997). Rall (2002:3) notes that:

...the power of critical pedagogy rests in its hope for social transformation, a transformation that takes place when the oppressed [read as previously disadvantaged individuals who are L2 English speakers – in this context the BFP cohort] are empowered through education to see themselves as [meaningful]

actors in the world'. In this way Critical Pedagogy facilitates student engagement, which further fosters participatory research. Kincheloe et al. (2007: 164) express the view that, "critical research can be understood best in the context of the empowerment of individuals.

Mustakova-Possardt (2004:248) regards critical [moral] consciousness as optimal consciousness which integrates the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of the human being. Levels and degrees of mature moral critical consciousness are the result of the lifelong synergistic interaction of moral motivation and structural cognitive development, leading to a progressively more harmonious working of mind and heart and an empowered unity of rational understanding, intuitive knowing and inner vision that is:

...central to negotiating the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and understood as a way of being, an optimal path of human development, which exhibits wholesome engagement with meaning and positive change in one's social world and is characterised by ever-expanding circles of agency.

Her conceptualisation of the construct of critical moral consciousness is that it entails four dimensions, namely," moral motivation, a moral sense of identity, a sense of responsibility and agency and a deep sense of relatedness on all levels of living and a sense of meaning and life purpose. In her study she presents a case for:

re-envisioning education in the direction of integrating mind and heart and developing both moral motivation and critical discernment.

This study thus seeks to pursue and make a conceptual contribution towards a responsive critical empowerment mandate and making provision for a higher education preparation that would be in alignment with that. A further reason for the choice of the bricolage (Kincheloe et al., 2007:170) is the contention that:

in social research, the relationship between the individuals and their contexts is a central dynamic to be investigated. This relationship is a key ontological and epistemological concern of the bricolage; it is a connection that shapes the identities of human beings and the nature of the complex social fabric.

The preceding assertion is an apt depiction of the emancipatory focus and asset-based approach of the study. Their portraiture also has to do with their own identity conceptualisation and construction as influenced by various factors, such as their

background and the milieu of the academia, which has implications for their academic identity. Since the focus of the study is on the BFP students there is an underlying implication that the teacher/educator has a role to play in the construction of the academic identity and ultimately their professional development.

The inherent critical pedagogy imperative is that teachers/ educators have to know how their students make meaning so that they can, “construct pedagogies that engage the impassioned spirit of students in ways that move them to learn what they do not know” (Kincheloe et al., 2007:166). They further present the view that educators, as critical teachers, have a dialectical role of assuming the mature authority of facilitators of student enquiry (Kincheloe et al., 2007:165). Furthermore, they, “must recognise the importance of understanding the social construction of student consciousness, focusing on motives, values and emotions” (Kincheloe et al., 2007:166) with implications for critical moral consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004). This should facilitate an understanding of the forces that shape who the students are and how they can contribute towards their own emancipation from debilitating and constraining forces.

From an ontological perspective Jansen (2013) talks about the importance of developing students’ resilience thus empowering them to be better positioned to overcome and face the various vicissitudes of life. He paints various real life scenarios in which students of varying ages are confronted with challenging circumstances and yet they are able to emerge victorious. His contention is that the ingredient that makes it possible for them to overcome is resilience. This assertion is a tacit reinforcement of the assumptions made in this study about the convergence of the cognitive and the affective in the academic performance of the students under study.

#### **2.4.5 ONTOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The issues that pertain to this aspect are brought into focus in pursuit of the transformational agenda of this thesis. Ontology is defined as that which ‘...deals with the nature of being’ (Collins, 2009). Wortham (2008:3) argues that from an ontological perspective “learning is by definition intertwined with social identification” which has transformational implications. In support of this view, Wenger (1998:215) contends that, “learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an

experience of identity with schools taking on the role of “crucibles of transformation” (Packer, 2001:1). Learning involves both representations of subject matter and the development of identity. Hall & du Gay (1996) substantiate this view by referring to identity as becoming. This means that learning to be a teacher does not only involve learning about the disciplines pertaining to the teaching profession but it also entails that one develops the attributes of a teacher (Hall & du Gay, 1996). The roles of a teacher are listed by Morrow (2007) as:

- (i) Learning mediator
- (ii) Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and material
- (iii) Leader, administrator and manager
- (iv) Scholar, researcher and life-long learner
- (v) Community, citizenship and pastoral role
- (vi) Assessor
- (vii) Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

From the above it is evident that there is both epistemic and ontological aspect related to being a teacher. It should be pointed out however, that Morrow (2007) voices his reservations about the extent to which this is a realistic expectation. However, the debate about the feasibility of the teacher’s ability to enact these roles as contested by Morrow (2007) will not be debated here. The list is merely used to illustrate the dimensions attendant to being a teacher, which has implications for pre-service teacher education and the assumptions presented as a premise for this study.

Ontology has transformational implications, with the classroom being a space that accommodates multiple identities (Wortham, 2008). This fits in with the study’s transformational concern which holds that academic identity is part of the student’s transformation process of becoming, which will culminate in a professional identity, as pointed out earlier. In tacit support of the role of epistemology and ontology in education is an excerpt from a key-note presentation titled ‘Developing Research Coherence’ by Prof Michael Samuel of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, presented on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010 in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. In his presentation he illustrates his point through a narrative by a student from

Turkmenistan. Despite the fact that the sentiments expressed here are from a Turkmenistanian student, they, nevertheless have a global and local relevance.

The student-teacher, conceives of teachers as “a model portrait for their country, they must show learners how to be citizens of the society and [they] must have three main qualities: dedication, expertise and tolerance”. The student’s summation aptly captures the essence of the point that is pertinent to this thesis, that is, the link between the cognitive (language) affective, when he states that “teachers are like a double helix DNA: they are always linking morality -the affective which, in this study is linked to identity issues and expertise -the cognitive which, in this study, is aligned to language. He goes on to point out they must evince “dedication –which is connected to the ontological development of students – and educational knowledge” (Samuel, 2010). The latter bearing a relation to epistemological access.

Schools are positioned at the center of the community, social and economic regeneration, therefore the situational realities of schools such as teacher shortages – particularly within the ECD/FP sector – or multi-lateral under-performance put quality learning at risk and ultimately impacts negatively on the economy and development of society (Samuel, 2010). The issue of under-performance in schools will not be dealt with in an in-depth manner but will be alluded to as based on the literature and implicature through the data.

Even though the issue of teacher-shortage does not fall within the immediate focus of the study, it is worth noting because it mentioned above have implications for individual and social development as well as economic growth, as pointed out. As mentioned earlier, there is a connection between education and the economy and subsequently, knowledge and power (Apple, 2001) which results in the cyclical effects alluded to as part of the assumptions inherent in this study. According to Herrington (2011), this connection is supported by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), a worldwide, multinational, longitudinal study on entrepreneurship. Research conducted by GEM shows that over 65% of the respondents identified problems with education as a contributory factor, specifically in the economic situation in South Africa. His elaboration on the correlation between entrepreneurship and education, specifically the quality of basic education will, however, not be interrogated.

Nevertheless, suffice it to say that Herrington (2011:122) tacitly affirms the assumptions posited in this study by pointing out that, "...apartheid education undoubtedly damaged people's confidence and self-esteem, which impacted negatively on their initiative and creative thinking." The relevance of this assertion for this study is that the selection of the participants of this study was informed by the type of schools they attended and the assumptions that are made about this factor.

The scenario painted above is an echo of the reality that frames this research, while the recommendations that are proffered in this account provide useful insights for responsiveness pertaining to this study. There are several indicators that point towards the need for a concerted and multi-pronged responsiveness towards the status quo in the education landscape and the improvement of quality. Taylor's (2013) NEEDU report diagnoses the problem of low – performance in schools as being ascribable to two factors, namely, a case of the teachers won't or one of they can't. In the former case, the issue of ill-discipline is placed at centre stage, while in the latter case there is an association with cognitive capacity. The issue of ill-discipline is, for purposes of this study, linked to ontological development while that of cognitive capacity is linked to epistemological access.

According to the NEEDU (2013) report the problem of low – performance in schools can be narrowed down to two factors namely, a case of they [the teachers] won't or they can't. The former instance of "won't" highlights the issue of ill-discipline, related to affective factors in this study while the latter case of "can't" foregrounds cognitive capacity. The validity of the above assertions relating to teachers is not explored within this study,

The findings of the report are used as an implicit reinforcement of the argument about the need for a transformative agenda – as conceived of in this study. It should be noted that the study's intention is to make a contribution to the quality of pre-service teacher education within the context of transformative learning and as part of an emancipatory agenda. What this means is that emphasis is placed on foregrounding critical consciousness and critical moral consciousness with the intention of empowering student teachers as change agents.

The underlying assumption is that language and identity are convergent factors that play a role in creation of a culture of continuous and consistent multi-layered

reflectivity that should culminate in a critical emancipation, as conceived of by Kincheloe (2008) and Mahlomaholo (2009) and critical consciousness in Freirean terms (Freire, 1970). In this context critical emancipation would entail paradigmatic shifts that lead to critical consciousness which in turn, lead to transformative praxis as outlined by Mezirow (1995) in his ten phases of transformation.

## 2.5 THE TECHNOLOGICAL TURN

The role of technology in meaning-making and its implications for knowledge reception and production will be brought into focus in this section. An additional dimension to the issue of epistemological access is the fact that students are assumed to be technologically savvy and are often members of the generation that is commonly referred to as digital natives (Koutropoulos, 2011). It should, however, be pointed out that Koutropoulos (2011) refutes the notion of a monolithic, homogeneous group. A point also confirmed by Prensky (2010:64) who states that:

By virtue of being born in a digital age, our students are digital natives by definition but that doesn't mean that they were ever taught everything or (anything in some cases) about computers and other technologies.

Even though the above does not form part of the central concerns of the study, it does bear relevance for the assumptions made about the cohort under scrutiny. The relevance for the BFP cohort lies in their backgrounds, where the likelihood is that they were not exposed to technology in an educational setting. In cases where there has been exposure, there is an immersion into a culture of instant consumption and instant gratification through social media and various digital platforms. The result of this is that they often struggle to access analogous texts. Academic information is packaged in texts that are linguistically inaccessible to them. Their inability to access information as they should has a significant bearing on their meaning-making skills – their ability to deconstruct texts and construct knowledge.

The nature of the social media texts (such as, for example, Facebook, sms, twitter and WhatsApp) they are often exposed to means that they do not have adequate opportunities to engage in deep thinking processes. The common-sense assumption

here is that this has a bearing on their ability to process academically coded texts which, in turn, limits their ability to formulate ideas in academically acceptable and pedagogically appropriate ways that will position them as critically conscious knowledge-producers and not passive consumers (Kincheloe et al., 2007).

## **2.6 THE ROLE OF CODIFICATION**

Codification is a dimension that should be borne in mind with regard to knowledge reception and production capabilities (Bernstein, 1990). In his view codes are regulators of cognitive orientation, dispositions, identities and practices. A case is therefore made for the importance of creating environments which are conducive to inculcating a culture of critical engagement thus raising the level of critical consciousness through which students will attain critical literacy proficiency.

The study will look at the extent to which students engage in constructivist ways of meaning-making. The aim is to make a case for encouraging students to be constructivists who are not just consumers but critical producers of knowledge who are digitally literate in a meaningful manner (Neary & Winn, 2008; Freire, 1994).

## **2.7 THE PARADOX OF LANGUAGE**

The contextual realities of the issue of language will be explored in terms of their paradoxical implications for the academic success of the cohort under discussion. Language should be looked at in the light of the culture (here translated as general *modus operandi*) not only in the academia but also in the society. Okombo (2000) states that no matter how we define development it cannot be done comprehensively without referring to language. He further points out that modern development relies heavily on knowledge and information which is packaged in language, which in the former British colonies of Africa is English.

He maintains that this makes knowledge inaccessible to a large number of people. The study will consider this assertion with the view to support the need for an approach that will empower students to access knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. The relevance of the view posited by Thorpe (2002) that English is the language of power which is used in education, parliament and the corporate world is also brought into focus. The assertion is tacitly confirmed by Nicherson (2005) when she points out how English has risen to become the world's



lingua franca and the most commonly used language of global trade. The result of this is that it has become an eagerly sought after commodity and the object of enormous investment.

The response to this assertion can be posed in the form of the question: If this is a reflection of the status quo, what would be the realistically responsive way to empower students to cope in the academia and beyond? This question has relevance for a social justice agenda of empowering students to not only cope within the milieu of the academia (as students who have to cope with the rigours of an institution of higher learning) but as teachers (in their professional identity) to also, upon completion, function effectively to contribute towards their learners' empowerment. This means that when they are empowered they will also be in a position to, in turn, empower their learners. In conformance with the assumptions made in this study about education and the concomitant transformative learning ideals it's pertinent to pursue this ideology as a transformative paradigm and critical pedagogical imperative.

Wolff's (2005) assertion – that in Africa language is a very sensitive issue, mainly because of its history and neo-colonial relationship with former colonial powers, is worth noting. Added to this is the fact that language is an emotive subject that is strongly linked to identity. Discussions around language use are often perceived as threats to the core of culture and they thus evoke a knee-jerk response of self-preservation. Thorpe (2002) concurs by pointing the ideological reasons for paying attention to African languages in African country because of concerns such as culture and identity. She goes on, however, to highlight the reality is that in South Africa, of the colonial past of English vis a vis its global future resulting in a clash between ideology and reality (Thorpe, 2002).

In the light of the afore-mentioned, the study explores the reality of the historical hegemony and dominance of English and its use as a currency in the knowledge economy of education and the ideal of policy dictates about the use of Home Language. The study seeks a pragmatic approach towards this paradigmatic paradox which simultaneously has implications for the performance of the cohort under discussion in this study. This is done against the backdrop of the reality of the use of English as the Language of Learning and Teaching at the institution that provides the habitat for this study. Alexander (2010) argues, rightfully, for mother

tongue (MT) instruction as a counter-hegemonic strategy. In so doing he represents an ideology, in resonance with, for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) that attaches a valid cultural significance to the issue of language. His advocacy for multi-lingualism is in consonance with the schools of thought that argue for code-switching (Cook, 1991) and heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) as ways of circumventing the potentially disempowering implications of mono-lingualism in L1 classrooms.

However, Tshepiso Matentjie, (2010) an educational psychologist, in effect, tacitly presents a counter-argument about the counter-hegemonic strategy mentioned above in view of the complexities of bi-and multi-lingual familial contexts. The problem is compounded by the fact that in urban areas the variation of the mother-tongue is often a 'diluted' and urbanised version of the one used in rural areas. This means then that the urban speakers of the home language do not, in reality, have mastery of the home language, in its pure form. She points out that a further challenge is that while the MTs function effectively at a BICS level they have not yet been adequately developed to function effectively at a CALP level (Cummins, 1996).

The NEEDU report (2013), in a study conducted at various schools confirms the difficulty of teaching Mathematics using mother-tongues that still do not have the appropriate equivalents for Mathematical jargon. A further compounding factor noted by the report is that of the issue of the different dialects of the same language as determined by geographic location. Also, the issue of non-familiarity with the official parlance is pointed out. A respondent points out an example of the official word for the colour brown in Setswana being an unfamiliar word which the learners would not understand because:

“We speak a deurmekaar (sic) Setswana. In most cases an Afrikaans or English word replaces the real word.”

In tacit agreement with Matentjie's (2010) contention, the NEEDU (2013) report highlights what it terms "the incongruence between the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and the home language of the learners, particularly in the urban areas – where in some instances all 11 official language are represented in one school. In some of the schools that were part of the NEEDU research, English was chosen as the LOLT in the Foundation Phase for the following reasons:

- (i) Parents were demanding it

- (ii) In the words of a respondent: “We decided it was necessary to expose learners to the modern world so that they can understand what’s happening on TV. It is difficult, but we are doing it at our own pace and parents are very happy about it.”

In both instances it is evident that parents see the use of English as a medium of instruction in a positive light because they are of the opinion that it will benefit them. Based on the assumptions that are inherent in this study, there is an alignment with the comments made by Jansen’s (2013:4) when he posits the view that English could be one of the major solutions for the crisis in Education. He further states the following:

Instruct every teacher and every child in English from the first day of school rather than add the burden of poor instruction in the MT in the Foundation years to the transition to English later on.

He also points out that for many parents English is already the language of choice in schools. The reason for that is that indigenous languages are poorly taught. He also asserts that “learning in a MT [is] no guarantee for improved learning gains in school. He further argues that:

Black parents prefer to have their children study in English, no matter what politicians might say about indigenous education, or the Pan South African language Board about language rights, black parents make the correct calculation that virtually the entire economy is now organised on English terms and therefore the chances of success are much greater in the colonial language.

It is in this light that this study explores the feasibility of adopting a transformative learning approach with critical emancipatory approach leanings (Mahlomaholo, 2009) within a critical pedagogical orientation (Kincheloe et al., 2007) to negotiate a compromise to ‘empower’ students with proficiency while facilitating heteroglossic functionality (Bakhtin, 1981) within the context of the dominance of English (as the LOLT) in the academia in an counter the disempowering reality of a combination of codification (Bernstein, 1990) and meritocracy (McNamee & Miller, 2004). Code-switching (Cook, 1991; Setati & Adler, 2000) heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) and trans-languaging (Williams, 1994, Makalela, 2015) are also considered as enabling options for linguistic repertoires that will facilitate meaning-making for this cohort. Within this study these three constructs are briefly described as follows:

- **Trans-languaging:** This is a concept that was coined by Williams (1994) as the “ability of multi-lingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system.
- **Code-switching:** Cook, (1991:65) explains it as a practice that, in normal conversations amongst bilinguals, consists of 84% single word switches, 10% phrase switches and 6% clause switching.
- **Heteroglossia:** According to Bakhtin (1981), this occurs when linguistic variations that reflect diverse speech communities are allowed to co-function in communication. For example, in English there are different variations such as formal and informal language. For purposes of this study, the concept of heteroglossia would allow for linguistic variations of, for example, a mother tongue to co-function in a code-switching context so as to facilitate communication and freedom of expression.

## 2.8 THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE CONSTRUCTS OF LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

The table below is an illustration that also serves as a juxtaposition of language and identity and the associated terms as they pertain specifically to this study.

**Table 2.1: Language and Identity: Associated Constructs**

Language	Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic performance</li> <li>• Epistemological access</li> <li>• Cognitive factors</li> <li>• Mind</li> <li>• Knowing</li> <li>• Thought – processes</li> <li>• Critical discernment</li> <li>• Critical literacy</li> <li>• Critical consciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic portraiture</li> <li>• Ontological development</li> <li>• Affective factors</li> <li>• Heart</li> <li>• Being and becoming</li> <li>• Emotions, values, morals, will, beliefs, resilience</li> <li>• Moral motivation – moral sense of identity, responsibility and agency</li> <li>• Cultural capital</li> <li>• Critical moral consciousness</li> </ul>

The stance that this study will adopt, therefore, is that there is a need for a balanced approach in which all the factors will be taken into account so that pragmatic solutions can be attained. The approach should be one that will ensure a strategic

multi-pronged responsiveness that will cater for the multi-dimensional realities of the South African education landscape in general and the language and identity complexities associated specifically with the cohort under discussion. Alongside this, there is a need to critically reflect on the issues that have a bearing on academic performance with ramifications for throughput and delivery as it pertains to the BFP students that are the focus of this study. This research is an attempt at making a valid contribution towards that end.

The previous section was an exploration of the literature that tacitly supports and lends credence to the assumption that language and identity are intertwined strands that play a role in the academic performance of the students under scrutiny in this study. In the following section I will focus on the theoretical and conceptual framework that will be used to as paradigmatic lenses for conceptualising how this study position itself as a responsive measure.

## **2.9 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The previous section entailed an examination of the literature pertaining to the focus of the study with a view to formulating paradigmatic insights regarding the claims and assumptions upon which this study is premised. In this section an attempt will be made to illustrate the cohesive thread between the theoretical and conceptual approaches as well as the concepts and constructs that are used in this research. The discussion will also include a tentative and preliminary positing of responsiveness in the light of the paradigmatic considerations. It should be noted that within the context of this study, the construct of paradigm will be semantically associated with the theoretical and conceptual framework.

### **2.9.1 THE CONCEPTUAL CONSTRUCT OF RESEARCH**

Research has been described as a systematic investigation or “enquiry whereby data are collected, analysed and interpreted in some way in an effort to understand, describe, predict or control an educational or psychological phenomenon to empower individuals in such contexts.” (Mertens, 2005:2). In order to facilitate the afore-mentioned the researcher has to choose a point of departure which will serve as a premise for the stated objective. The paradigm as it pertains to the theoretical framework (Mertens, 2005) is regarded as that point of departure that forms the

basis of the research process. Babbie (2001: 42) supports this assertion by stating that, “a paradigm is the fundamental model or frame of reference we use to organise our observations and reasoning”. Paradigm can be regarded as related assumptions or propositions that frame thinking and research. Creswell (1998:74) supports this view by stating that, “all qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm or world view, a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guides their enquiries”.

These relate to:

- the nature of reality;
- the role of values in a study;
- the relationship of the researcher to what is being researched, and
- the process of research – the methodological issue.

A study that was conducted by De Wet and Smith (1998:181) revealed, *inter alia*, that education is undertaken from a diversity of paradigms with 13 identified paradigms. The study further revealed that from the articles that were analysed only 4% gave an account for the paradigmatic perspective while 87% positioned their hypotheses or methodologies within existing theoretical frameworks.

## **2.9.2 THE NATURE OF REALITY**

Reality, as it pertains to this study, entails the paradigm which shapes the theoretical and conceptual framework that it is premised upon. Patten (2002) points out that orientational qualitative enquiry allows for approaching a setting with an explicit and pre-determined paradigmatic and theoretical orientation. The study thus adopts this orientational qualitative enquiry stance in the pre-selection of the Transformative Paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) as an overarching lens that is appropriate for this study’s critical and theoretical framework.

## **2.10 THE TRANSFORMATIVE PARADIGM**

The Transformative Paradigm is usually regarded as a deviation from dominant research paradigms and perspectives (Mertens, 2005). It arose as a result of dissatisfaction that the issues of social justice were not adequately dealt with by the dominant paradigms of that time. It is often associated with a political agenda and

mixed method approaches (Creswell, 2003). However, for the context of this study its association with a political agenda will be dispensed with in lieu of the action for reform agenda which carries the supposition that it “may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which the individuals work or live and the researcher’s life (Creswell, 2003:9). The association with mixed-methods validates its link with the bricoleur’s multi-theoretical perspective even though a qualitative approach will be used. The multi-theoretical perspective positions the researcher as a theoretical bricoleur who works through and between multiple theoretical paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:5).

The change-agency supposition referred to above (Creswell, 2005) lends a pragmatic quality to the transformative paradigm. The bricoleurs’ perspective presents the view that bricoleurs are paradigmatic negotiators (Kincheloe et al., 2007) who fall into two main categories, namely:

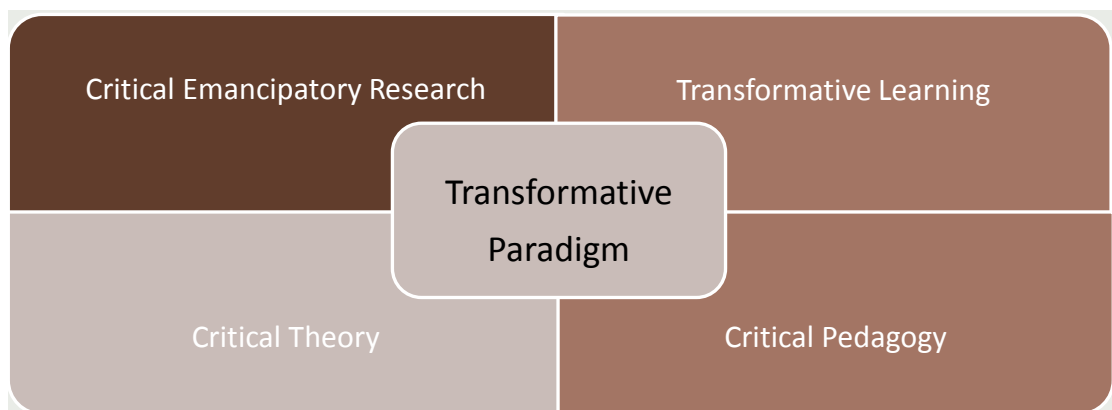
- (i) Those who allow the research process to yield new insights. The first category presupposes an open-mindedness that allows for new theoretical associations and that is not confined to a particular theoretical stance. This means that in this case the researcher does not have a cast-in-iron theoretical orientation that bars entry to any other paradigm. In this regard the link with the pragmatic paradigm can thus be seen as a new insight.
- (ii) Those who have a grander purpose in mind (Creswell, 2007; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2008).

In this second instance the researcher sets out with a specific aim in mind and towards this end a specific set of theoretical tools is used to attain the desired pre-determined outcome.

In this study both categories are valid because, on the one hand, there is an expectation that the data and research process will provide new perspectives while there is also a circumstantially-dictated agentic emancipatory objective. The latter is influenced by the aim of the study to be responsive with regard to the overall research mandate of strengthening the BEd Foundation Phase programme as it pertains specifically to the Black BEd Foundation Phase (BFP) pre-service teacher cohort. For purposes of the afore-mentioned agenda the change-agency and empowerment agenda of the Transformative Paradigm justifies and necessitates the

inclusion of the concomitant concepts of critical consciousness, critical literacy, praxis and transformative learning. This is in conformance with the study's alignment with the bricoleur's perspective.

As pointed out earlier, the approach of the bricolage is to posit the view of the 'methodological bricoleur' whose research combines different lenses of critical enquiry. (Kincheloe et al., 2007). Within this study the concept of the bricolage refers to the linking of theories and associated constructs, which, takes into account, "the complexity of the lived world and [thus] grounded on an epistemology of complexity" (Kincheloe, et al., 2007:168; Denzin & Lincoln, 1999; Kincheloe, 2001 & 2004; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). This conceives of bricolage research as "a critical, multi-perspectival [and] multi-theoretical approach to enquiry". For purposes of this study the bricolage will be constituted by the fact that it is critical qualitative enquiry which draws from different perspectives and theories that are held together by the Transformative Paradigm. The initial conceptualisation of the bricolage as, it pertains to this study, can be visualised as follows:



**Figure 1: Conceptualisation of Bricolage in this study**

The above diagram illustrates the Transformative Paradigm as the central theoretical underpinning for this study and its interconnectedness with CER, Transformative Learning, Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy. The interconnectedness of these theoretical orientations is facilitated by the critical transformation thread that forms a cohesive thread.

In keeping with this bricoleur's theoretical orientation it is envisaged that the study is positioned to confirm the assumption that the convergence of language and identity yield an intertwined strand, referred to in this study as a novel construct, namely,



'*epistology*'. This is a term that accrues from the convergence of language and identity in this study. The word is a pastiche of **epistemology** and **ontology**. It is used to convey the idea that language and identity are intertwined and interconnected, and analysis of this interconnectedness can contribute towards the epistemological access that is linked to the academic success and ontological development of students.

The aforementioned supports the view of bricoleurs expressed earlier as paradigmatic negotiators who allow the research process to yield new insights (Creswell, 2007). The objective is to play a role towards responsiveness to the assumption of contextual disadvantage by making a contribution towards epistemological access and ontological development, with specific reference to the cohort under discussion.

### **2.10.1 THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE PARADIGM AND RELATED THEORIES**

The Transformative Paradigm has been chosen as the over-arching theoretical framework because of its concern with issues of social justice (Mertens, 2005). The appropriateness of the Transformative Paradigm hinges on its action and agency agenda to transform the lives of the participants and institutions that fall under its lens of enquiry (Creswell, 2003). Even though ideally this lens is used under mixed-method research conditions, for purposes of this study it will be used from a qualitative research perspective and the associated theories, namely the CER theory and Critical Pedagogy Theory as theoretical lenses for this study. The Transformative Paradigm is linked to the assumptions that form part of the premises for this study. These assumptions pertain to the epistemological connections of language and the ontological connotations of identity. A further reason for the paradigmatic choice lies in the aim to explore the questions pertaining to the problem, as it relates to the cohort that is the focal point of this study.

### **2.10.2 THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY**

This theory is often associated with Mezirow's (2005) conceptualisation of transformation. It should thus be understood in terms of its association with learning as a construction of meaning by the learner him/herself who then uses it to create a

new consciousness (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2009). They add that the “aim of education is to empower learners to maximise -completely develop and fully utilise their human potential [fundamental human virtue] through facilitating life-long learning [resolving real-life challenges] in order to create a safe, sustainable and prosperous future for us all” (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2009:49). In conformance with this notion is Grabove’s (1997:90) view that learning has, “intuitive, non-rational creative and even spiritual dimensions that play significant roles in the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of our fundamental world view.” This view is in conformance with the views expressed by Stewart (2002; 2008) and Mustakova-Possardt (2004).

This also has implications for a holistic approach to learning and life-long learning with constructivist connotations. In this regard, the following assertion is worth noting: “the aim of education is to empower learners to maximise (completely develop and fully utilise their human potential (fundamental human virtue) through facilitating life-long authentic learning (resolving real life challenges) in order to create a safe sustainable and prosperous future for all” (Slabbert & Hattingh, 2009).

Transformative learning is couched within the Transformative learning theory which holds the view that “reconstructing or transforming perspectives is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world [and positioning] ourselves to change these structures...and finally making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings” (Mezirow, 1991:167). Mezirow (2003:98) further asserts that, “discourse or dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs is a core tenet of the transformative learning theory.” He proffers the view that transformative learning brings about a meaning shift which involves profound personal change and therefore has identity implications (Mezirow, 2000).

Transformative learning is regarded as a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thoughts, feelings and actions. This means that it has implications for both critical consciousness and critical moral consciousness. In this study critical consciousness can be described as the ability to move beyond commonly-held beliefs to a critical mode of meaning-making that will enable individuals to re-configure their life-views for emancipatory purposes (Kincheloe et al., 2007). While critical moral consciousness entails affective factors as well as the spiritual dimension (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004).

Mezirow (1995:50) conceives of transformative learning as a Ten-Stage sequence which entails the following:

**Table 2.2: Ten-Stage Sequence of Transformative Learning**

Stage	Action that requires a response accompanied by critical consciousness
1. A disorientating dilemma	Picture the event
2. Self-examination of affect	What are you aware of feeling...describe it
3. Critical assessment of assumptions	What does it mean to you to feel this? What advice are you giving yourself in the picture? How do you interpret what is happening? What is your intention?
4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation	Why do I feel like this? What brought me to this situation? What do I need to do to change this?
5. Exploration of new roles	How would you prefer this to be different? Frame an Action
6. Planning a course of action	What are you aware of that keeps this from happening? Describe the dangers to change. Describe the benefits of staying the same.
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementation	What will you need to know/accomplish/overcome for this to occur more often?
8. Trying out new role.	How will you know when you are more on track?
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships	Specific transformative actions. For example, extra support, classes and mentoring.
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective	A regular routine of self-reflexivity and adoption of habits and actions that are aligned with a transformed life.

The above reflect a link with critical consciousness and transformative praxis which are further connected to an emancipatory agenda. It should be pointed out, however, that not all the discursive assumptions that are made are directly related to the concerns or emphases of this study. A brief summation of their relevance for the concerns of this study is the assumptions about language-related and identity-related under-preparedness which has implications for power-relations. Also, for purposes of this study the construct of 'oppression' should not be regarded in its political denotation of subjugation. It is used to denote the cohort under discussion as L2 speakers of English who are situationally positioned in a previously white

institution and who, by virtue of the backgrounds and positioning find themselves in a potentially disempowering and debilitating situation, as will be revealed by the data.

The tentative emancipatory response to the above is posited as the inculcation of a culture of critical literacy that involves reading that goes beyond the words on the page by contextualizing it to situational realities of the lived world. This gives rise to a critical consciousness that has a multi-faceted potential of transformation (Freire, 1970). Critical consciousness involves 'reading [as a] mode of finding something [which] brings a joy that is directly connected to the acts of creation and re-creation. (Kincheloe et al., 2007:164).

Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998, in Kincheloe et al., 2007:165) assert that critical pedagogical research must concern itself with promoting a form of reading that takes into account the fact that the words that appear in texts are representative of ideologies that transcend the superficial meaning. In their view, "such a curriculum promotes students as researchers who engage in critical analysis of the forces that shape the world". In this regard students therefore, do not just read for exposure to the written word and for language acquisition (Krashen, 2003; 2004) or comprehensible input and communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972). The form of reading advocated for here is an emancipatory and empowerment objective which is in alignment with the study's critical emancipatory and transformative learning agenda. The critical theory lens, as used in tandem with its connotations of critical consciousness, transformative learning and reflective practice, further bring into the critical emancipatory research paradigm the concept of a bricolage, which, according to Kincheloe et al. (2007:168) is:

an emancipatory research construct...[with] elements of multi – disciplinary research...[and which] exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world...it is grounded on an epistemology of complexity...[which] constructs a far more active role for human [beings] in shaping reality.

Kincheloe's view of the bricolage also includes the metaphoric association with a jazz ensemble and an intricately woven tapestry (Kincheloe, 2010). In both metaphors there is the image of a synergistic combination of elements to either produce harmonious melodies in the former instance (that of the jazz ensemble) or an aesthetically pleasing array of colours (in a creatively woven tapestry). Both

metaphors convey the sense of a blend or fusion of various elements as will be inferred through the recommendations of this study.

As pointed out earlier, the Transformative paradigm is a theoretical framework that is associated with critical theories. In this study critical emancipatory research theory is aligned with the Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2003) and Critical Pedagogy Theory (Servage, 2008; Apple, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008; Brookfield, 2003). This is in consonance with the concept of the bricolage which gravitates towards multi-disciplinary research in view of the multi-faceted and multi-logical nature of the bricolage.

According to Kincheloe (2008:6) “Critical pedagogy should be about a deep conceptualisation of the role of the social, cultural and political in shaping human identity as well as the ways schooling affects the lives of students from marginalised groups.” In tacit affirmation to this Servage (2008) asserts that critical pedagogy places a strong emphasis on the role of education in facilitating students’ critical consciousness and knowledge production. This has implications for both identity and language as they pertain to the BFP group which is the focus of this study. It is of specific relevance to this cohort because of the multi-layered emancipatory ramifications of the role of the emancipated teacher in the emancipation of the learner (McGregor, 2003).

Also, the implicit mandate of this study should be regarded as emancipatory because of the focus on strengthening the Foundation Phase with a view to contribute towards the improvement of the quality of education. The assumption made in this study is that the students that form part of the cohort under scrutiny are in many instances from socio-economic backgrounds that impact on their life-view which has implications for their identity and how they perceive and conduct themselves. With this in mind, a further paradigmatic imperative is to contribute towards the creation of a critical consciousness -that is linked to epistemological access. Further associations are made between language and cognitive navigational skills that will facilitate critical consciousness.

Critical moral consciousness is conceived of as part of ontological development processes. In addition, identity is aligned with ontological development that is associated with critical moral consciousness. This is illustrated in the diagram below

which shows that within this study language is associated with epistemological access as well as the constructs of cognition since and critical consciousness (Freire,1970, Kincheloe, 2008). Identity is associated with ontological development, as it is conceived in this study, and further with critical moral consciousness as presented by Mustakova-Possardt (2004).



**Figure 2: Epistology & Ontology**

Within the context of the study’s transformational paradigmatic concerns, the issue of language and epistemology are regarded as constructs that require an emancipatory focus that employs the use of critical consciousness and critical moral consciousness as they are conceived of in this study.

## 2.11 CENTRAL DEFINITIONS OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN RELATION TO THE STUDY

Breuing (2011) conducted a study in which she explores the different ways in which university educators define their conceptualisation of the construct of critical pedagogy. In her study she looked at the central definitions and the influential theorist that the definition draws from or is associated with. The table below has been partially borrowed and adapted from her article to serve as a means through which further light can be thrown on the construct of critical pedagogy as it pertains to this study.

A selection of this list was taken to classify the definitions in accordance with whether the definition and association is in alignment with this thesis’ seminal

philosophical orientation or not. They were classified as follows: TC -for total compatibility with this study's orientation, PC -for partial-compatibility.

**Table 2.3: Central definitions of Critical Pedagogy and Theorists**

<b>Educator Category</b>	<b>Central definition</b>	<b>Influential Theorist</b>	<b>Thesis Orientation</b>
Difficult to define	Classroom as an arena of struggle	Marx,K (1867)	PC
Constructivist/Experiential education	Student engagement/critical thinking/life-long learning and ownership of learning/field-oriented classroom practices	Shor (1996) Kincheloe (2004)	TC
Critical pedagogue	Critical responders through praxis and research	McLaren (2003)	TC
Critical pedagogue/ Constructivist	Social justice and change through critical praxis and research/reading the world by reading the word	Freire (1970) Vygotsky (1971)	TC

It should be noted for now, however, that a 'PC classification' should not be misconstrued for a value or conceptual judgment on the credibility of the theorist but rather, it should be understood that the theory is not in full congruence with the focus and orientation of the study. In her research Perry (2012) looks at and classifies various theorists and the views they espouse about critical pedagogy.

These will not be discussed in detail. They are, the Frankfurt School that was greatly influenced by Karl Marx with specific reference to his views about labour which linked the essential societal problem to socio-economic inequality. He believed that social justice could only be realised through a socialised economy (Eisner, 2002). The study does not align itself with this view because of its concern with appropriately structured education as a vehicle for liberation within a free-enterprise system – and not socialised economy.

Another school of thought, the Critical Theorists of the Frankfurt School held the view that schools 'undermine the kinds of social consciousness needed to bring about change and social transformation' (Eisner, 2002). The theorists that are

associated with this school of thought are Apple (1982) and Kincheloe (2004). This view is more in consonance with the views espoused in this study.

The most widely known theorist, who is also known as the inaugural philosopher to critical pedagogy, is Freire (1970). The school of thought that he subscribed to was referred to as the Latin American liberation movement. This movement was primarily concerned with the plight of the poor and how to liberate them from their often debilitating life circumstances. He felt compelled to look for pedagogical ways through which their lives could be improved.

Breuing (2011) draws attention to the fact that Freire (1970) referred to his educative process as liberatory action or praxis. He argued that people need to engage in a praxis that incorporates theory, action and reflection as a means to work towards social change and justice and he devised a literacy program based on this ideal as well as the practical needs of his students. Shor (1996) and Kincheloe (2004) also found resonance with this view when they conceive of critical pedagogy in terms of a classroom praxis that sees teachers and students collaborating as agents of social change. The relevance of these views for this study lies in the critical emancipatory agenda that focuses on the students who are PDIs (Previously Disadvantaged Individuals) and who are the pivotal point of this study.

### **2.11.1 THE VARIED NATURE OF CRITICAL THEORY**

In spite of the neo-Marxist connotations of the critical theory paradigm the study should not be decoded purely in terms of the political and ideological orientation of this theoretical delineation. Kincheloe et al. (2007:163) provide a list of neo-Marxist theorists which includes, inter alia, the following: Immanuel Kant, George Wilhem Friedrich Hegel, Max Weber, the Frankfurt School theorists, continental social theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida; Latin American thinkers such as Paulo Freire; Russian sociolinguists such as Mikhael Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky. From this list it is evident that critical theory is used for a broad range of applications which may vary from context to context. In tacit support of this assertion Kincheloe et al. (2007:163) state that, in essence, critical theory cannot be limited to a fixed set of characteristics for the following reasons:



- there are many [varied] critical theories;
- the critical theory is always changing and evolving and
- critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity, as there is room for disagreement.

In cognisance of the above considerations the study strongly aligns itself with the contention that “critical theory should not be treated as a universal grammar of revolutionary thought objectified and reduced to discrete formulaic pronouncements or strategies” (Kincheloe et al., 2007:164). This means that in this study there is an attempt to adopt a critical pragmatic stance that is aimed at providing practical solutions rather than one that will merely engage in critical or revolutionary rhetoric. This presupposes a critical non-revolutionary deconstruction and responsiveness that is in alignment with a transformative learning orientation.

In other words, critical theory, and its related lenses, should be regarded as a vehicle that can be used to convey ideological leanings that place a strong emphasis on the need for emancipatory pragmatic paradigmatic shifts.

### **2.11.2 A DISCUSSION OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY**

This refers to a praxis-oriented teaching and learning approach in which students are encouraged to be reflective and to critique meaning. In this approach there is a drive towards inculcating a constructivist critical consciousness that is strongly aligned with the notion of praxis in students – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and low socio-economic contexts. Critical Pedagogy is regarded as a vehicle of students’ attainment of critical consciousness (Servage, 2008; Apple, 2001). This approach augurs well for the emancipatory approach that is envisaged as a responsive measure for the challenges that are associated with this cohort.

The language and identity problems that characterise the BFP cohort that is under scrutiny in this study constitute the reality in this study. This reality includes, inter alia, the cohort’s L2 status, their disadvantaged backgrounds and the fact that they are often 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students. This means that they find themselves in situations where they have to navigate their way through university without appropriate support from parents.

Perry (2012:51) is, by implication, of the view that it is incumbent on the academia to look at ways of “decreasing achievement gaps for students whose families and communities practice literacy in ways that may differ from those in the mainstream...’ What this means, in essence is that the academia has a responsibility to provide students with additional support that will close the gaps created by lack of prior exposure to literacy practices that are valued in the academia.

In congruence with the above assertion Bernstein (1990) presents a frame of reference in which there is a codification system that advantages those who enter the system of higher education from underprivileged backgrounds while privileging those from higher income groups (Bernstein, 1990). He is of the view that class relations privilege certain forms of communication which transmit what he refers to as dominant and dominated codes. The academia’s code thus becomes part of the dominant code which is used as a regulatory measure of quality. The L2 speakers of English, who constitute the dominated code, have not had exposure to the dominant code. This study postulates that lack of prior exposure to this dominant has a negative bearing on their performance. Codification thus refers to the often exclusionary codes that are used in the academia. This has implications for both language (derivation of meaning from the text) and identity (context and perceptions about self in relation to the text)-which, according to this study, has implications for academic performance.

These realities form part of the basis for the interrogation of how the convergence of language and identity affects the academic performance and influences the portraiture of the BFP students. In addition, the contextual reality pertaining to the study is that it foregrounds the role of language as a codified academic currency and a means towards epistemological access. The study further highlights identity in its general and academic connotations as part of the ontological repertoire that facilitates professional identity as it relates to the BFP cohort. The issue of the professional identity is significant for this study because of the mandate to develop and strengthen the BEd Foundation Phase programme. The intention with the development and strengthening agenda is to improve the Foundation Phase provisioning which is a key factor in improving education in general.

As it is argued in the assumptions of the study the Foundation Phase teacher is a key role player in education because of the cyclical ramifications of poor Foundation

Phase provisioning. It is further argued that a Foundation Phase teacher has the potential to play a significant role as a change agent in the strategy to address under-performance. However, In order to understand the current status quo with regard to teacher education it is important to refer to the historical background pertaining to teacher education.

### **2.11.3 CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH (CER) THEORY**

This is a type of research that seeks to empower the subjects of enquiry (Mahlomaholo, 2009). The empowerment agenda presupposes unequal power relations that are situationally and socially constructed. However, there is an attempt to engage subjects as co-participants in the research process. There is no illusion regarding the power relations that shape and inform the research process. The co-constructionist objective simultaneously recognizes the fact that participants may not always be in a position to clearly articulate their views and concerns. The cohort that forms the focus of this study falls under this category.

According to Mahlomaholo (2009), CER liberates [transforms] the mind thus aligning itself with a social justice agenda (McGregor, 2003). This mind-set could be translated to mean that emancipatory theory is a social justice imperative that should be incorporated into pedagogy that is concerned with addressing inequities. The inequities referred to here can take the form of situational and individual practices and ideologies that have a negative bearing on transformative praxis. This is in keeping with Mezirow's (2005) contention that "critical reflection is a characteristic feature of transformative learning". He further states that 'critical pedagogy and critical thinking are co-requisites for transformative learning and transformative praxis.

Brookfield (2008), by implication, supports Mezirow's (2005) contention in his belief that for critical pedagogy to have an impact transformative learning is required. Transformative learning and education, therefore, entail "a fundamental re-ordering of ...practices after a ...process of thought and self-scrutiny' (Cranton, 2002). The assumption that is made in this study is that this re-ordering entails an epistemic reflectivity and critical moral consciousness that facilitates ontological development. Mezirow (2005) identifies critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions and critical discourse as essential components of transformative learning.

## 2.12 THE ROLE OF VALUES IN RESEARCH

There are various schools of thought regarding the role of values in scientific enquiry. For example, the positivist approach, primarily adopts the stance that the researcher should refrain from engaging in value-laden enquiry since this could detract from the objectivity of the research (de Vos et al., 2005). This is in contrast to the interpretivist approach which aligns itself with the phenomenological research stating that it is, “rooted in empathetic understanding...of the everyday lived experience of people in specific historical settings” (de Vos et al., 2005:6).

The interpretivist approach lends itself well to the paradigmatic orientation of the study with regard to the high premium it places on the role of values as imperatives of scientific enquiry. Values are upheld and, in the same vein, value is accorded to the participants. According to the critical theory view research is borne out of a need for change agency that is responsive to dissatisfactory situational dictates and contextual conditions. The change agency agenda that informs this study is seen as multi-faceted and participatory. This means, therefore, that the researcher should not be regarded as a redeemer figure that provides top-down solutions to the identified problems but the participants are regarded as co-contributors and co-negotiators (Kincheloe et al., 2007).

The work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire is used as a basis for the critical theoretical approach of this study. He believed firmly in involving his participants as partners in the research process (Freire, 1970, 1994; Freire & Shor 1987). Kincheloe et al. (2007:164) sum this up by stating that in Freire’s critical research *modus operandi*, “all participants and researchers learned to see more critically, think at a more critical level and to recognise the forces that subtly shape their lives.” His aim was to ensure that all the role-players maintain a critical mode of thinking that would position them to contribute to the creation of a better world.

The role of values in this study is further encapsulated in the fact that it is premised upon a collective (national) mandate as well as a researcher’s (personal) obligation to make a contribution towards the cyclical effects of ill/under-preparedness. The

theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this study are appropriate tools for the realisation of these values in that they provide the opportunity to explore critical emancipatory ways of transformation. For this reason the study has an empowerment and developmental aspect which points towards an emancipatory agenda. The research methodologies and attendant ethical considerations such as anonymity and privacy also form part of the values that are taken into cognisance in qualitative and interpretivist research in general and in this study in particular.

### **2.13 A RESPONSIVE STRATEGY**

Critical theories are often critiqued for their critical stance that does not seem to provide practical solutions to existential challenges. The pragmatic idealist approach is a term coined to describe the paradigmatic stance adopted in this study. This entails the simultaneous espousal of the ideal of, for example, the accordance of an equal status for all language groups while taking into account and planning for a pragmatic response to situational dictates such as the reality of the use of English as a lingua franca to facilitate cross-cultural communication and as a facilitator of epistemological access. This approach asserts that striving towards an ideal should also take into account and make provision for the reality of situational dictates so as to facilitate appropriate responsiveness. This will be explored in Chapter 6 as a viable response to the language paradox.

### **2.14 CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on the paradigmatic underpinnings of the study. Associated constructs were discussed as well as preliminary discussions pertaining to theoretical and conceptual responses. In addition, the interplay between language as a means to epistemological access and identity as an ontological development construct was demonstrated. Furthermore, the coinage of the concept of epistology, as associated with the creation of optimal learning environments and as a product of the intertwined strand that accrues from the interplay between epistemology and ontology, was broached in this chapter. The concept of Appropriate Responsiveness was tentatively explored in relation to its relevance within a reality *vis a vis* idealist tension with specific reference to the language paradox.

The concept of bricolage was also used to show the interrelatedness of the theoretical approaches and how they are interwoven to convey and address the assumptions and concerns regarding the BFP cohort.

With this in mind, the following chapter will look at the research design around the methodology that will serve as a harvesting tool for the validation or refutation of the premises of this research. A further intention of Chapter 3 is to look at the appropriateness of the design, strategies of enquiry and tools that were used to investigate the assumptions about the cohort.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 brings into focus the planning and conceptualisation of the research, the research questions, assumptions and aims of the study with the view to validating the research design. Attention is paid to the methodological and paradigmatic issues pertaining to data collection. This chapter also takes into account the implications of the relationship of the researcher to the research subject(s).

#### 3.2 THE METHODOLOGICAL ISSUE

This study was interpretivist with an explorative component and was conducted using Qualitative research methodologies (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research is conceived of by Van Manen (1983) as an overarching term that covers an array of interpretive techniques which focus on the description and translations of phenomena that occur in the social world.

Qualitative research is thus designed to help researchers understand people and the social contexts within which they live. The phenomena (namely, language and identity) that form the central discussion point of the study are examined with the view of interpreting how they affect the BFP cohort that is the central focus of the study. The literature is consulted to provide validation and to serve as reference points for the assumptions and theoretical orientation of this study. The research process is seen as non-linear and iterative with the researcher being able to return to earlier steps at any given point.

### 3.3 THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

The research design was informed by the following considerations:

- The knowledge claims that are made by the researcher, including assumptions and theoretical orientations;
- The strategies of enquiry that inform the research procedure and
- The methods of data collection (Creswell, 2003:5)

The components that bear relevance for the research design are visually represented as follows:

**Table 3.1: The design of the research and related components**

Research Questions	Related paradigms theories, terms, concepts & constructs	Assumptions, Aims and Approaches	Data Collection and Analysis
Key Research Question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do Black Foundation Phase students cope with English as a medium of instruction in a previously white institution of higher learning?</li> </ul> Sub-research questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does language influence cognition (knowledge reception and production) with reference to this cohort?</li> <li>• What effects do students' identities (both self-perceived and others) have on their performance?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative Research</li> <li>• Transformative Paradigm</li> <li>• Critical Emancipatory</li> <li>• Research theory</li> <li>• Critical Theory</li> <li>• Critical Pedagogy</li> <li>• Transformative Learning</li> <li>• Transformative praxis</li> <li>• Descriptive</li> <li>• Interpretive</li> <li>• Phenomenological</li> <li>• Critical Consciousness</li> <li>• Critical Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cyclical impact of education with specific reference to the phenomena of language and identity</li> <li>• The paradoxical implications of English including the role of technology</li> <li>• Cognition and language-related epistemological access</li> <li>• Identity related ontological development</li> <li>• The effects of codification and meritocracy on portraiture and performance</li> <li>• Appropriate responsiveness</li> <li>• Asset-based approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews &amp; narrative text units</li> </ul> Data analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to and transcribe recordings</li> <li>• Read and re-read transcriptions</li> <li>• Verify validity and add questions to glean more information</li> <li>• Critical analysis of data to formulate themes</li> </ul>

#### 3.3.1 THE KNOWLEDGE AIMS AND CLAIMS OF THE RESEARCHER

The aims of the research were such that they were in alignment with the dictates of the EU/DHET research initiative to improve the BEd Foundation Phase programme.

Towards this end the study was designed to:

- examine a representative sample of the cohort under study to determine the extent to which language and identity bear relevance for their academic success and;



- explore the reality and implications of the dominance of English as one of the two media of instruction, deconstruction, and construction at the University of Pretoria.

The choice of the qualitative research paradigm (Creswell, 2003), with specific focus on the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2005), was regarded as appropriate for obtaining responsive data that would facilitate the following:

- making recommendations that will make a contribution towards the development of strategies that will have a bearing on the retention and successful completion of the BEd programme by the Black BEd Foundation Phase students and
- contributing towards the promotion of a culture of continuous and consistent multi-layered reflectivity that will culminate in scholarly and equitable critique as conceived by Kincheloe (2008) and Mahlomaholo (2009), and critical consciousness in Freirian terms (Freire, 1970).

The selection of the BFP participants was further informed by the consideration that the participants would play an important and informative role in the accurate interpretation of the phenomena under discussion.

### **3.3.2 THE STRATEGIES OF ENQUIRY THAT HAVE A BEARING ON THE PROCEDURE**

An interpretivist, phenomenological approach was chosen because of the study's aim to interpret and understand the meaning of BFP students' everyday lives (Fouche, 2005, in de Vos et al., 2005). A further reason for choosing this approach was that, according to Creswell (1998), it describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon or concept for various individuals. This approach further made provision for reflexivity which allowed for the yielding of interpretive and responsive insights regarding the phenomena under scrutiny. Moreover, an interpretivist, phenomenological approach made provision for a participatory approach that facilitated a constructivist and collaborative relationship between the participants and the researcher.

### 3.3.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The appropriateness of the research design for the study hinges on its ability to inform decisions about the selection of participants, data collection and data analysis. The phenomenological approach, as part of the qualitative research paradigm, was selected (Creswell, 1998) because of its ability to cater to the two central phenomena of the study, namely (language and identity) and the assumptions that are made about their role in the academic performance and portraiture of the BFP students. Creswell's (1998) view regarding the phenomenological approach is that it 'attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation through naturalistic interpretive inquiry' (de Vos et al., 2005). Also, in this approach, the researcher attempts to situate him/herself in the milieu of the respondents. This is done in compliance with and in pursuit of the overarching critical emancipatory objective which sees the respondent as a co-constructor of the emancipatory imperative (Mahlomaholo, 2009). Furthermore, since this approach also facilitates a co-participatory relationship, it was deemed well suited to the study's aim of attaining negotiated transformative praxis.

According to Kincheloe et al. (2007), "the design and methods used to analyse the complex social fabric cannot be separated from the way reality is construed...ontology and epistemology are linked inextricably in ways that shape the task of the researcher." This is of critical significance for the claims made in this study about the relationship between language and identity and its implications for the epistemological access and ontological development of the cohort under discussion.

Furthermore, in view of the critical emancipatory paradigmatic considerations, the interviews and narratives served the purpose of allowing the research to assume an epistemological and ontological stance. That is, the interview process provided insight (epistemological access) into the phenomena under study, which further created opportunities for reflectivity (ontological development) on the part of both the participants and researcher. In that sense, the methodological tools for this study further served the participatory purpose of the empowerment agenda of the study (Rall, 2002).

To that end, the researcher assumed the stance of a reflexive Freirean (1970) and critical emancipatory scholar cognisance of the participants (Kincheloe et al., 2007) as co-constructors and co-negotiators. This cognisance was facilitated through the interview process and narratives that also made provision for the students to frame their stories through questions that were designed to give them a voice in the process.

### **3.4 THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY**

The participants of the study were divided into two groups: students and lecturers. The first, and main, group comprised a purposive sample of  $n=9$  ( $n=3$  in the 1<sup>st</sup> year,  $n=3$  in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and  $n=3$  in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year) students from the BFP cohort. The composition of the participants was such that the reflection of their gender would detract from the strength of anonymity – particularly in the direct quotation – and, as such, this was not stipulated. The criteria that informed the choice of participants were formulated to substantiate some of the assumptions upon which the study was premised. The selection of the participants was in accordance with the following broad criteria:

- (i) Black BEd Foundation Phase students;
- (ii) L2 speakers of English with one (or more) of the 9 Black South African languages as a home language;
- (iii) The sample should be classified as PDI's (Previously Disadvantaged Individuals);
- (iv) Pre-university education should have been in a PDI school specifically designated for such individuals and preferably situated in an area for PDIs and;
- (v) Preferably, but not necessarily, 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students.

### 3.4.1 STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

**Table 3.2: Layer 1: Students as participants**

Participant	Year of Study	Overall Context of Exposure	School setting
Y1s1	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Minimal prior exposure to English as LOLT	Urban
Y1s2	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	Exposure in English classes only	Urban
Y1s3	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	A significant amount of exposure to 'simple' English	Peri-urban
Y2s1	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Under – exposure to English	Rural
Y2s2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Very limited exposure to English in both school and social context	Peri-urban
Y2s3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Exposure to key concepts in content subjects	Urban
Y3s1	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Very little exposure	Semi-rural
Y3s2	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	English not used much	Peri-urban
Y3s3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	English not used much	Rural

#### Denotation of school setting

Urban = Township; Rural = Villages and farms; Peri-urban = Part urban and rural

### 3.4.2 LECTURER PARTICIPANTS

The second group was made up of two lecturers, one Black (B1) and one White (W2). They were chosen for validation purposes and on the basis of their interaction with the cohort. Their inclusion as participants in the study was regarded as a necessary layer that would add co-constructionist value from an educator's perspective (Kincheloe et al, 2007).

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION

The choice of data collection tools and data collection process was informed by the need to draw data that would corroborate or negate the assumption about the phenomena of language and identity as they pertain to the BFP cohort. Ethical clearance was sought in compliance with the dictates of the nature of qualitative research, as it pertains to the participants of this study. The instruments were, therefore, chosen and deemed suitable for the purpose of this research.

### **3.5.1 THE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The methods of data collection were in keeping with the qualitative research design and non-probability sampling principles. Qualitative researchers choose non-probability sampling to ensure generalizability which, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:370), means that "...to study the particular is to study the general." Purposive sampling was chosen as an appropriate data collection method because, "the purposive sampling of participants represents a key decision point in a quality study" (Creswell, 1998:118). A further consideration was the fact that, "...researchers designing qualitative studies need clear criteria in mind and need to provide rationales for their decisions". Within the paradigm of criticality this also means that when sorting data there should be reflectivity and cognisance of underlying issues such as power relations (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In addition to these considerations meta-data was sourced through DTR (Desk Top Research with the view to explore some of the claims pertaining to this study. It should be noted that the meta-data was not used for analytical purposes or as objects of enquiry.

#### **3.5.1.1 Interviews**

Interviews are the most commonly used method for generating data in qualitative research (Greef, 2005). Furthermore, the interview is also a convenient way of overcoming both distance and time. Interviews were used in this study not only for their 'popularity' but also their suitability with regard to the evidence that this study sought to affirm. Not only that, the interviews also yielded data that was also contrary to the assumptions of the study, and at times refuted the claims made about language and identity and their link to the academic performance of the BFP cohort as claimed by the study. Rather than limit, such challenges actually enriched the tapestry of the study's argument.

This choice of interviews was further made because of how interviews facilitated easier interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviews further provided insight into the interviewees' consciousness through a critical analysis of the discourse. This analysis facilitated the derivation of themes and categories. Furthermore, as Holstein and Gubrium (1995:76) note, interviews are "...an appropriate instrument to engage the participant and designate the narrative terrain."

Not to mention that they also provide access to non-verbal semiotic cues that can be gleaned only through observation during the interview.

Furthermore, the interviews provided the opportunity for the creation of a rapport and sense of camaraderie that contributed towards co-constructionism and the facilitation of participatory praxis. To this end, there were due considerations given to ensuring that the appropriate interview techniques were used (de Vos et al., 2005), while also provision was made for proper communication of and reflexivity on the data selected (de Vos et al., 2005).

For purposes of obtaining relevant data for this study, promoting a participatory approach, and achieving understanding of the participants' point of view or situation (Denzin, 1998:1), semi-structured one-on-one interviews were used. The interview questions were structured in a manner that elicited responses that yielded data pertaining to the two phenomena: language and identity. The study assumed an interpretive stance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) because of the intention to understand the problems and respond to the questions that pertain to the PDI/L2 BFP cohort that is the focus of this study. The interview schedules A & B below, were used towards this end.

**(a) Semi-structured Interview Schedule: Student Participants**

**Table 3.3: Interview Schedule: Students**

1.	Discuss the extent to which English was used as a medium of instruction or Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) at the schools you attended before you came to university.
2.	Briefly discuss your experience with the English language and your exposure to it within the pre-university school context.
3.	Describe your experience with regard to the use of English as a medium of instruction as a BEd Foundation Phase university student.
4.	How do you feel about expressing yourself verbally in English within a classroom/lecture hall setting?
5.	Are you able to clearly understand the lecturer and follow all the proceedings during lecture sessions?
6.	How do you feel about expressing yourself in writing in English during tests and assignments?
7.	Are the instructions during tests and assignments written in a manner that you can easily understand?
8.	Are you confident about your ability to respond appropriately to the requirements of given tasks?
9.	Discuss whether you think that it would be to your advantage to undertake your Foundation Phase studies in your Home Language?

10. Do you have any suggestions regarding how you can be assisted to cope with any language-related challenges you might be facing as a BEd Foundation Phase university student?

**(b) Semi-structured Interview Schedule: Lecturer Participants**

**Table 3.4: Interview Schedule: Lecturers**

1.	Comment on the performance (as it is conceived of in this study) of Black L2 speakers of English in your classes. This can be juxtaposed with that of White L1 speakers of English.
2.	From your observations, would you say that language has a bearing on their performance? Discuss.
3.	Briefly share the extent to which you see the interplay between language and Identity as it pertains specifically to students who form part of this Cohort.
4.	Can you cite a few instances where you saw this interplay and the concomitant implications?
5.	From your experience, do you have any suggestions/views regarding how this situation can be addressed in academia?

**3.5.1.2 Narratives**

Narrative is part of the wide range of tools that can be used within the transformative and emancipatory research paradigm. It's used to source data because of its characteristic as a "formed tale, told by a narrator relying upon point of view, plot and character" (Pelias, 2005). Pelias further points out that, "narratives are records [and] utterances [that] emerge as descriptive, deconstructive and critical claims" (Pelias, 2005). Narratives provide the researcher with the opportunity to engage with the text and deconstruct it so as to glean themes that give insight into the participants and phenomena under study. The appropriateness of narratives for this study is further captured in the fact that they are regarded as, "stories [that] often carry a sense of social responsibility...to further social justices [and] as acts of witnessing, as testimony on behalf of others" (Pelias, 2005).

Ellis (2009:16) concurs with this view of narratives by stating that:

Stories are what we have, the barometers by which we fashion our identities, organise and live our lives, connect and compare our lives to others, and make decisions about how to live. These tales open our hearts and eyes to ourselves and the world around us, [thus] helping us change our lives and our world for the better.

Narrative enquiry was also chosen for this study because of its ability to provide knowledge of “the other” and the self (Singer, 2004). Bamberg and Georgakopoulous’s (2008:13) point out that in narratives “specific linguistic choices can be linked with larger social identities,” a point which is relevant for this study’s concern with the language and identity of the BFP cohort. The BFP students’ narratives are used as critical data that serve to further the underlying critical emancipatory agenda of the study. The verbal narratives were selected for the purpose of generating an emancipatory element, where there was an underlying intention for participants to reconstruct their language and identity stories. In this way they participated as co-participants with me in engaging in the deconstruction of the stories and their relevance for the research. The open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews translated into narratives which resulted in the unintended consequence of also, to some extent, providing useful background information.

### **3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

The validity of this study also hinged on substantive data double-checking in order to establish its veracity (Shenton, 2004). In particular, the recording of the interviews facilitated easy verification of the transcriptions, such that the resulting transcripts were an accurate reflection of the meaning/intention expressed in the interview.

Reliability was facilitated through multiple readings of transcriptions and critical discourse deconstruction (Creswell & Miller, 2000) of the narrative texts that were compiled from the recordings. Researcher’s reflexivity was further used to ensure validity, while Desk Top Research (DTR) served as another source of data validation. Further reliability validation was facilitated through the layer of interviews with two lecturers. Within this critical study the construct of validity further entails the ability to account for the use of particular constructs, (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) such as, “bricolage”, “identity”, “language” and “literacy” as they are used and understood within the context of the study.



### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analysed through reading and re-reading the transcripts with the intention of identifying key themes and categories through which the initial assumptions of the study could be refuted or affirmed (Silverman, 2000).

Textual analysis (Foucault, 1978) of the transcriptions was done using critical discourse analysis underpinnings (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). The texts in this case comprised the audio recordings and written transcriptions of the interviews. The recordings, in particular, were listened to and checked for veracity a number of times. The reasons for choosing this type of analysis are linked to the foundational principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which are enumerated as reflected below by Fairclough & Wodak (1997:271).

- CDA addresses social problems
- Power relations are discursive
- Discourse constitutes society and culture
- Discourse does ideological work
- Discourse is historical
- The link between text and society is mediated
- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
- Discourse is a form of social action

These foundational principles point out the link of CDA with the Critical theoretical concerns of this study. A summary of the enumeration is that CDA is a form of social action which addresses social problems and which “does ideological work, representing, constructing society and reproducing unequal power relations” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997:271). As social action, CDA addresses critical emancipatory concerns, thus tacitly affirming this form of analysis’ appropriateness as a suitable instrument for textual interrogation of this study’s narrative texts. It should, however, also be borne in mind that such an emancipator capacity of CDA is not given because, “...researchers’ interaction with the objects of their enquiries are ...always complicated, unpredictable and complex” (Kincheloe et al., 2007:168). The reasons for the complexity can be located in fact of the multi-layered dimensions of the contexts and phenomena that are under scrutiny. Through this critical discourse

lens I was able to pin down themes and translate these into an analytical appraisal that has critical emancipatory implications for transformation.

Furthermore, the bricoleur's stance was also adopted in sourcing, analysing and interpreting the data. As pointed out already, the bricoleur's stance makes provision for the emergence of new insights while also pursuing a particular ideal through multi-perspectival engagement with the research materials (Kincheloe et al., 2007). Furthermore, through this stance, provision was also made for the researcher's emancipatory bias and agenda to influence reading of the texts and analysis of the data.

The concept of the bricolage was used, in particular, to bring into view the multi-layered, multi-perspectival approaches that relate to theories and methodologies. Researchers who subscribe to this descriptive view are referred to as bricoleurs and methodological negotiators. According to Kincheloe et al. (2007), bricoleurs fall into two categories. On the one hand, there are those who allow the research process to present new perspective and, on the other, those who have a "grander purpose in mind." The latter refers to the notion of a preconceived idea of the results and findings that will emanate from the study (Kincheloe et al., 2007).

Both categories of the bricoleur are relevant for purposes of this study. In the first instance, the study positioned itself to find the answers to critical questions and verify assumptions pertaining to the role of language and identity in the academic performance of the BFP student. Thus, allowing for the 'yielding of new insights,' as per description above. In the second instance, there is an overarching purpose to contribute to 'the noble ideal of the grand purpose,' which in this case is the strengthening of the Foundation Phase provisioning with the implications for throughput as it pertains specifically to the cohort under scrutiny. As such, the study relied on both notions of bricoleur in its performance of data analysis.

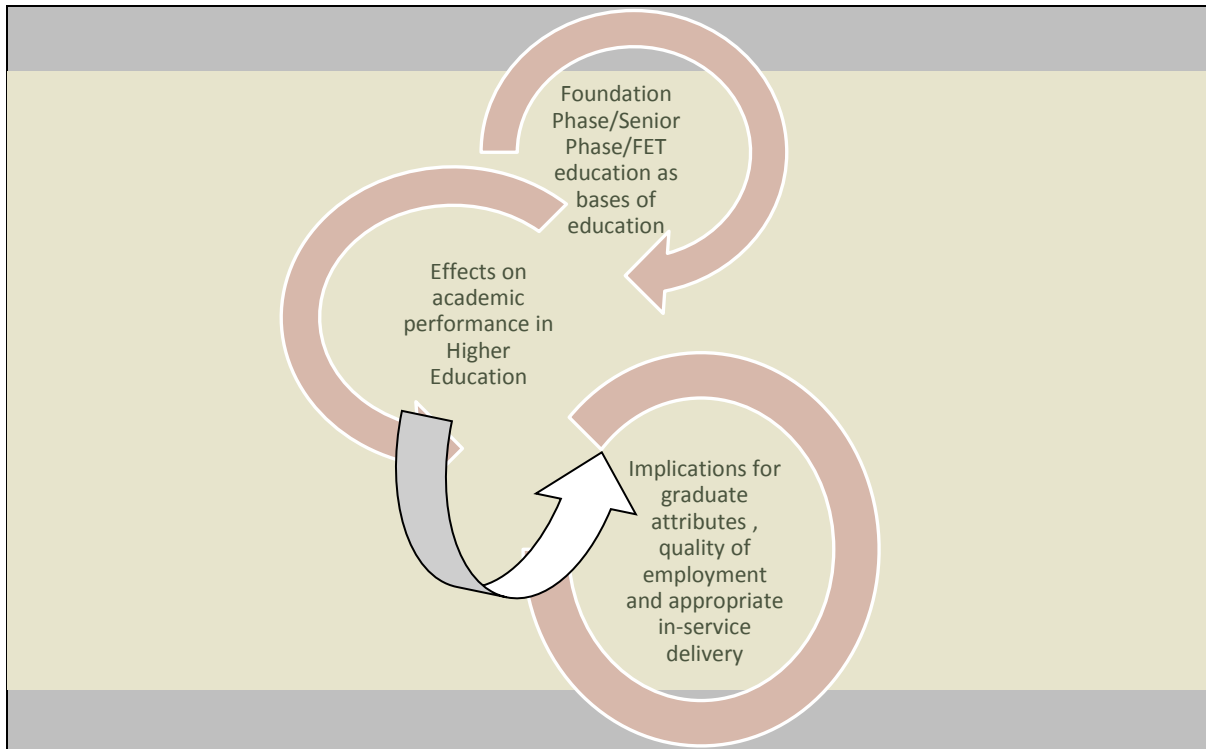
### **3.8 ASSUMPTIONS IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

The design of the research was further informed by the assumptions of the study about the relationship between language and identity, including their implications for the academic performance of the participants in question. A further influential assumption affecting the research design had to do with the power relations that are

embodied in communication. As noted already, Bourdieu (1997) maintains that the opportunities learners get to speak and the variety of English they speak is determined by the dominant culture which, therefore, has connotations of inequity. The collection of data, premised as it were on the unequal relationship of researcher and research subject, had the potential to reinforce the unequal power relations due to communication. As such, care was taken to interrogate this assumption in the analysis.

A further assumption that affected the selection of participants was that of the significance attached to codification (Bernstein, 1990), as well as the need to interrogate the assertion that Black students who demonstrate an 'acceptable' level of English language proficiency are not necessarily in a better position academically. Cummins (1996) maintains that, even if non-native speakers of English are able to communicate in English, it is often at what could be regarded as the rudimentary level (by academic standards) of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which does not position them to, for example, write texts that comply with the 'prescribed' academic writing standards.

As has already been mentioned, codification bears relevance for knowledge reception and production capabilities (Bernstein, 1990). A case is therefore, tentatively made for the importance of creating optimal learning environments (OLEs) in this study, which are conducive to inculcating a culture of critical engagement, thus raising the level of critical consciousness through which the pre-service teacher cohort could attain requisite critical literacy proficiency. The data collection strategy was designed with the view to draw insights regarding what such creation of OLEs would entail. The research design of the study was premised on the empowerment agenda regarding students' ability to engage in constructivist and critically conscious ways of meaning-making, which, for purposes of this study's agenda also had implications for epistemological access.



**Figure 3: Cyclical significance of Foundation Phase education**

This diagram can be interpreted as follows: Pre-university education has a bearing on academic performance in post-school education. In relation to the focus of this study, post-school education refers specifically to pre-service teacher preparation. The preparation further has ramifications for graduate attributes and in-service delivery in the context of Foundation Phase provisioning. It is argued in this study that the quality of teacher training, with specific reference to the convergence of language and identity, is critical because of the role these phenomena play in academic performance and throughput.

As alluded to at the outset of the study, and as supported by, for example, Jensen (2009) and the EFA Global monitoring report on educational conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa (EGM, 2011) there is a relationship between the socio-economic conditions and education. A further consideration in the notion of cyclical impact is the fact that parents in the low socio-economic group often cannot afford to take their children to better-resourced schools that would provide adequate and appropriate preparatory exposure. This results in their children attending the type of schools that perpetuate the cycle of under-performance.

This means that in many instances, students' ability to complete their studies is negatively affected by cyclical socio-economic conditions. This in turn, has implications for throughput and, in the context of this study it has a bearing on successful completion. As per an earlier assumption at the onset of the study (See Chapter 1, 1.7) the combination of these factors has implications for quantity and quality. That is, the number and type of teachers who qualify.

The study was partially an attempt at responding to the assumption that paucity has economic implications, which results in a cyclical perpetuation of codification. Bernstein's (1990) contention about the complex interrelationship between different aspects of society, the implications for the distribution of resources, and the effects of low socio-economic status on academic performance (Jensen, 2009) thus also bear relevance for the design of the research. The theoretical framework, literature and methodology were chosen with these factors in mind and with a view to make a contribution toward breaking this vicious cycle.

### **3.9 CRITICAL THEORY AND THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Creswell (1998:51), the researcher using the Critical Theory lens seeks to, "deconstruct the hidden curriculum and search for truth and understanding within the social context." He identifies five traditions of critical inquiry that were relevant for this study:

- Biography, which refers to the broad genre of biographical writings. This requires a detailed account of an individual's life which will include narratives in the form of extensive historical and contextual information.
- Phenomenology, which aims to interpret the meaning that subjects accord to their day-to-day lives. This is achieved through long interviews which yield conversational texts that are analysed.
- Grounded theory, which involves moving beyond description and generating or discovering a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
- Ethnography, which focuses on, for example, an entire cultural group. It involves extended observation of beliefs, values, culture and language.

- Case Study, which is about studying an issue and is usually explored through one or more cases within a bounded system or strategy (Denzin & Lincoln; Yin, 2003).

### **3.10 THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH IN THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH**

The study's immediate concern was to make a contribution towards the strengthening of the Foundation Phase Education offering, with specific focus on the BFP cohort. However, in the course of the study there was cognisance that there are, what might seem to be, extraneous factors that should be taken into consideration in such strengthening. These include the students' pre-university background, its ramifications for their performance, as well as the implications of their performance when taking into account the larger scheme of things such as the economy, their individual development, and societal expectations. It is for this reason that the study promotes an asset-based approach as part of its solution to the identified problems.

The asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006) is a super-imposition upon a deficit approach. An asset-based approach focuses on the coping strategies that students bring on board. This approach thus privileges focusing on the strengths that can be used to counter the challenges of the problematic dominant culture of the academia that the students encounter. The ability of the cohort to survive all the odds of their disadvantaged backgrounds and make it to university is indicative of their tenacity which can be enhanced through appropriate support and directed towards the realisation of transformative ideals.

Within the context of this study, for example, the asset-based approach entailed regarding teachers as change agents who have the capacity to bring about transformation in a ripple-effect manner. This meant that the potential and capacity to bring about transformation could not only be limited to students' encounter with their teachers in the classroom, but could be extended to different communities, school contexts, spheres of influence, and peers. In other words, the BFP cohort's capacity for transformational agency and their ability to influence multi-dimensional change was considered (albeit tangentially) within a critical emancipatory agenda of contributing towards paradigmatic shifts which would also result in the multi-layered changing of behavioural modes.

The asset-based approach that moves away from pathologising (Boughey, 2005) the students and, instead, sees them as co-participants and co-creators of knowledge facilitates transformation. In this regard their position as co-participants in the study was valued and their views were infused into the recommendations. It should also be pointed out though that the pursuance of an asset-based approach focuses on reinforcing the inbuilt resilience and harnessing it in a manner that results in praxis. As such, this approach is in alignment with transformative learning and critical pedagogy which focus on the inculcation of praxis.

However, it should also be noted that adopting an asset-based approach does not imply that the role of codification and its concomitant effects on academic performance should be disregarded. On the contrary, it means that the ramifications of codification should be fore-grounded in order to highlight how it serves to perpetuate under-performance. In this regard it is imperative that the realities about under-preparedness should be looked at alongside an asset-based approach in order to provide appropriate support that will have a positive bearing on performance.

### **3.11 VALUES IN RESEARCH DESIGN**

For purposes of this study, the concept of values is encompassed in the significance accorded to reflexivity which Finlay (2002:532) sees as, "...thoughtful, conscious self-awareness [and which] encompasses continual evaluation of subjective responses, inter-subjective dynamics and the research process itself. It involves a shift in our understanding of data collection from something objective that is accomplished through detached scrutiny of "what I know and how I know it," to recognizing how we actively construct our knowledge". With this in mind, the study envisaged to be instrumental in raising a multi-dimensional reflectivity and reflexivity of both the researcher and the participants as co-negotiators of meaning and holistic change agency. It is further envisaged that this reflectivity will ultimately lead to the cohort becoming reflective about transformation as part of their academic and professional portraiture.

### 3.12 CONCLUSION

To conclude, in Qualitative Research the researcher is the primary source of data collection and thus the researcher's interpretations of the data are inevitably filtered through the analysis. The expectation, therefore, is that in accordance with the stated bricoleur's perspective highlighted above the analysis in this study reflects biases and slants that are aligned to the researcher's assumptions. That is, the researcher's connection with these interwoven transformative theories is based on the study's concern with empowering pre-service teachers as agents of social change who should be equipped with the requisite knowledge to function effectively in their academic identity and subsequently in their professional identity (Andrade, Jeffrey & Morrel, 2008).

In summary, this chapter looked at methodological issues and the phenomenological interpretive stance of the study in the light of the cohort under scrutiny. The selection criteria that were used were discussed in order to validate the cohorts' suitability for selection as participants. The various theories, approaches, assumptions and phenomena were brought into focus with the view to substantiate and form a point of convergence with the research design. Chapter 4 will entail the discussion and analysis of the data and the findings which accrued from the analysis.



## CHAPTER 4

### REPORTING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

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#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter constitutes an analysis of the data that was collected to gain an insight into the credence of the notion of the convergence of the factors of language and identity, and the relevance of this convergence for the academic portraiture and performance of the BFP cohort that forms the focal point of this study.

#### 4.2 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews in order to allow for a narrative and collaborative element into the enquiry. Students and lecturers were asked to respond to questions which although pre-designed and structured, also provided an opportunity for further probing. Participants' personality types and communication styles also played a role in the manner in which the structured interviews unfolded. In some instances the participants proffered a bare minimum of mono-syllabic 'yes' and 'no' responses, while some of their peers provided longer narrative data-rich answers to the same questions. This meant that some participants' responses yielded more data than others with the result that their peers' voices were, at times, silenced.

The initial strategy was to source additional data through individual mini-essays, however, the narratives that were constructed through the interview process yielded sufficient data. Themes were formulated through a process of deductive reasoning (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The participants were allowed to exercise their co-constructionist status and voluntary participation privilege to refrain from participating through writing essays. These circumstantial dictates, however, contributed to the serendipitous realization that written narratives would, in effect, be a duplication of the narrative element that was provided by the interviews.

### 4.3 COMMENTARY ON THE INTERVIEW PROCESSES

The interviews with the students were conducted in the familiar and conducive environment of the University of Pretoria Early Childhood Education departmental seminar room. Apart from reasons of expedience and accessibility, this venue also served the purpose of ensuring that the ambience was relaxed, allowing for a cordial, collegial, non-intimidating, and non-threatening setting. This cordiality helped to elicit data that, in certain instances, spontaneously and unintentionally confirmed assumptions about codification and its connection to the convergence of language and identity. I assured each participant about the voluntary, yet valuable nature of the process. Some of the participants were initially uncomfortable so I had to allay their apprehension and calm them down by pointing out that the interviews were confidential and non-meritocratic.

I introduced myself as a doctoral researcher who was conducting research that was intended to develop and strengthen Foundation Phase provisioning, with specific reference to Black pre-service teachers as per the DHET mandate. As part of the process of establishing a rapport with them, I informed them that it was envisaged that their participation would play a significant responsive role in this regard. This set the tone for a participatory relationship and it became evident from their demeanour and disposition that most students saw themselves as co-participants with an agency in the process.

On a lighter note, had I anticipated this perceptible change and had it not been for the anonymity clause attendant to this research, I would have captured the 'before' and 'after' pictures, for dissemination, as evidence of this visible transformation. The questions allowed for the students to express their opinions regarding how they could be assisted to make things easier in terms of their language and identity-related contextual challenges, while also contributing towards the inclination to participate. In that way, the researcher and the research subjects became co-partners in the collaboration around the matter of improving the BEd Foundation Phase programme. While the language of communication for the interviews was primarily English, provision was also made for code-switching as dictated by the participants' language preference. The researcher's knowledge of the additional

language preferences of the participants served as an advantage that facilitated the process of code-switching.

In some instances I had to ask follow-up questions that would prompt the provision of more details. This had the positive result of throwing further light on the issues under discussion, thus providing an additional layer of data. In addition to DTR to validate data, a further layer of data was provided through interviews that were conducted with lecturers for corroborative and triangulation purposes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). These interviews were conducted in the offices of the lecturers. This arrangement facilitated a collegial ambience in which the researcher and the lecturers were co-participants in working towards the realisation of the stipulated aims of the study. The lecturers were requested to provide information regarding the performance indicators, as they pertain to this study and with specific reference to the BFP cohort. The responses of the lecturers were interwoven with those of the students to facilitate a multi-perspectival data base. A critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough, 1997:271) was used for the reasons listed in Chapter 3 (3.7) to deconstruct the textual units for themes and categories.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed through multiple listening sessions and interpretations (Creswell, 2003). This transcription process allowed for accurate verbatim transcriptions. The advantage of listening repeatedly to the recordings was that it enabled me, as the researcher, to familiarise myself with the 'voices' of the participants so that I was able to establish a connection that extended beyond the interview sessions.

The transcriptions entailed an iterative process of reading and thinking. In order to ensure trustworthiness and validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000), I read and re-read the transcriptions that accrued from the recordings and then formulated *vivo* codes to represent the participants' voices. These codes were aligned to themes which were then inductively linked to categories (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In order to maintain authenticity while also paying attention to the ethical aspect of anonymity, the participants were assigned an identity code that revealed their level of study and sequence position.

#### 4.4 THE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS IN RELATION TO THE ASSUMPTIONS

The data was collected through structured and semi-structured interviews that were designed to be responsive to the research questions. The questions were structured to highlight the assumptions about the convergence of the phenomena of language and identity as conceptualised in this study, and with specific reference to the Black BEd Foundation Phase (BFP) students at the University of Pretoria, a historically white institution.

The interviews were thus intended to support the deductive reasoning (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) that informed the assumption about the nexus of epistemological access and the ontological dimension of portraiture as it is portrayed in this study. Participants had to respond to 10 questions, as indicated in Chapter 3, and specifically as it pertained to aspects of the phenomena of language and identity. The lecturers responded to five questions that were intended to obtain their respective perspectives pertaining to the interplay between language and identity as articulated in this study. Provision was also made for follow-up questions when clarity was required regarding a particular response.

It should be noted that the students are interchangeably referred to as participants and students, or categorised according to their year of study and interview 'position' – for example, year 1 student (**Y1s1**) and second year student (**Y2s1**). The two lecturers' comments and responses are interlaced with those of the students and not dealt with separately. They are referred to as **B1** (Black lecturer) and **W1** (White lecturer), respectively and in conformance with the anonymity clause of this study. Both detailed and cryptic comments are discussed under the various aspects. The reporting and analysis of the data reflects the themes that were deductively pinned down through initial assumptions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) and the categories that were identified inductively through the interview questions, and responses.

## 4.5 THEME 1: PARTICIPANTS' EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH IN PRE-UNIVERSITY CONTEXTS

Below is a diagrammatic representation of Theme 1 with the two categories and associated in-vivo codes.

**Table 4.1: Theme 1: An illustration**

Theme 1	Categories 1 & 2	In-vivo codes
<b>Participants' exposure to English in pre-university contexts</b>	<b>Category 1:</b> The use of English in the pre-university social context	<i>"I kinda used it everywhere...[with] private school friends",</i> <i>"I read a lot"</i> <i>"Maybe I would use English once"</i> <i>"There was no-one I could speak English with"</i>
	<b>Category 2:</b> The use of English in the pre-university school context	<i>"I started speaking English when I first came here"</i> <i>"They would normally use our Home Language"</i> <i>"They were explaining to us some of the things in our Home Language"</i>

The questions relating to language used the notion of prior exposure as a point of departure. This was pinned down as Theme 1 and was based on the Bernsteinian (1990) idea of prior exposure, codification and its meritocratic implications. Participants were requested to provide information pertaining to the extent to which they were exposed to English in both the social and school contexts. Two categories were thus identified, namely: prior exposure to English in the pre-university social context and prior exposure to English in the pre-university school context.

### 4.5.1 THEME 1 – CATEGORY 1: PRIOR EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH IN THE PRE-UNIVERSITY SOCIAL CONTEXT

The questions that were asked in this regard were intended to elicit responses regarding students' exposure to English in the pre-university social contexts. This was identified as Category 1 of Theme 1. All in all, students' responses showed that prior exposure to English in the social contexts simplified or enhanced their use of English, whereas limited or no exposure had the opposite effect.

When asked about their experience with English before they came to the university, they had this to say:

**Y1s1:** *“Well, I kinda used it everywhere, I had friends who were from private schools so we communicated using it, I also used to read a lot, so it wasn’t much of a problem ...”* She emphasised this point by nodding her head.

The above response, by **Y1s1**, confirms the role of prior exposure. In this instance the participant’s exposure to English, albeit in a social context, led her to say with confidence that she does not have a problem [with English]. Krashen (2003; 2004) emphasises the importance of reading as part of a language-rich regimen that plays a role, alongside comprehensible input, in language acquisition. In this instance, comprehensible input is associated with communicative competence and social communication (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972). This is tacitly confirmed when this first year student **Y1s1** stated:

*“I also used to read a lot so it [English] wasn’t that much of a problem... I had friends who were from private schools so we communicated using it”*

The above was also supported by lecturer **W2** when she commented on the role of language:

*“I don’t find their English that bad but that is social English, if I can put it that way. When they write, and I don’t refer to spelling here or even slips with vocab, there is an underlying problem with the structure of English, the way in which they express themselves in writing. They seem to perform better orally but then again the responses are not necessarily of a higher cognitive order, again for several reasons...”*

On the question of prior exposure to English in the social context three students, namely, **Y1s2**, **Y2s2** and **Y3s3**, respectively, expressed their limited exposure as follows:

**Y1s2:** *Yoh, maybe I would use English once, like maybe when I go out with my friends. But at home obviously we don’t use English at all, we use our language.*

**Y2s2:** *As we were from local schools, it's quite difficult like when we speak to different people...the background was local so everything was just local, so I just used my Home Language”.*

**Y3s3:** *Um...I started speaking the English language when I first came here which was very difficult...” There was no one, no one I could speak English with. There's no one who speaks English where I stay...” That's why I'm saying it's still difficult when I want to say some words I still struggle because this is where I started to speak English and to socialise with people who speak English only because I speak isiSwati and they speak other languages so we don't understand each other, that are when we had to speak English”.*

Despite her assertion about experiencing difficulties with expressing herself in English, **Y3s3** demonstrated proficiency in speaking English. When I commented about this and asked her what the reason for this apparent disparity could be she pointed out:

*I think it's because ... like I said when we first came here we met a lot of people who speak a lot of different languages so we had to speak one language, so English was the only language we could use to understand each other better, so that's why... [Also] I have a friend who speaks Swahili, so she speaks English, so if I'm with her then I have to speak English.*

**Y3s3** thus tacitly confirmed the connection between acquisition and exposure. The participants' responses revealed the different experiences of the participants with regard to the use of English in the social context. There were instances of ample, limited, or no exposure.

Theme 1 reflects a link between preponderant exposure to English through social contact and reading and communicative competence, as revealed through the verbatim quote: *“I don't have a problem...”* This was confirmed by **W1**: *“their BICS is fine.”* This observation will be looked when contrasting the issue of prior exposure in the pre-university context to that of exposure in the university context.

#### 4.5.2 THEME 1 – CATEGORY 2: THE USE OF ENGLISH IN THE PRE-UNIVERSITY SCHOOL CONTEXT

The questions relating to the use of English as a LOLT were meant to draw responses that throw light on participants' prior exposure to English in the schools they attended. Their responses to the questions relating to this aspect are reflected below.

**Y1s3:** *It wasn't always English... English [sic]...there and there it would be a bit of HL. There wasn't a lot of English [it] was only used during English classes. We kinda used it like during English but they intervened with the Home Language (HL). The English that they used in school, it was very easy, ya it was not that difficult, as compared to the kind of English they use here. At least they gave us a chance where we could express ourselves in a simple way, ya that's how it was used as a medium of instruction. They tried to teach us new words but then, I mean we never used, ok...bombastic [sic] words, those kinda words but we used simple words. At least they could accommodate us because it was a 2<sup>nd</sup> language for us...So we were taught in English but sometimes it was like we won't communicate in English, all the times, sometimes the teachers would use the languages we were used to.*

A second year student **Y2s2** responded in this manner:

*"I found it difficult to understand English because I didn't grow up speaking English but I'm learning and I'm still learning more and I'm willing to learn more..."* At this point the student, who had a look of uneasiness, paused and asked, almost desperately: *"And...can I speak Tswana please? Can I please mix?"*

She was visibly relieved when I acceded to her request. By so doing she inadvertently confirmed the significance of code-switching in academia and thus unwittingly made a contribution towards the language-related recommendations of the study, as will be seen in Chapter 6.



Participant **Y2s2** then went on to state:

*“As ke tlhakana le English go re ke kgone go ruta Fondation Phase I feel nothing is best for” me then go re ke ye ko a local school, I’m more comfortable in my Home Language but I’m willing to learn more”*

A paraphrase of the above is that she is expressing the view that her interaction and difficulty with the English language confirms to her that, as a Foundation Phase teacher, she would prefer to teach at a school where she will be able to use her Home Language. Other responses in this regard were:

**Y2s1:** *The medium of instruction was supposed to be English but Sepedi was used a lot of the times. So HL (Home Language) was the one that was used frequently. So I wasn’t really exposed to English... we didn’t really get the chance to learn English because during class English was not used from the start of the lesson to the end. I can’t say we learnt much from English even during English classes the medium of our MT (Mother Tongue) was used and it was really mixed up.*

The above participant (**Y2s1**) further pointed out:

*“We didn’t really get the chance to learn English because during class English was not used from the start of the lesson to the end. I can’t say we learnt much from English, even during English classes the medium of our MT was used and it was really mixed up”. For example, during poetry classes if there was a certain part that we didn’t understand the teacher would use our MT, which was Sepedi, to explain it. We were not really exposed to English in a way that would help us to understand it the way we’re supposed to.”*

A second year student, (**Y2s3**), responded as follows:

*“It wasn’t like that kinda English, like the best, it was 1<sup>st</sup> language but we did not speak it like the best, like fluently so, it was only specified like in an English lesson we would speak English but in some other classes we would mix languages and we would shift languages, we would be like code-switching...If ever you did not understand a concept or a key then the teacher would explain it in Setswana so we could get the clear meaning of*

*it...They were mixing our Home Languages with some of the English concepts and that's how I was coping with English somehow. Our subjects like Business Economics...they were explaining to us some of the things in our Home Language. It was only in the English class where they were making it 'a must' to talk English. In other subjects you could talk any language you wanted to..."*

This participant further expressed dissatisfaction with that 'arrangement' by stating that:

*"Because now we came to UP and everything here is English, yet some of the concepts we should have learnt them in High School. Then when [coming] here you'd just go with the flow but then it was difficult because they were explaining to us in our Home Language but you find that when we came here we find new things that we were supposed to find in High School.*

The responses to the question relating to exposure to English within the pre-university school contexts were indicative of the fact that the participants' schools did not allow for much exposure to English.

The categories are a reflection of ample exposure and little or no exposure to English in the pre-university social and school contexts. Responses revealed instances of code-switching and the preponderant use of mother tongue, in lieu of English, for scaffolding purposes. Some participants felt that this was to their advantage while others felt that it denied them the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the primary language of the academia.

## 4.6 THEME 2: LANGUAGE IN THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

The table below reflects Theme 2, categories 1 and 2 and the associated in-vivo codes

**Table 4.2: Theme 2: An illustration**

Theme 2	Categories 1 & 2	In-vivo codes
<b>Language in the university context</b>	<b>Category 1:</b> English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in the University context	<i>"I wrote a test...found a word I could not understand...it was difficult"</i> <i>"They just put something and expect you to understand"</i> <i>"New things, new concepts...we could have learnt them in High School"</i> <i>"Language is a barrier"</i> <i>"English is the medium of instruction and I can go anywhere with it"</i>
	<b>Category 2 –</b> Language use and contextual support in the university	<i>"I would understand everything in my Home Language "Being taught in my Home Language would be an advantage."</i> <i>"They must use simple English"</i> <i>"Tutor sessions can help us"</i>

Participants were requested to give an indication of the extent to which English, as a medium of communication and in reference to their participation in academic activities, played a role in their academic performance. This was pinned down as Theme 2 with two categories, namely: the use of English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and language use and support in the university context. In this theme there were indications of convergence as per the study's assumptions about the interplay between language and identity.

### 4.6.1 THEME 2 – CATEGORY 1: ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING (LOLT) IN THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

The first year student, (Y1s1), who had ample exposure to English in the social context through interactions with friends and reading, demonstrated the significance of prior exposure as confirmed through Krashen's theory (2003;2004) regarding the association between exposure and acquisition.

In spite of her exposure to English in the social context, she, however, expressed the concern that:

*“...sometimes it’s like you just don’t know how to put it. You know... if this is there supposed to be like this but how do I put it like saying it the exact same way they want me to say it...Like there’s this module, it’s like English. At first I found it difficult. The medium of instruction, it was totally English new terms and new everything and I was kinda struggling at first. We had to write essays, it completely differed from when we wrote essays before... you just wrote whatever you wanted to write but then when we came here we had to take like the stages of writing...”*

Her concern, therefore, corroborates Cummins’ (1995) assertion about the discrepancy between BICS and CALP; that the ability to communicate competently at a social level (BICS) does not naturally translate into the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately at an academic level (CALP). He thus presents the view that fluency and accuracy in every-day English is not necessarily an indication of commensurate proficiency in academic language.

To further illustrate, when asked about the use of English as a LOLT within the university **Y1s1** responded as follows:

*“They used simple English in secondary school as compared to the English they use here...sometimes just because we are at university they seem to think that we know everything, they just put something and they expect us to be able to do it...”*

**W1** concurred with the above comment by stating that:

*“the assumption is, and I refer to the university in its entirety, that because you speak English you can cope so we don’t offer bridging courses or support courses, or whatever. We shout at you because your essay is bad but we don’t put anything in place, for me that’s a big thing there’s no point in talking about multi-lingualism and trans-languaging and all the rest if we’re not doing anything about the [academic] English”.*

The above implicitly signifies the issue of codification (Bernstein, 1990), which relates to academic language proficiency and points towards the need to pay attention to its effects on academic performance particularly as it pertains to the BFP cohort.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> year student's (**Y2s1**) response to the issue of the use of English in the academia was as follows:

*“Since I’ve been here at this university in terms of the exposure of English, I think it was really great, I can say that I’ve had a lot of exposure to English, I’ve learnt a lot because in the beginning my English was so poor, I can’t say I’m perfect now but compared to the beginning there’s a huge difference, I’ve improved a lot...”*

**Y3s3** commented as follows:

*Um because the university uses English...um ...as a medium of instruction we have to ...have to...I don’t know how to say it...but we have to...*

The response to the question of exposure yielded significant unintended evidence about language, identity, and performance when it became evident that the above participant was struggling to find an appropriate word to adequately express what she wanted to say. She heaved a sigh of relief when I ‘rescued’ her out of her predicament by suggesting the word “adapt”.

Participants were probed with the aim of sourcing information regarding their ability to understand and follow the lecturer during classes. Their responses were varied. There were those who indicated their inability to follow the lecturer due to the unfamiliar accents. **Y3s2** had this to say in this regard:

*No, like ok, I can hear the lecturer but there and there I just can’t catch the lecturer. But at least when I’m there and I have my own notes I can be able to relate to what she’s saying because I have something to read because the accent is just too much sometimes... and the terms sometimes.*

The responses that were gleaned regarding whether students were able to understand questions and content so as to clearly follow proceedings in class, provided evidence of self-regulation. This was also a reflection of the convergence of the constructs of language and identity as defined in the context of this study.

**Y2s2:** *Maybe the lecturers, because English is their Home Language, they speak faster, maybe if they could speak slower, maybe \*ba etse pace ya bone go re e nne the same as ya rona then go ka nna betere. \*if they could adjust*

*their pace so that it can be the same as ours, it would make things better for us.*

*The pronunciation... I was not used to lecturers... but I'm not expecting them to do so because we should understand that we are varsity students and that's how it works here, it's for me to do... \*go etsa selo se a leng go re se tla etsetsa nna bo betere. \* [I have to make things easier for myself.] If I find a lecturer that speaks English in a manner that is too fast for me then I should take notes and then refer back to the text book or study guide.*

**Y3s2:** *... if there's a term that I don't understand I either go to the dictionary or to Google or something...As time goes on you meet friends who have higher grades then you have to ask: How are you going to do this? Then that's where they told me ok you have to understand the concepts so that you can answer the question. Ok, coz as time goes we get used to English and we get used to other students where they talk English in an everyday language, ok fine my friends now are Blacks even though we talk Home Language but there will be other times where we talk English.*

Student **Y3s2** also stated that she felt more confident about writing in English than expressing herself verbally and the reason she gave for this apparent disparity was her prior exposure to English in that regard. In her own words:

*"Ok, because like in High School, even though you can't [don't] speak English you have to write in English. I think that's the thing that gave me confidence in writing. And I mean I got good marks. I get good marks in my modules and that's why I'm like ya my English is ok."*

These students provided evidence regarding the importance of exposure, peer interaction and taking the initiative to find out which strategies their peers employ to get higher grades. The assertion about the interplay between the phenomena of language and identity, as they are conceived in this study, is further supported by the following remarks:

**Y2s3:** *Well, no I can't say that I did speak well as I live with these people here, I tend to be like them, like I adapt quickly, I can say that maybe I adapted...*

*then as time went on that's how you discovered that it means there's a difference, there's a reason why these people are performing better. How do they do it?"*

**Y2s2:** *Well last year we were under pressure, we were not exposed to a lot of people like friends, I wanted to have my own space...well this year is kinda different , the more I interact with different people the more I learn and gain knowledge.*

The response elicited from **Y2s2** by the question whether the interaction with other people who speak English played a role was:

*"Yes, my interaction is helping me to improve".*

The above comment is a further corroboration of the correlation between exposure and acquisition. This and other responses presented above pointed towards a combination of affective aspects surrounding performance. These vary from feelings of inadequacy to taking meta-cognitive ownership of their learning through extrinsic factors, such as a brother who was a 'role-model for Y2s1 because, "*he speaks English, just like that...I was like , I wanna be like him*", and intrinsic motivation that resulted from the benefits of a sense of belonging and the benefits/advantage of feeling confident. This issue of confidence is related to the connection between identity and recognition (Taylor, 1992; Mayes, 2010; Boughey, 2005).

Participants were also asked to comment on whether instructions for tests and assignments were written in a manner that they could easily understand. **Y3s2** responded by stating that she used her initiative to look for additional information by researching, "*...if there's a term that I don't understand I either go to the dictionary or Google of something*". This, she reflected, often helped her to make sense of the words and concepts that she might not have understood initially.

#### **4.6.2 THEME 2 – CATEGORY 2: LANGUAGE USE AND CONTEXTUAL SUPPORT IN THE UNIVERSITY**

Participants were asked to state their preference regarding the use of language in the academic context and they reflected mixed feelings about this.

**Y1s1:** *No, I kinda feel like the Home Language is just...I prefer English. Like English it can be clearly understood, unlike teaching in Sepedi.*

When asked how she felt about being taught in Sepedi her response was:

*“Um ...maybe it would be an advantage, I’d clearly understand things better. I wouldn’t need to consult other sources, like it would be straightforward, unlike with English... you have to consult dictionaries for words you don’t understand. So ya, being taught in my Home Language would be an advantage.”*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> year student **Y2s1** provided an insightful response with regard to the language/identity connection:

*“I think it’s good so it would be good to teach or be taught in Sepedi because it’s my MT and we mustn’t kill it. But I just love to speak English because it makes me feel good because I can fit in, I prefer to go for English.”*

When asked whether he would be happy with being taught in Sepedi he responded as follows:

**Y2s1:** *I wouldn’t be happy with that because I know Sepedi very well so I need to explore another language. As you know, English is the medium of instruction and I can go anywhere with it so I wouldn’t go for Sepedi.*

The above student’s response to the question regarding whether he did not think that being taught in the medium of Sepedi would be to his advantage was:

**Y2s1:** *Obviously it would make life easier because I would understand everything, there would be no term where I would say here I’m stuck, I’d just flow but I just prefer English but I think it would be great because learning in your MT is easy you don’t experience any problems.*

He however, emphasised her preference for the use of English by stating:

*“Ya, because I can use it anywhere”*

It should be noted that this is the same student who displayed an admiration for his brother’s proficiency, thus indicating the significance he attached to proficiency in



English. He accorded such value to acquiring proficiency in English that it served as an ontological incentive, as evidenced in his statement, *“my eagerness helped to learn because I was very eager to learn and improve”*.

Another 2<sup>nd</sup> year student (**Y2s2**) responded as follows to the question about the use of Home Language:

*“Ya sometimes I think so and sometimes I think no, coz English is a dominant language and you have to know English, no matter because whenever you go for an interview it won't be in your Home language it will be I English and you have to know English. Home Language is kinda like a language that it's there to help whenever you don't have a clear meaning of something so if ever you know English when you don't get a clear meaning of something so if ever you know English then you can go to different places and do many things...”*

*“I have thought of that before like if we are allowed to use our language as a medium of instruction for our modules that it would have been better but again it's a disadvantage because when you go further you have to know English because it's the most used language that we use outside and inside our country...”*

The above student went on to voice her views about the use of her Home Language in preference to English by emphatically stating:

*“No, coz, I'm getting more used to English than my Home language and I find English is so easy to grab the module...”*

It is evident from the above responses that, for the participants, English represented a gateway to epistemological access and the world of work whereas the Home Language was regarded as a crutch that could be used for linguistic support within the academic context.

A 3<sup>rd</sup> year student (**Y3s3**) was, however, quite resolute about her preference for the use of her Home Language instead of English:

*Yes, definitely, it would be to my advantage because then I would understand everything and I wouldn't have to go and ask someone for a second opinion or what they think about this or that because it's my Home*

*Language so I know it. Even if I have to teach using isiSwati it would be to my advantage because it's my Home Language. I think also it's because I'm confident in speaking my language..."*

Her resoluteness about her preference to be taught all her modules in isiSwati as a BEd Foundation Phase student was further expressed as follows:

**Y3s3:** *Yes, definitely, I'd take it... Yes everything, it would be easier for me.*

The above student also tacitly confirmed the convergence of language and identity by stating that she would prefer isiSwati because of the confidence she has when she expresses herself in this language. Her stance regarding the use of her Home Language was an echo of **Y1s1**'s responses regarding this question as well. Of the 9 participants, these were the only two who felt strongly that they would prefer to be taught in their Home Language.

**W1**'s response further corroborated the responses of **Y3s3** and **Y1s1** to be taught in their Home Languages:

*"I hope that I have, amongst other things, inspired them to not feel 2<sup>nd</sup> rate about their English and their mother tongue..."*

This lecturer also, in a way, proffered a solution to the dilemma of having to choose between English and Home Language through these assertions:

*"I allow my students to speak any language in class, if they want to answer me in Zulu, they can do that, someone will just have to translate and again I do it because I want them to see that in class you can't judge a child on the way s/he speaks but you've gotta judge them on their ideas so I allow them to speak to a mate or to speak to me. The Afrikaans kids are very comfortable in doing that and I think it's almost as if they've jumped at that and I then translate for the class."*

She also voiced her views about the importance of the mother tongue in relation to identity and culture:

*"I put an incredible amount of emphasis on the importance of valuing your mother tongue and explaining that in South Africa less than 10% of the entire 55 mil of us are MT speakers of English so in my classes I really go*

*to great lengths to show them that their MT is key to who they should value it, they've got to nurture it, they've got to speak it to their kids, they've got to get books that their kids can read, tell their kids stories draw on their entire cultural heritage that is for me totally inextricably linked to language”.*

**W1's** views were instructive in relation to the assumptions presented in this study about the intertwined connection between language and identity. She further drew attention to the pride she sees around student's identity and the use of their Home Languages:

*Again, this year it's very evident that there's been a change in their attitude towards English even in the corridors, I hear students now speaking to each other in vernaculars, whereas, maybe 5, 8 maybe 10 years ago, everybody spoke English and I found that strange because I don't believe that English is necessarily South Africa's lingua franca I think Zulu could be or maybe in this geographic region Northern Sotho or Tswana might be, I'm not sure but I can see by body language, nodding of heads couple of gestures, “sharp, sharp”, suggesting that they are now proud to claim the MT as their own rather than pretending to have to be good at speaking English...”*

She further pointed out that her module was designed to create a space for students to feel free to express themselves in their own languages and to have a sense of pride about their culture and identity. She also shared her own experience:

*“My own accent ... I've been told by a British language school that they'd never employ me because my accent smacks of the previous regime, I was told that to my face and my response was, “I'm sorry but you're losing one of the best teachers, regardless of the accent”... as if accent determines ability. So I do try to get the students to understand that it's mother tongue and English as well as whatever else you'd like to speak...”*

She went on to point out how the children's literature theme she uses provides her with the opportunity to instil pride in the mother tongue as part of an identity formation strategy. During the safe spaces she creates in her classes she encourages her students to investigate the idioms and stories that are passed down through the oral tradition. A lot of narrative space was accorded to illustrating the

lengths she goes to in an attempt to accentuate cultural significance and the pride students' should take in their identity:

*“I was brought up English-speaking and then I was sent to an Afrikaans High School so I understand both cultures fully but if I have to explain to someone what is a white SA English speaker’s culture it’s all British or adopted from African culture in South Africa, or Afrikaans culture, so koeksisters, boerewors, chakalaka, whatever, it’s not English it’s all borrowed from somewhere so I again show them that I actually haven’t got a culture and everybody does have a culture... I talk about their names that mean something...like Peace, Mpho, Lerato...”*

At this point I ‘felt the need’ to interject: *“And Neo, my name, which means Gift...”*

The participants’ comments reflected the paradox of language as articulated earlier in the study. On the one hand, participants indicate a preference for the use of the Home Language as an ideal situation. Yet, on other hand, they grapple with the awareness that the contextual realities such as mobility, acceptance by peers, and epistemological access dictate the use of and proficiency in English. The data also reflected the effect of power relations on students’ participation (Mayes, 2010; Morrow, 2009; Boughey, 2005; McKenna, 2010). This further highlighted, to an extent, the hegemony of the English language in academia, its codification, and the relation of this codification to meritocracy and performance.

Out of 9 participants only 2 indicated an unequivocal preference for the use of Home Language as LOLT for reasons of access and ease of use, 1 indicated a partial preference citing expedience in both instances. She pointed out that, as result of the language-related difficulties she experienced as a student she would prefer to work in an environment where she can use her Home Language, Setswana. In this regard she made a case for the promotion of language spaces that allow for the use of Home Language. The other 7 stated that they would prefer English for expedience, in the sense that they see it as a gate-way to epistemic and career opportunities. In spite of these assertions, however, there was a unanimous agreement among all the participants that it would be easier for them to be taught in their Home Language.

Those who registered a preference for English as LOLT were of the opinion that it would be expedient for them to be taught in English because of its dominance and hegemony. For purposes of this study, the preference of Home Language constitutes the ideal while the preference of English, as dictated by situational realities, spoke of the reality of such things as employability and accessibility. This, according to the argument presented in this study, constitutes a paradoxical situation. The recommendations pertaining to language in Chapter 6 posit possible responsive approaches to this paradox.

As noted already, the students who formed part of this cohort were, more often than not, L2 speakers of English who were usually 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students. These two factors are related to language and identity, respectively. In the instance of language it means that they had limited or no prior exposure to English as the language of learning and teaching. Within the Bernsteinian (1990) frame of reference there is a codification system that disadvantages those who enter the system of higher education from low socio-economic backgrounds while privileging those from higher income groups (Bernstein, 1990). This was also supported by lecturer W1 with the apt observation that students' initial reticence was informed by their minority status in a previously white HE institution.

As part of the critical emancipatory and participatory transformative approach participants were asked whether they had any suggestions regarding how they could be assisted to cope with any language-related challenges they might face as BEd Foundation Phase students (Mahlomaholo, 2009; Kincheloe et al., 2007; Mezirow, 2000). The random, across the board (from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 3<sup>rd</sup> year), and insightful responses to the question around support for language-related challenges are listed below:

**Y1s1:** *Well, sometimes just because we are at university they seem to think that we know everything, they just put something and they expect us to be able to do it and then at times it's not like that. We should...like um... I don't know how to put it, but then...ah...I don't know what to say...Ya, something should be done...well, we're not the same, some people are extremely...struggling extremely, although there are tutors but it's still not enough because tutors like they won't be patient with you and they just call*

*something out and they just move on so you are left with no idea of what they are saying...”*

**Y2s2:** *I think programs like tutoring if they can form a group that can help us...*

*Maybe the lecturers because English is their Home Language they speak faster, maybe if they could speak slower, maybe [code-switching to Setswana] ba etse pace ya bone go re e nne the same as ya rona then go ka nna betere. [Translation: if they could adjust their pace so that it can be the same as our then it can be better for us]. And again I think I prefer Black lecturers...*

In relation to the expressed preference for Black lecturers the student stated:

*“Well, I think because that’s where I feel more confident to interact in group discussions. It’s because their English is more understandable than White lecturers because they speak slow [ly] and you can understand them clearly but you’ll find that a White lecturer will speak fast and expect you to understand even though you don’t.*

The above sentiments were a partial echo of those expressed by a third year student, albeit in response to a different question:

**Y3s1:** *Obviously the lecturers have to teach in English of which we are not used to listen to English each and every time. Even though maybe we watch movies to grab English and get used to it but then in my 1<sup>st</sup> year I found it so difficult because like some of the words or let me say the ...accent...*

A second year student responded as follows to the question relating to this aspect:

**Y2s2:** *The pronunciation... I was not used to the lecturers, especially the English [White] people, like ok, the Black people, fine we pronounce words like in our own way so I was kinda like familiar with that but then the Whites, it was so difficult...but then I’m ok now.*

The above student was asked a follow-up question regarding her challenge with coping with the difference in pronunciation: *So are you then saying that at some point lecturers should also think about the fact that there are people like you in the class?*

**Y2s2:** *But I'm not expecting them to do so because we should understand that we are varsity students and that's how it works here but it's for me to do... [code-switching] go etsa selo se e leng go re se tla etsetsa nna bo betere. Ke gore ge ke kereya lecturer e e leng go re e bolela English e leng go re e [translation: I have to do that which will make things easier for me if I find a lecturer that speaks English in a manner that is] too fast then I should take notes and then refer back to the text book or study guide.*

When asked about the reason(s) for her ability to make the transition from her background to university and ultimately for her to be able to pass and go into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year she responded:

**Y3s2:** *Well, you know, you find me happy this afternoon because I'm much improved from last year...Most of the time I've been attending tutorials and I find that the tutorials helped me a lot and also referring to the text book most of the time.... Making my own notes...apart from the lecturer's notes I've been taking my own notes.*

Her response reflected that she took ownership of her own learning by taking the initiative to do something extra. In addition it showed the significance of tutorial sessions as a support structure:

*"You know when we are with the tutors we discuss the questions that we don't understand..."*

With regard to the issue of support for contextual challenges student **Y2s2** raised the following language-related concerns:

*"Ok, as I'm doing ECD this year I had to do an African language and this year I had to do Sepedi which I did not do at school, from primary to High School then I was like, how am I gonna learn Sepedi coz I don't know anything. I don't know anything about Sepedi. Then I asked [someone from the department and I was told] "you don't have to do Sepedi beginner, you have to do Sepedi because of the Home Language you did at school, Setswana". I was like, that's the challenge for me. Then [I was told] I need to adapt to everything and learn. And it was a challenge for me because I did not know anything because then during class I was in Sepedi and I was*

*like I don't know anything, they will use metaphors an I was like, what's happening? But I did adapt and I did pass well.*

When asked what she thought could have been done to assist her in that particular case she responded thus:

**Y2s3:** *I think there should have been tutors. Even there it says Sepedi Home Language because some of us are not Sepedi speaking people. For instance, I'm a Tsonga but I did Setswana as a Home Language in school.*

The above student added a further dimension to the issue of Home Language when she pointed out:

*"I would have preferred to do Setswana than Sepedi... they should have done other African languages...so people can do their own languages".*

The above responses by **Y2s3** are significant indicators of the need to refrain from assumptions about Home Language, such as the issue of mutual intelligibility, and to ensure that appropriate responsive strategies are in place.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> year student **Y3s2** 'self-audited' by stating:

*Ok, my problem is that I associate with people who speak Home Language mostly, so maybe if I can get friends who talk English [only] maybe I can improve. And even my study methods I think I lack a bit there coz they're not working for me.*

She suggested the following solution with regard to her 'problematic' study methods:

*"I think the group discussion after studying helps but then now you find maybe two people who are interested some time but then some of the people will say. No, I'm not interested today, then you have to do it [study by] yourself."*

She also reflected a preference for tutorial sessions as a means of providing additional support:

**Y3s2:** *Yes, ok tutorials, coz in my 1<sup>st</sup> year, in [name of module] the tutor was helping so much and if you have a problem she was always there, but since then they'll tell you that there's a tutor and the contacts and*



*everything but then you have to book and when you go there then the person is not available so you just give up the person is not responding sometimes ...she's not responding that she's not gonna pitch up or something and when you go there you don't find her but sometimes she's gonna tell you that I'm not available at that time of which it's your free time so you can't bunk classes [especially] the class that you're gonna attend once a week. You can't bunk such classes...that's the problem."*

Upon further probing regarding whether the creation of a 'user-friendly' system in tutorials would be conducive, she responded:

*"Yes, I think it's gonna help. I think that right now they're just gonna have to come up with an option that let the tutorial class be compulsory. Coz now they'll tell us, here's the tutor but then there are no classes for tutorials. So now coping with that thing is not easy...In our first year it was compulsory so that's how we developed the eager [ness] to go to tutorials.*

The sentiments expressed by another 3<sup>rd</sup> year student **Y3s3** about this were:

*"Um...I know that they can't possibly teach us in all the 11 languages but I think it would be better if...um...I don't know how to put it ...um, I'm not saying that they should put it as a medium of instruction or something but maybe if we had...er...because we do have people who help us like if you're struggling with an assignment or something, like...We do have tutors...I think they are counsellors or something.*

The above went on to state her preference as specifically...

*"those people who speak our language that would be better I think".*

The above data gives an indication of the emerging themes associated with the role of prior exposure to English, implications for codification, the effects of this exposure on performance as it relates to participation, and the coping mechanisms that have implications for critical consciousness. The two lecturers were also asked to proffer their suggestions concerning how students could be supported. Their responses are detailed below:

The issue of code-switching in the class was addressed as outlined below by **W1** and **B1**. Their responses are presented as continuous text to allow for a free flow of

their train of thought around this issue. Both responses are quite insightful, albeit in different ways, with regard to supportive responsiveness:

**W1:** *Not everybody understands code-switching but I think the staff should be prepared to allow code-switching which is a form of trans-linguaging for the students. I don't think we can expect the staff to know all languages or them all or to be proficient in all, not all the staff will understand all the languages they should be prepared to allow for code-switching and allow the student to respond in a particular language.*

She further expressed her qualms about translation by stating that,

*“too much gets lost in the translation and the student is at a disadvantage. They might be getting key concepts but the finer nuances are lost, certainly not at undergrad level would I encourage that.”* Her suggestion, in this regard, was that there was a need to, *“get them the actual words and phrases that they can use in the class coz it's a different kind of discourse, it's not just chatting about coffee and last night's book [that you read] or your boyfriend that you have or something... I think there's a lot that we can do. In short... there isn't sufficient support for the English that we expect the student to have, we offer no support but we expect results. We allow the Afrikaans students to do everything in Afrikaans. I'm not saying that the Afrikaans students are proficient, they probably also need support. We offer no support but expect academic English at 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year level let alone post-grad level...”*

**B1's** recommendation for linguistic support was:

*You know what, I think we need to make language easier and simpler for them. We must move away from those terms, I don't know how to explain them when we grew up we used to call them the bombastic words, so we just need to simplify everything and even the instructions we need make sure that they are simple and easy to be understood and followed.*

The above data pointed strongly towards the need for additional support and the creation of a teaching and learning environment that would be conducive to both

epistemological access and ontological development. In short, the two lecturers were of the unanimous view that there is need for appropriate contextual support for the BFP L2 cohort. It should be pointed out, though, that when **W1** voiced her qualms about translation she was, implicitly, confirming her previously cited preference for trans-languaging (Williams, 1994); heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981) and code-switching (Cook, 1991).

#### 4.7 THEME 3: IDENTITY FACTORS IN RELATION TO PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE

Theme 3 was deductively derived to draw attention to participants' identity-related experiences with specific reference to affective factors. In this study identity was regarded as an affective phenomenon. Participants had to respond to questions that reflect identity, as it is defined in this study, including related factors connected to participation and performance. The two categories of Theme 3 are reflected with the associated in vivo codes in the table below.

**Table 4.3: Theme 3: An illustration**

Theme 3	Categories 1 & 2	In-vivo codes
<b>Identity factors in relation to participation and performance</b>	<b>Category 1:</b> Participants' negative affective experiences pertaining to participation and performance	<i>"It's difficult when there's a lot of people in class"</i> <i>"It's kinda like intimidating"</i> <i>"I just don't have the confidence"</i> <i>"I'm scared to talk in class"</i> <i>"You look like a fool"</i> <i>"I'm afraid to say the wrong word...I don't say anything"</i>
	<b>Category 2:</b> Participants' positive affective experiences pertaining to participation and performance	<i>"I was able to adapt"</i> <i>"My eagerness helped"</i> <i>"I have to make my own notes"</i> <i>"I do extra research to understand"</i> <i>"We had to learn so we could be good teachers in future"</i>

#### 4.7.1 THEME 3 – CATEGORY 1: PARTICIPANTS’ NEGATIVE AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES PERTAINING TO PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE

Category 1 of Theme 3 was inductively derived through analysing responses that reflected negative affective factors pertaining to participation and the ability to respond appropriately to the requirements of given tasks.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> year student, (**Y3s3**) who demonstrated a noticeable discomfort while struggling to find the right word and the second year student, (**Y2s2**) who anxiously requested for permission to express herself in Setswana, confirmed the association between language and identity as a construct that relates to perceptions about oneself. **Y2s2’s** expressed her discomfort as follows:

*“Um I don’t feel comfortable at all coz I think my English is just simple, so I don’t feel comfortable at all... That’s why I said that you can find the lecturer is asking questions and I know the answer but I can’t express myself so I just keep quiet, not because I don’t know the answer...”*

I should point out that the performance referred to here is not necessarily linked to assessment grades but, in this case, relates to class participation and the ability to understand, interpret, and perform a given task. It also refers to active engagement in class/group activities. Lecturer **B1’s** responses also provided insight into both levels of performance. With regard to class participation she responded as follows:

*“To be honest in terms of class participation they don’t participate much, others don’t participate at all. Others can participate but it’s very limited. Most do not participate at all until I call out their names and say: “you haven’t spoken to me for the past 3 months...”*

When responding to the question pertaining to the issue of expressing herself verbally in class, **Y1s1** remarked:

*“Yoh as a 1<sup>st</sup> year I don’t wanna lie, I’ve never expressed myself verbally because I’m scared, I have fear that maybe I won’t say the right words...”*

It is interesting to note that the above-mentioned student stated that she did not have a problem with English because of her prior exposure to it in the social context. However, with regard to class participation she voiced the following concern:

*“Um...it’s kinda like intimidating because you’ve got like Whites and they so English and I like, I can speak English but I don’t think that I’d be able to express myself in a lecture hall full of people who’ve been doing English like their whole lives”.*

She also pointed out that:

*“...there’s a big difference from what we used to do in secondary school...I hardly answer any questions”.*

**B1** confirmed this by pointing out that:

*“Participation in my class is mainly with white students”*

The above assertion is an apt example of how identity, as it is conceptualised in this study, has a bearing on portraiture and performance. In spite of the fact that she evinced proficiency in expressing herself in English and her admission at some point during the interview that, *“I don’t have a problem,”* **Y1s1** felt intimidated by the fact that she was ‘competing’ against Whites whom she regarded as 1<sup>st</sup> Language speakers of English.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> year student (**Y2s2**) responded by saying:

*“Sometimes it’s kinda, maybe I’ll say a wrong word, so I don’t wanna say anything”*

When asked whether this affected her participation in class discussions, her response was:

*“Exactly, every time maybe the lecturer is asking a question in class first I have to think of like how should I construct my words before I raise my hand to speak...”*

Another 2<sup>nd</sup> year student **Y2s3** had this to say about the issue of class participation in relation to expressing herself verbally in English and in a lecture hall setting:

*“For example like asking a question or participating in a discussion I...um plan or something like how to phrase a proper question so that the lecturer would understand coz I’m not a fluent speaker of English, so the thing is I need to know how to construct my sentences...”*

The response given by **Y3s2**, as she smiled self-consciously, was:

*Well, that is a problem, even though you have a question you have to think about it. How are you gonna ask? Coz I mean English is not our MT so that’s why we find it so difficult. We have to think about it. How’s it gonna sound?*

*Sometimes it’s kinda, maybe I’ll say a wrong word so I don’t wanna say anything...every time maybe the lecturer is asking questions in class I first have to think of the word like how I should construct my words before I raise my hand to speak.*

The sentiments expressed by the above student regarding engagement in class activities were partially reiterated by another 3<sup>rd</sup> year student, (**Y3s3**):

*“It’s just so difficult like when you have to answer a question or even raise a point or say something, it’s just difficult when there are a lot of people, unlike when you have to go to the lecturer after class and maybe you have to ask a question...I feel that it’s better that way”*

The students’ sentiments regarding class participation were implicitly echoed by lecturer **B1**:

*“Language creates a barrier which impacts on participation, particularly in group work. Some would want to express their ideas in their Home Language and their frustration is evident since it ultimately results in visible lack of confidence”*

**B1**’s comment is implicitly confirmed by **W1** when she responds to a related question:

*“Absolutely, very definitely...when we do small groups or the think pair and share method... I try and encourage them to talk to people who are not like them or don’t use their language for the exchange of ideas but I think they’re far more animated when they are with people who do understand*

*and share their language... and...er... I don't know if this is a stereotype but I have noticed and this is over the years this is not just recently...if you ask a student, and I use a laser to point at them...my classes are unfortunately very large so I don't know who I'm speaking to... and it's almost as if instinctively the Black student would turn to someone to consult with a friend, to...um confer with someone...it's more a collective response, and I hesitate to say that coz I could be stereotyping but that is a real experience of mine, whereas if you did it with a white child or even an Indian student they respond it's not as if they look around and ask for assistance or help, they might look at their notes but they respond as individuals."*

The validity of some of the above responses will not be explored within the context of this study but suffice it to say that they are indicative of the significance of affective factors with regard to performance, specifically as it relates to the ability to participate actively in class and interact with others. This has implications for assessment, particularly where students' participation in group activities is rated in meritocratic terms (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004). The participants' responses and the manner in which they reflected the role and significance of affective factors is further analysed below.

**Y1s1:** *Sometimes it's like you just don't know how to put it. You know, ok, this is supposed to be like this but how do I put it like saying it the exact same way"*

**B1's** comment on performance, as it relates to assessment grades, is worth noting in this regard:

*"Let's say I give them an assessment they [L2 speakers] don't get higher marks when we assess them. So language is a barrier, so bana ba [these students] if English was their first language you can see that they would perform better. Sometimes \*o bona go re ngwana o \*[you can see that this student] has much to say but because of language they can't... but because I'm also an L2 speaker of English I don't consider it that much.*

**B1's** stance is partially supported by **W1** when she points out:

*“I use the concept linguistic arrogance and that I address to the mother tongue speakers of English and I say you can’t look down on someone who’s English is not good you can’t judge people”*

The above statement alluded to the assumption about the convergence of language and identity. That is, the students’ reticence to express themselves because they are ‘scared’ or ‘intimidated’ when they express themselves in English and ‘comfortable’ when they express themselves in their Home Language, is confirmed by their responses and by the allusion to the notion “linguistic arrogance” as it pertains to L1 speakers of English and their perceived supercilious attitude towards L2 speakers. This brings into tangential focus the notion of othering as conceived of by Boughey (2005). It could, therefore, be postulated that the Black students’ tendency to confer or group themselves in mono-racial groups has to do with their fear and thus the need for affirmation and support from their ‘own’. The validity of this postulation was, however, not fully explored. **B1**, however, implicitly supports the above, by stating that:

*“They don’t mix with white students so we have these students and I know that they are L2 speakers of English and they sit alone, they group themselves... I usually like to mix them but they feel comfortable if they group themselves. They group themselves based on their identity, as you said, and on their language proficiency”*

She continued by expressing a related concern:

*“You know what...I give them an activity and they do the work... in most cases they group themselves, go bolela nnete, [to tell the truth] even when I group them they’ll tell me that wa tseba go re [you know] ma’am we feel very comfortable ge re bereka le bo so and so... they are very comfortable when they work with so and so, ba mpha direasons, [they give me reasons] like we stay together in res... I’ll have to think about go re ke e adrese bjang [how to address this]”.*

A 2<sup>nd</sup> year student, (**Y2s3**) while pointing out the difference between expressing herself verbally in class and in writing noted:

*“Well when you’re talking and when you’re writing it’s different coz when you’re writing you can just stop and then write again, but when you’re*



*talking you run out of words and you become like a fool or something but when you're writing you can just relax a bit and try to put a sentence"*

A 3<sup>rd</sup> year student (**Y3s3**) self-audited by stating:

*"I don't think I understand fully like sometimes I think I'm not sure about what they want so I have to get someone to verify something for me".*

This participant's response is indicative of the ability to self-regulate, as pointed out earlier. The ability to self-regulate offers tacit support of Taylor's (1992) views about the dialogical dimension of identity which is in compliance with Dialogical Self Theory's views about self in dialogue. The students' positive affective experiences lend further credence to the notion of the dialogical self.

#### **4.7.2 THEME 3 – CATEGORY 2: PARTICIPANTS' POSITIVE AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES PERTAINING TO PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE**

The views expressed by the following students implied that, as they engaged in dialogues with themselves their confidence increased when their proficiency and understanding increased:

**Y2s1:** *I think there's a huge difference there because I've acquired a bit of English so it's quite better than last year...In the beginning I wasn't good in English so I wasn't very comfortable but since now I can construct proper English sentences... in the beginning I would not even answer questions, so I would just keep quiet because I didn't have that confidence.*

**Y2s3:** *Ok, firstly I have to understand the concept of the question, define them on how am I going to answer the question. That's where I have the confidence about what do they really want in that question. That's how I answer my questions. I have to look at the concepts first before I can answer the question.*

**Y2s1**, who was referred to in relation to his eagerness to emulate his proficient brother was asked a follow up question to further establish the reason(s) for the brother's English language proficiency:

*“I think it was because he was from a different school so he was flowing in English...just like that [again clicking fingers for emphasis]”... he was also getting good marks for English....I was like, I want to be like him”*

The above student’s responses pointed to three issues: (i) an admiration for his brother’s proficiency; (ii) his desire to emulate him: “so I was like, I want to be like him...” and; (iii) the reflective fact that the “different” school his brother attended was a contributing factor to his proficiency which, in turn, constitutes an implicit support for the assumption made in this study about the role of prior exposure: “he was from a different school so he was flowing in English”. A further unstated assumption in this regard was the implications this perception about the brother has for his future professional identity as an education practitioner. In the light of what the student said about the improvement in his proficiency. When asked what he attributed his improved proficiency to he responded:

*“That’s how I am... I always had a dictionary which also helped me to learn new words. I think it’s because of the internal motivation I had”.*

In response to the question relating to the extent to which English was used as a medium of instruction in the university, participants further raised the opinions that appear below:

**Y2s2:** *Well at first, like last year, in my first year I was a bit shy, I was like, now I have to learn how to speak English differently which would be an everyday thing and I wasn’t used to it... to speak English fluently... Then the thing was that my friends were not English-speaking then during our times together we were like we should try to speak English and we would try to speak English and at times we would speak Setswana.*

The above participant cited the reason for their motivation to try and improve their English language proficiency as follows:

*“Well we were like, soon we’ll be 4<sup>th</sup> year students and we’ll have to go into practicals and there won’t be any need for us to speak Setswana, so we were like we need to learn English more fluently so that we can be good teachers in future.”*

The above response is related to the observation that was made by **W1** about students' noticeable proficiency. She pointed out:

*“I hope and that is a personal hope, that I have, amongst other things, inspired them to not feel 2<sup>nd</sup> rate about their English... I've certainly found the students far more willing to engage.”*

The participants were further asked whether they saw a difference between their proficiency in their 1<sup>st</sup> year and the time of the interview and, if so, what this difference could be ascribed to.

**Y2s2:** *Ok, the thing is that last year was my first year and my first experience in varsity and the environment and so I had to adapt to everything. This year I'm kinda used to life in varsity. I know what is expected of me as a university student. So ya, it has improved.”*

The following remarks tacitly confirmed the bearing of identity-related factors on performance while also highlighting the significance of association, the ability to adapt, meta-cognition and their connection to an asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). In terms of students' ability to draw from their 'inner reserves/assets as an adaptation skill and coping mechanism, this was reminiscent of the resilience that Jansen (2013) refers to as imperative for the identity-formation of students.

**Y2s3:** *Well, no I can't say that I did speak well as I live with these people here I tend to be like them, like I adapt quickly. I can say that maybe I adapted.*

**Y3s3:** *But then I adapt easily, whatever comes my way I just find a way to tackle it and then at the end I'll be alright.*

**Y3s2:** *Ok, now I'm so familiar with it, I don't experience any difficulty with the lecturer when she's explaining or something, now I'm good. But then in my 1<sup>st</sup> year it was so difficult. I had to have a written thing so I can have clue. Y'see maybe she was explaining and assignment in class. Fine, she will explain but then I'll have to look at it in my own time so I can explain to myself ok, so what was she trying to say.*

**Y3s1:** *I do a lot of research... I read books to try and improve myself.*

**Y1s3:** *I work hard...I'm willing to learn more.*

The above is indicative of the coping strategies and fortitude the participants evinced in adapting to unfamiliar terrain and surviving all the odds to enter university and their ability to further survive in a 'codified' environment (Marshal, 2010). An asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006) highlights these strengths as part of the strategy to 'counter' the challenges of the dominant culture of academia.

#### **4.8 LIMITATIONS**

The participants displayed an ostensible reticence to write the mini-essays which were initially intended to form part of the data collection strategy. In view of the voluntary participatory nature of the data collection process, it was difficult to persuade them to write these. The emancipatory and participatory agenda, albeit part of the study's theoretical orientation, had an inadvertent and unintended consequence of allowing participants to choose the extent of their involvement. A further factor was that our availability as research partners coincided with participants' assessment times, which had a somewhat limiting and constraining effect on the duration of the interview sessions.

#### **4.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter constituted an analysis of the data that was gleaned from participants' responses pertaining to language and identity. It was envisaged that the findings would make a contribution towards knowledge that will qualitatively address the problems that pertain to the cohort under scrutiny in this study. The recommendations that accrue from the findings and researcher's critical observations are intended to serve as a response towards the clarion call that was made by the DHET to strengthen and develop the Foundation Phase BEd programmes, with specific reference to the BFP L2 cohort. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the themes and findings, as situated within the literature as well as responses to the research questions.

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## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the data that reflected participants' experiences regarding language and identity. The themes, categories, and in vivo codes related to the phenomena of language and identity and their convergence were discussed. In this chapter I also respond to the sub-questions of the study and conclude this chapter with a response to the key research question.

#### 5.2 THEMES, FINDINGS AND LITERATURE

The table below is a reflection of the key points of the findings which reflect the convergence between language and identity as they are conceptualised in this study. The concomitant literature is also indicated.

**Table 5.1: Key Findings**

Theme	Key Findings	Associated Literature
<b>Theme 1:</b> Prior exposure to language in the pre-university context	Participants' responses provided evidence regarding the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior exposure to English in the social context facilitated a measure of proficiency</li> <li>• The pre-university school contexts provided limited or no exposure to academic discourse. This meant that the benefit of proficiency in the social context was countered by lack of prior exposure in the school context. The result was, therefore, a reinforcement of the discrepancy between BICS and CALP</li> </ul>	Cummins, 1996; Krashen, (2003;2004); Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980)
<b>Theme 2:</b> Language and contextual Support	The following were identified within this theme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited or lack of prior exposure to codification created a barrier to epistemological access. Students were challenged when they had to access/retrieve information in an unfamiliar code.</li> <li>• The hegemony and dominance of English had concomitant implications for power relations and subsequently on class participation and</li> </ul>	(Bernstein, 1990; Taylor, 2004 Jensen, 2009; McKenna, 2010; Morrow, 2007; Mayes, 2010)  (Morrow, 2007; Boughey, 2005; Gee, 1990; Street, 1995; Bourdieu, 1991; Potter

	<p>performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants registered a preference for English as LOLT citing, inter alia, reasons of expedience, empowerment, communicative competence in the academia and workplace, upward mobility and conformance with expected norms Responses reflected a preponderant preference for the use of Home Language which, owing to situational dictates, was registered as support through code-switching. Only two participants indicated a definite preference for Home Language as LOLT. This confirmed the need for a support strategy that would be cognisant of situational realities while striving for the ideal</li> <li>• Participants indicated a need for customized systemic support within learning environments that would facilitate optimal learning</li> </ul>	<p>&amp; Wetherell, 1987; Widdicombe &amp; Wooffitt, 1995; Edley &amp; Wetherell, 1997; Antaki &amp; Widdicombe, 1998; Bucholtz &amp; Hall, 2005).</p> <p>(Janks, 2000; Morrow, 2007; Jensen, 2009; Rall, 2000; Bourdieu, 1997).</p> <p>(Alexander, 2010; Cook, 1991)</p> <p>(Mayes, 2010; Boughey, 2005; Bourdieu, 1997; Rall, 2000; Taylor, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008)</p>
<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Identity factors in relation to participation and performance</p>	<p>This theme yielded data that revealed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' experiences reflected both sides of the affective coin, namely, the participants' negative affective experiences and their positive affective experiences. On the negative affective side there were indications of anxiety and self-depreciation around participation which had to do with the notion of recognition and the fear of being pathologised.</li> </ul> <p>On the positive side participants displayed qualities that were indicative of emergent transformative praxis. This was evinced through reflective self-regulatory practices such as meta-cognition and thus reflecting varying nuances of critical consciousness and drawing attention to the need for an asset-based and critical emancipatory approach as a supportive strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutoring was cited as an appropriate support strategy with participants indicating that it should be tailored to provide contextually appropriate support.</li> </ul>	<p>Mustakova-Possardt, 2004; Taylor, 1992; Mayes, 2010; Kincheloe, 2008; Kincheloe et al., 2007; Mahlomaholo, 2009; Steele et al., 2002; Breuning 2011; Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 2005; Fullan, 2005)</p>

The table above is a synopsis of the findings in relation to the three themes that were identified in the study. The data indicated the convergence of language and identity in the cohort's portraiture (as related to identity and ontology) and language (as it relates to cognition and epistemological access). The findings, therefore, point towards the need for a support structure that will take into account the language-related challenges while making provision for the development of an emergent transformative praxis and critical consciousness.

The discussions that constitute responses to the research questions will be looked at in the following section.

### **5.3 RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION – SUB-RESEARCH QUESTION 1**

#### **How do Black Foundation Phase (L2) students cope with English as a medium of instruction in an institution of higher learning?**

The data that was gleaned from the interviews, with specific reference to Chapter 4 Theme 2, showed that the use of English as a medium of instruction, in a historically white institution, posed a challenge for the BFP participants of this study. This question has both an epistemological and ontological dimension. On the one hand, the data revealed the negative experiences of participants with regard to their ability to express themselves in lecture halls. Their reticence in class participation could be said to be reflective of the power relations that are manifested through the fear of being judged.

The fear to speak was expressed as follows by participant **Y1s1**: *“I don't think I'd be able to express myself in a lecture hall that is full of people who have been doing English their whole lives.”* This participant's perspective is an implicit illustration of how power relations play themselves out and can result in a negative impact on performance (Mayes, 2010).

For some participants, the perceived power relations had the effect of silencing them. The participant, **(Y1s1)**, quoted in the previous paragraph further pointed out that, *“...as a first year student I've never expressed myself verbally because I'm scared, I have fear that maybe I won't say the words right.”* These sentiments were echoed in various ways by other participants as well. Their fear of expressing themselves, to the point that they were even afraid to ask questions where they

required clarity, had negative implications for their epistemological access. These asymmetries have an impact on the kinds of identities participants construct in social and institutional interaction (Heritage, 1997; Mayes, 2010; Coupland, 2001).

The data also revealed the effects of limited or no exposure, where students found it very difficult to engage and communicate resulting in negative effect on their ability to negotiate meaning (Bakhtin, 1981), including on their performance (Steele et al., 2002; Bandura, 1999).

Theme 2 (Categories 1 & 2) categories pointed to the observation that, in spite of the often-stated difficulty of coping with the challenge of communicating in English (in the light of their status as L2 speakers of English), students often found ways of self-regulating and adapting. Mayes (2010:192) sees this as a form of empowerment in which “students are acting as agents in the process.” This ability to self-regulate offers tacit support of Taylor’s (1992) postulation regarding the dialogical dimension of identity which is in compliance with Dialogical Self Theory’s views about self in dialogue.

Taylor (1992) posits the view that identity formation is strongly linked to the ability to define oneself in relation to a particular position and in relation to how one is perceived by others. For the participants of this study, there were specific pivotal ‘moments’ that came about in different ways such as through the recognition that, *“I have to do more [research/study/read] to improve myself”,* or, *“I have to adapt.”* These assertions support the notion of identity-construction as a process that involves examining the manner in which participants use language in context and how the use of language is also indicative of the impact of language use on identity-formation (Mayes, 2010; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

#### **5.4 RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION – SUB-RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

##### **How does language influence cognition (knowledge reception and production) in academic performance?**

The response to this question was found in the data pertaining to the theme and categories associated with language, namely, Theme 1. The issue of prior exposure served the purpose of illustrating how language played a role in facilitating cognition



for the student participants. Participants who had limited or no exposure experienced difficulties such as expressing themselves in English. They also pointed out how the culture of academia – which made assumptions about their knowledge bases – threw them into the proverbial deep end. For example, some of the comments that were made around this issue included: **Y1s1**: *they expect you to be able to do it...sometimes you just don't know how to put it*”;

**Y1s2**: *the English here is not like...the simple English we used...they could accommodate us because it's a 2<sup>nd</sup> language for us,*”

**Y2s2**: *I can hear the lecturer but sometimes I just can't catch the lecturer...*

The aforementioned assertions were also confirmed by both lecturers **B1** and **W1**. **B1** drew from her own experiences as an L2 student of English. In the interview with her she shared anecdotally that her first career choice, when she first went to university, was social work. She stated that her first day in the social work class also became her last day because of the unmediated terminology and academic jargon she was confronted with. She, interestingly, also described her experience by using the same words that were used by **Y1s1** when she lamented that in High school they used “simple English” and not “bombastic words.”

**Y1s2** voiced a concern related to the discrepancy between academic essay writing and what she was used to: *“totally English, new terms, new... everything, and I was struggling...when we wrote essays it totally differed to secondary school then we wrote essays you just wrote whatever you wanted to write...”* This participant's experience brings to bear the argument concerning codification and its relationship with the ability to construct texts that comply with academic writing standards. The argument made in this study was that, students whose school contexts denied them exposure to academia's codification system were often thrown in at the deep end with no help (Jensen, 2009).

As indicated by **Y2s3**'s remarks, *“they expect us to know ...and we don't.”* This expectation of the academy is revealed through the fact that tests and tasks are premised upon the assumption that students will be able to comfortably comply with the stipulated standards, without overt consideration of the knowledge that is in place. This observation is of particularly pertinent to the cohort's language-related

challenges. Their responses indicated the various instances in which it was difficult for them to cope with English as LOLT in their status as L2 speakers of English.

## **5.5 RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION – SUB-RESEARCH QUESTION 3**

### **What effects do students' identities have on their performance?**

The data revealed that, on the one hand, students were intimidated by the L1 context of the academia and thus experienced feelings of inadequacy. The conceptualisation of identity in accordance with the cognitive psychology definition of identity as relating to 'self-image, self-esteem, self-reflection, awareness of self and individuality' (Leary & Tangney, 2003) bore relevance for this cohort when they expressed debilitating feelings of self-depreciation. However, on the other hand there was evidence of self-actualisation and what could be regarded as ontological development as it is conceived of, in this study. For example, when students came to the realisation that they had to adapt or they had to engage in further research, it was a sign of identity formation and ontological development that ensued from dialogues with the self (Hermans, 2001) and the surrounding others.

The further association of identity with becoming and self-actualisation, particularly as conceptualised by Maslow (1998) in his hierarchy of needs, was also pertinent. Holland et al. (1998:3) definition of identity as a process of self-understanding, whereby people define their identities as multiplicities of self-positions in relation to themselves and others, came into view. The relevance of the aforementioned for this study's discussion is that, according to the data, the phenomena of language and identity, provided an indication of the asymmetries of language as a social practice. The data in Chapter 4 (Theme 3, 4.7; Category 1) revealed participants' interactions, particularly in the classroom, as reflecting asymmetrical power relations. These were especially evident in both the participants' negative affective experiences and positive affective experiences. With respect to the negative affective, there were indications of anxiety around participation which has to do with the notion of recognition by those with authority. Consequently, these asymmetries have a bearing on the kinds of identities participants construct in social and institutional interaction (Heritage, 1997; Mayes, 2010; Coupland, 2001).

Students expressed depreciatory images of themselves that were based on the expectation that they had to perform at the same level as their privileged peers. These images of low self-esteem were, in the context of this study, informed by the fact that in most instances the school backgrounds of most of these students provided limited exposure to the code of academia. This, in turn, had the effect of heightening their awareness of their ill-preparedness as weighed against the standards of their academic requirements.

The result of the above was that the circumstantially dictated self-depreciation became an instrument in the participants' own disempowerment since, according to the data, it prevented them from active participation in class activities. This brought into view the dimension of power-relations and inequity, as expressed by this participant, **Y1s1**,

*“It’s intimidating... I don’t think that I’d be able to compete with people who’ve been doing English like all their lives”*

The idea of negative self-esteem as a result of situational dictates was implicitly confirmed by lecturer **W1** when she pointed out during the interview that over the past few years she has noticed a difference in the manner in which the Black students in her class conducted themselves. She attributed this to the fact that, since the University of Pretoria is a previously White institution, Blacks were in the minority and because of that they displayed a reticence towards participation. In her words:

*“In the past I found that the Black student was certainly very reticent and upon reflection I have a sense that it could be as a result of a few things. It could be the new cohort coming from the schools where they’re becoming more confident, that could be it, I personally think that it’s probably the fact that there are far more students of colour in the same group, so now it’s a matter of I’m not a minority any more...”*

The comments and postulations by **W1** are instructive in three ways. Firstly, they point to the role of prior exposure that has been discussed earlier under Theme 1 (Chapter 4, 4.6; Category 1). The assumption that can be made here is that prior exposure to English increases proficiency, albeit in BICS. Secondly, they confirm the

earlier assertions by the students of how they did not want to express themselves in class because of the fear that they would say the “wrong things.”

Students’ reticence can thus be ascribable to the fact that at that point, they were in the minority and therefore, probably felt “othered.” The result of the above is that the circumstantially dictated self-depreciation became an instrument in their own disempowerment since, according to the data, they indicated feelings of fear and inadequacy as it prevented them from active participation in class activities, as reflected in these remarks by **Y3s2** and **Y3s3**, respectively:

*“I don’t wanna say anything” and “It’s difficult when there are a lot of people...”*

Taylor (1992:25) uses the contextually appropriate analogue of blacks in relation to “the white society [that] has for generations projected demeaning images of them, which some of them have been unable to resist adopting”. His admonishment in this regard is that their “first task ought to be to purge themselves of this imposed and destructive identity” (Taylor, 1992:25).

In partially critiquing the participants’ negative self-construction in relation to language-based identity I concur with Taylor’s (1992) view, from a critical emancipatory stance, that seeking recognition from others should not constitute an individual’s self-image. Participants evinced transformative and reflective capacity when they decided to self-audit and take actions that would position them for agency and self-regulatory practices such as, for example, doing further research, consulting peers or accessing support and consulting dictionaries.

## **5.6 RESPONSE AND DISCUSSION – KEY RESEARCH QUESTION**

**How does the convergence of language and identity affect the academic performance and influence the portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase (L2) students?**

The study problematized the convergence of language and identity and situated its resolution within context of strengthening the BEd Foundation Phase Education as it pertains specifically to the Black cohort. This underlying developmental concern necessitated a transformational approach. The role of this convergence in academic

performance and appropriate graduate attributes was brought to the fore. In other words, in view of the transformational agenda of this thesis there was a mandatory attempt to proffer insights into solutions for the problems that have been associated with epistemology (language) and ontology (identity).

Within the context of this study the phenomenon of language was associated with literacy practices, which, it was also argued, facilitate the reception and production of knowledge (Christie, 2002; Halliday, 1994). With reference to how students coped with the convergence of language and identity, it was evident that language often posed itself as a barrier that made it difficult for these students to perform at optimal level. For example, some of the participants expressed feelings of disempowerment as a result of not being able to communicate in the language of academia, which made it difficult for them to participate actively in class.

This argument was supported by the Bernsteinian (1990) notion of codification. For example, student **Y1s1** pointed out that she was not familiar with the academic way of writing and that she, in essence, found it difficult to cope with academia's cultural code: *"sometimes it's like you just don't know...how do I put it like saying it the exact same way they want me to say it."* The above student also voiced the view that, *"I kinda feel like you just have to add more, like the English that we spoke and the English that I feel I do now, the standards are not the same."* This was in spite of the fact that there was a module that was specifically designed to assist students with those issues. **Y1s1** and her peers experienced language-related difficulties because everything was, according to her, *"English, English English..."*

Participants indicated how challenging it was for them to cope with the culture of the academia, with specific reference to language and how this in turn had a bearing on their performance. On the other hand, however, there was evidence of the positive implications of the convergence, where students demonstrated their adaptation skills in the face of contextual challenges. That is, in confirmation of the initial assumptions that were made, the convergence was strongly apparent in various instances of exposure to English in the academy. However, in the themes that were discussed in Chapter 4, with specific reference to Theme 3 (4.7; Category 1) there was strong evidence to suggest that participants' performance was negatively affected on the one hand. On the other hand, however, there were indications that there were

positive outcomes, which were in conformance with the tenets of an asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

At times, the interplay between language and identity resulted in participants feeling ill-equipped to participate actively in classroom activities. As reflected in **Y3s3's** comment, *"I hardly ask any questions.....I'm scared that I'll say the wrong thing"*, and **Y3s2's** concern *"...maybe I'll say the wrong thing so I don't wanna say anything"*. This further affected their ability to pose questions that would throw light on some of the issues that were discussed in class, with negative implications for epistemological access.

The data also revealed that at other times the convergence of the phenomena resulted in feelings of being "othered" with regard to participation in the code and currency of academia. The consequence of this was reticence to participate according to the meritocratic system of academia (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004). However, it is also possible that such perceptions could have been misconstrued as incompetence on the students' part.

The above notwithstanding, as pointed out earlier, there was also a strong indications of emergent transformative praxis and critical consciousness. This response highlighted the possibility for the inculcation and further development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe et al., 2007), critical moral consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004), and transformative praxis (Mezirow, 2000) on the part of the students as per the study's assumptions and related aims.

To the end pointed out above, the data also reflected that feelings of being 'less than' were replaced with confidence (related to identity) when participants gained proficiency of the medium of instruction. The issue of confidence was particularly pertinent for purposes of the study's emphasis on emancipatory and transformational practices. In addition, the data revealed that student confidence had a positive bearing on their ability to perform better. For example, participants expressed feelings of confidence in articulating their views after acquiring proficiency in English. This confirmed the connection made by Taylor (1992) about identity and the ability to formulate an appropriate definition of who you are through situating yourself in a particular space and using a particularly current language. In this instance, the students who expressed an increased level of competence that accrued from an

increase in confidence demonstrated a positive correlation between language and identity as asserted in this study.

In particular, some of the participants commented that their lack of proficiency and feelings of inadequacy prompted them to find out how their peers were able to perform better. They thus looked at various ways through which they could improve their performance, including attending tutorial sessions (see Chapter 4, Theme 3; 4.7). The data further revealed that participants were prepared to take ownership of their learning by going the extra mile to do research and to get additional assistance, such as through study group participation, thus evincing qualities of meta-cognition and self-regulation.

The factor of intrinsic motivation played a significant role as a coping mechanism with specific positive implications for improved performance and praxis. For example, participants revealed how knowing that they would be teachers motivated them to seek to improve their English language proficiency. Even though English presented a challenge to them personally, they were motivated to strive for proficiency because they felt that it would stand them in good stead in their profession as teachers.

A further reason that was provided for motivation was that the students deemed it in their interests to be proficient as they would be participating as global citizens and looking for upward mobility. These factors regarding motivation tie in with the study's focus on inculcating "a will to learn" (Barnett, 2007:101-102) in the students as part of further signifying their identity in positive terms to language acquisition.

Furthermore, the related concept of adaptability was also cited frequently as a coping mechanism that enabled participants to cope with the unfamiliar territory and language of academia. From an asset-based perspective, (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006), this capacity for adaptability can be regarded as a quality that confirms the students' ability to draw from their inner repositories, in order for them to cope with the rigours and challenges of academia.

With specific reference to the emancipatory agenda of the study, participants could be said to have demonstrated a measure of reflectivity by stating a preference for exposure to English as LOLT despite the fact that it would be expedient and easier

for them to be taught in their MT. As indicated through the above arguments, they were also able to self-audit by realizing that the onus rested on them to take active steps in facilitating their academic success (Taylor, 1992). In this way, they showed that with the appropriate support, they could overcome challenges and develop their academic identity with positive implications for transformative praxis.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I looked at the findings and insights that were gleaned from the data. The questions that provided an impetus for this study were also responded to. The next chapter explores the recommendations that are intended to be responsive to the insights, problems, and questions that were highlighted as pivotal points of the study.

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## CHAPTER 6

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The need to contribute towards the qualitative increase and successful completion of studies of the BFP cohort students positions this thesis within the context of empowerment and critical emancipation (Kincheloe, et al, 2007; Mahlomaholo, 2009). The study has endeavoured to articulate a transformative agenda undergirded by an emancipatory consciousness (Grinberg, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008). The recommendations presented in this chapter are conceptual with pragmatic implications for student support and curriculum design. They are derived from a combination of the findings, lending credence to the participatory approach and theoretical paradigmatic orientation that pertains to the phenomena of language and identity in relation to the BFP cohort. In addition, curriculum design principles around student support are also proffered as bricoleuric contribution to the problem that was highlighted at the onset of this study. For purposes of this study, I present the recommendations as new knowledge in the form of three pillars which I have coined as Pillars of Educational Transformation (PoETs). These recommendations are summed up at the end of this chapter.

### 6.2 THE PILLARS OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION (PoETs)

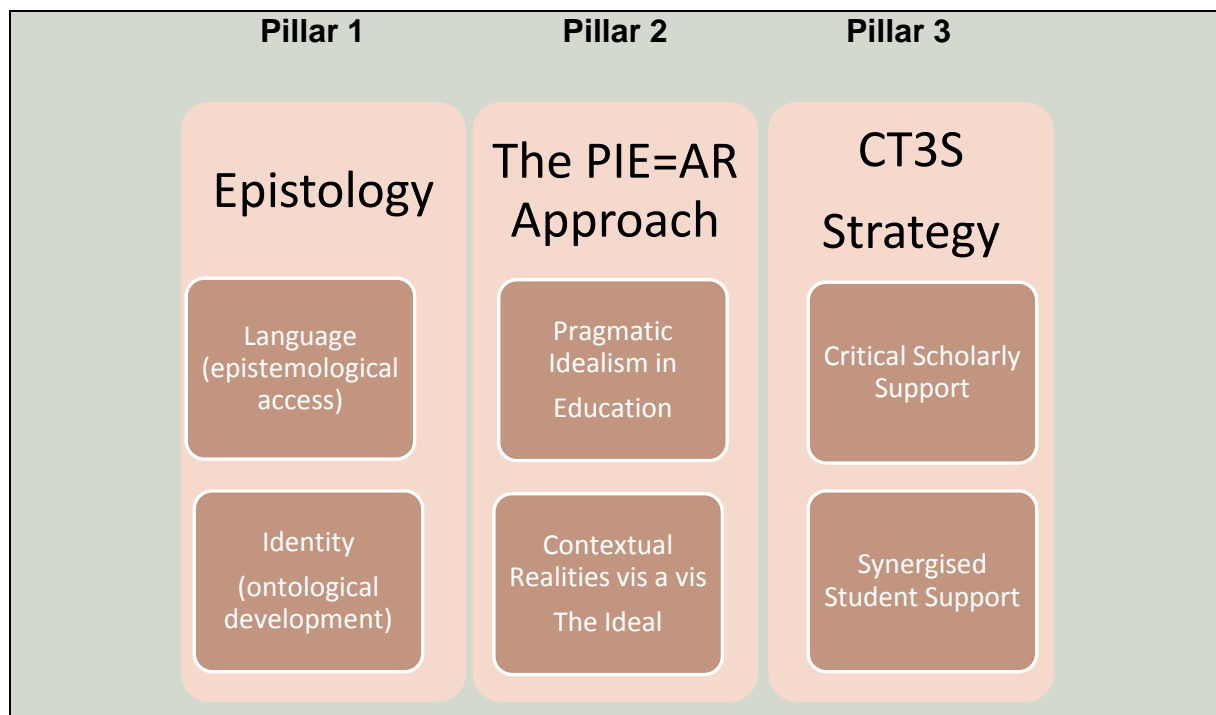
This acronym was conceptualised without any intentional connection with the word that is conventionally associated with the wordsmiths who create images and evoke emotions through the use of poetic language. Even though this was not the initial intention I realized that, given the ideological orientation of this study, a connection could be established between the construct of poetry and the acronym PoETs. Of relevance here is the anecdotally familiar assertion that poets use language and words like paint brushes with which they paint various portraits, depending on the message they want to convey or the emotions they want to evoke. This is often, albeit not always, done with the intention to elicit some sort of transformative outcome that may manifest itself at either a philosophical level or in a practical way in the form of a call to action and agency. This had a special appeal for me,

particularly as one who has an affinity for poetry as a vehicle for reflection and injunction to action (See Appendix 3).

Bearing in mind the notion of the bricolage as a multi-logical construct, a bricoleuric association can be made between the two connotations, that is, that of the acronym PoET and the literal meaning of a poet as a wordsmith.

The acronym is reminiscent of the poet who makes an impassioned plea for a call to transformative action. A further association with the PoETs approach stems from the fact that I presented it as a responsive strategy that is intended to provide multi-layered and holistic pragmatic support. This support takes into account theoretical concerns, curriculum design, student support, and discipline-specific considerations in its formulation of a transformative response to the education problems identified in this study.

The three pillars are graphically envisioned as follows:



**Figure 4: 3x PoET Approach**

The three pillars are all geared towards facilitating transformative learning and the creation of optimal learning within the context of the convergence of the phenomena of language and identity. I posit the view here that they should be considered as an inter-connected continuum that will facilitate the actualization of a critical

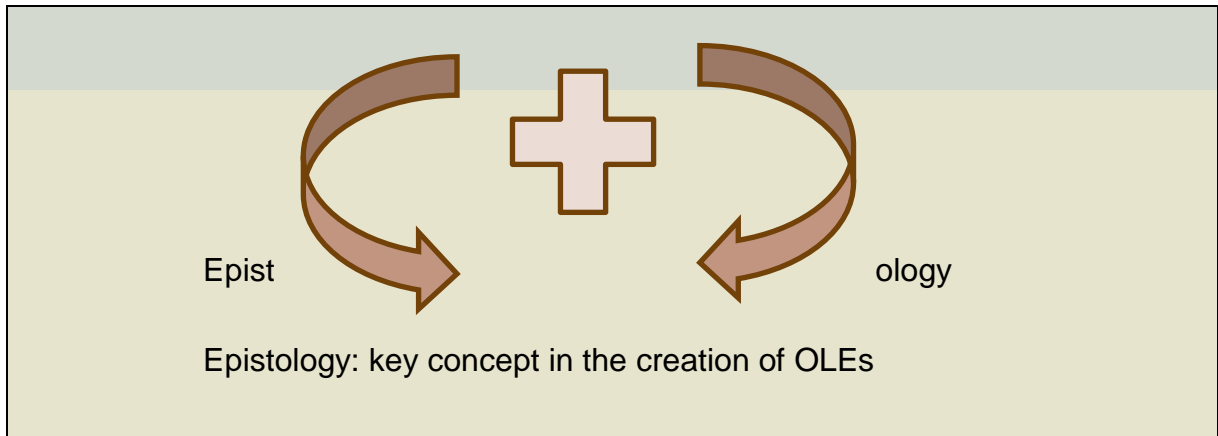
emancipatory student support agenda. As asserted at the onset of the study, the aim is to make a contribution to the corpus of knowledge that is dedicated to breaking the vicious cycle of multi-dimensional under-performance through a means that will facilitate this emancipatory end. This means, therefore, that even though these three pillars are discussed separately below they should be regarded as interrelated and coterminous components of a multi-layered and cohesive student support strategy.

### 6.2.1 PILLAR 1: EPISTOLOGY

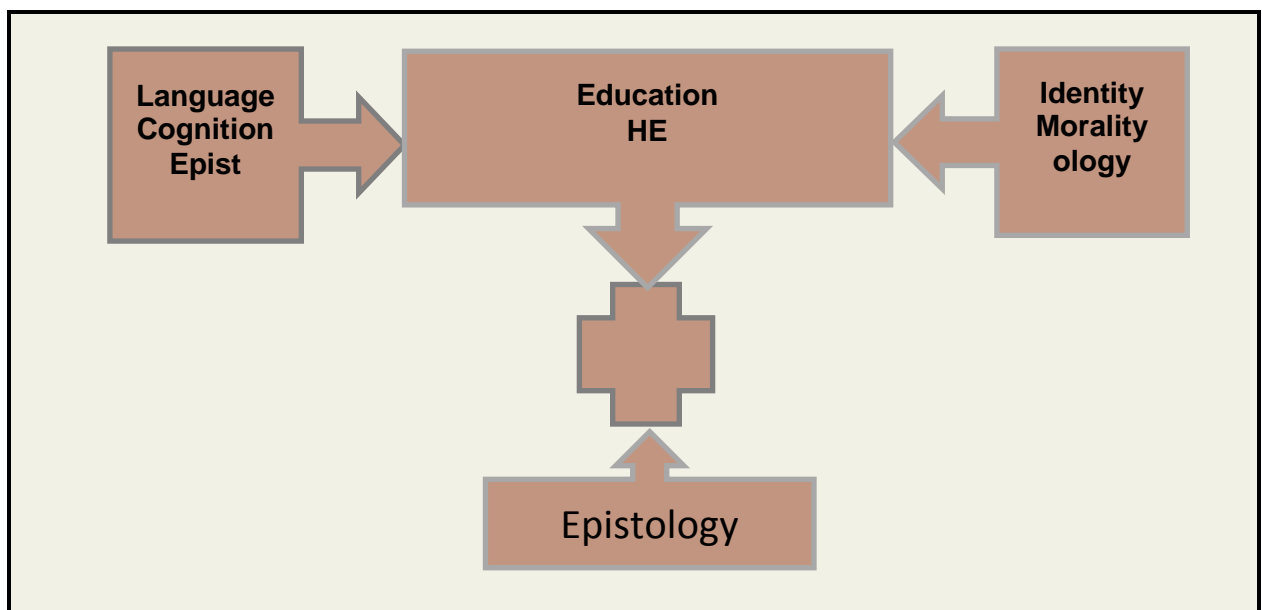
As already noted, a key assumption of this study was that the major relationship between the phenomena of language and identity is identifiable in their convergence for epistemological access and ontological development. In turn, this convergence was said to contribute towards academic performance and ontological academic portraiture, forming an intertwined strand referred to as epistology. Epistology, therefore, was used to convey the idea that language and identity are intertwined and inter-connectedly contribute to the ability of students to gain an understanding of epistemological access and ontological development and how these then contributed to their senses of identity.

The concept of epistology, as such, is regarded as a pivotal element in the academic performance and portraiture of the cohort under discussion. It is also tentatively regarded as a key consideration in the formation of optimal learning environments (OLEs). This includes, in particular, adopting a social justice approach which Griffiths (2003:52) highlights in relation to teaching as follows: “Teaching for social justice has a common goal of preparing teachers to recognise, name and combat inequality in schools and society through relevant pedagogy”. The convergence is envisioned as an intertwined strand of epistemological access and ontological development which should be part of the provision of a relevant fit-for-purpose and needs-driven curriculum design strategy.

‘Epistology’ is my own coinage and thus new knowledge that aptly captures the essence of the envisioned convergence. It is a construct that is derived from the term ‘*epistemology*’ and ‘*ontology*’ resulting in the combination of 5 letters that have been taken from both terms. Figures 5 & 6, below, are diagrammatic representations of this construct:



**Figure 5: The concept of epistemology**



**Figure 6: Epistemology: An illustration of the convergence**

The above diagram depicts how, in this study, the phenomenon of language is associated with cognition and how that of identity is linked to morality. The diagram also illustrates the fact that in academia, language is associated with epistemological access and critical consciousness while identity is linked to ontological development and critical moral consciousness. The convergence of the two phenomena is shown as epistemology.

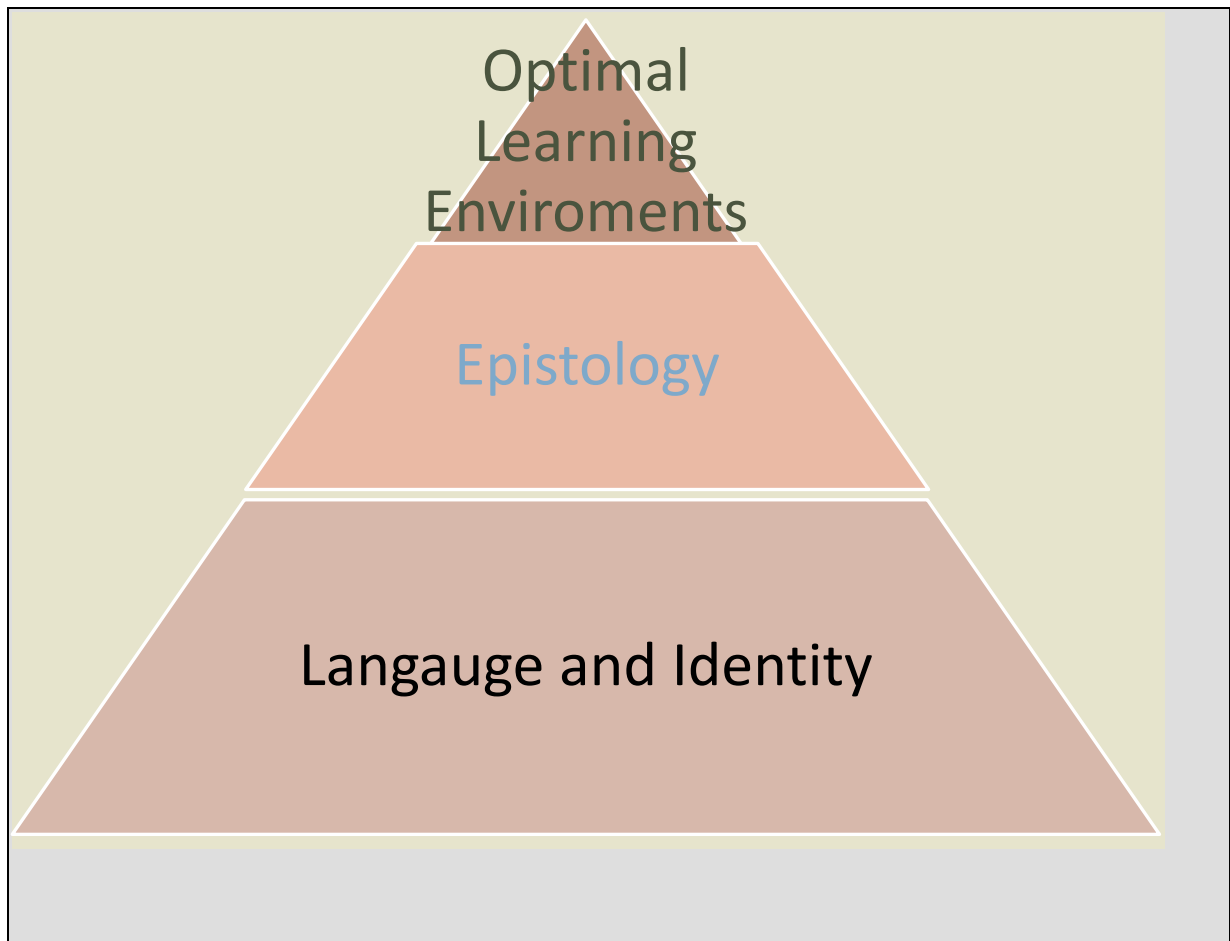
In Chapter 1 I used the quotation by Newman (1852 in Ker, 1976) as a premise for the argument that part of the role of a university education is to raise the moral and intellectual tone of society. That is, a Newmanian perspective was used to support the assumption regarding the convergence of the phenomena of language and identity as conceived in this study. The assumption was conceptualised on the basis

that language is linked to cognition and critical literacy, which are further connected to the notion of critical consciousness. In this conceptualisation identity is associated with affective factors, which include morality. For purposes of this study morality was categorized as a construct that is related to critical moral consciousness. I posit the view here and elsewhere (see Chapter 2), that critical moral consciousness is a significant aspect of ontological development that includes motivation and meta-cognition. In turn, ontological development plays an important role in the creation of professional identities and the formation of transformative praxis.

The aforementioned resonates with Okri's (2015) views that, "education ought to educate us to understand our world, instilling confidence [without which we will] fail to achieve our true potential." In his impassioned plea, which he referred to as a summons, he emphasised the need for inculcating in our students the consciousness of, "the radiant truth that begins with self...the awakening of a people to their sleeping greatness."

The data demonstrated that there is an inter-play between language-related and identity-related factors. In certain instances it was clear that language-related challenges acted as a barrier to epistemological access and cognition. The role of self-regulatory practices, however, demonstrated how these could be countered. In that regard, some of the data provided a solution to some of the problems. These practices, as revealed through the themes and categories highlighted in Chapter 4, Theme 5, give an indication of how the afore-mentioned constructs have, in some instances, contributed to students' ability to gain epistemological access. They have also played a role in their ontological development of the students in terms of their ability to take ownership of their own learning.

The recommendation here – which is also supported by the responses of the participants – is that epistology is a critical theory construct which should be factored into the creation of an enabling teaching and learning support curriculum in pursuit of the creation of OLE's as visually depicted below:



**Figure 7: OLEs**

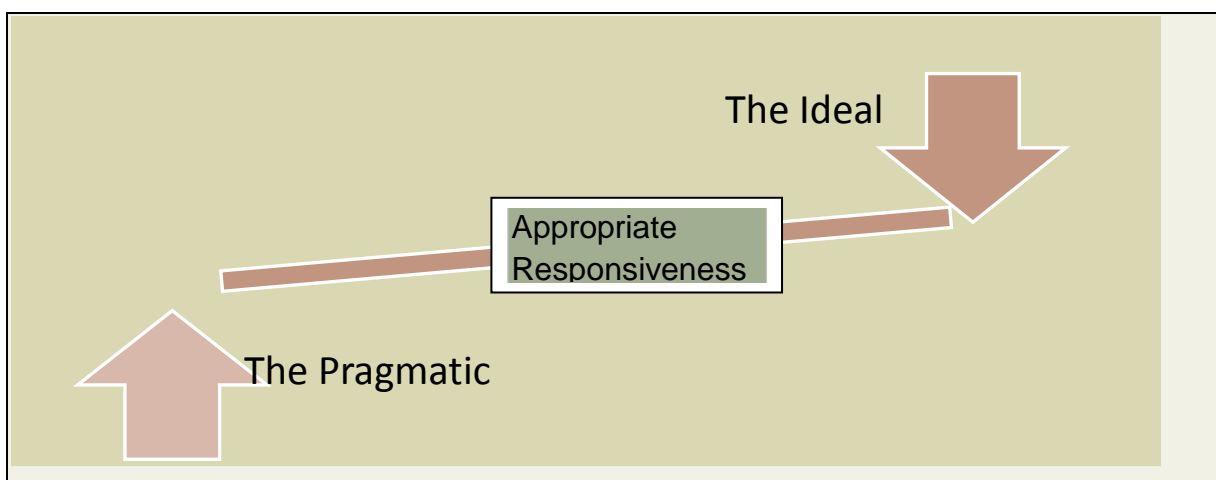
### **6.2.2 PILLAR 2: THE PRAGMATIC IDEALIST IN EDUCATION (PIE) = APPROPRIATE RESPONSIVENESS (AR) STRATEGY**

The PIE approach asserts that striving towards the ideal (I) in Education should make provision for a pragmatic (P) response to situational dictates so as to facilitate appropriate responsiveness (AR). This formulation can be presented as:  $PIE = AR$ . This observation is particularly relevant for the language paradox where, as revealed by the data, the Ideal was that most of the participants, who are L2 speakers of English, would prefer to be taught in their Home Language. However, the findings gleaned from the data show that contextual realities dictate otherwise.

In this regard the recommendation is an empowerment strategy that would entail making provision for the reality of codification and ensuring that students are equipped with the appropriate SKAVs (Skills, Knowledge, Attitudes and Values) that will position them for academic success. This is a familiar concept the difference

here however, is that in these envisaged tutor spaces there would be adequate opportunities for specific exposure to the academic culture while also factoring in the cultural capital they bring into the teaching and learning context. As pointed out earlier, the contextual realities of the academia have a bearing on the portraiture and performance of the BFP cohort. The argument presented here is that these realities require an appropriate responsive strategy that would contribute towards the creation of optimal learning environments while pursuing the ideal of a counter-hegemonic strategy.

The following is a visual representation of the PIE=AR pillar.



**Figure 8: Pillar 2**

### 6.2.3 PILLAR 3: CRITICAL THEORY SYNERGISED STUDENT SUPPORT (CT3S) SYSTEM

The use of tutor support featured prominently in some of the responses. The support system was lauded on one hand:

**Y3s2:** *You know when we are with the tutors we discuss the questions that we don't understand..."*

**Y2s2:** *I think programs like tutoring if they can form a group that can help us...*

**Y3s2:** *Most of the time I've been attending tutorials and I find that the tutorials helped me a lot... I think it's gonna help. I think that right now they're just gonna have to come up with an option that let the tutorial class be compulsory. Coz now they'll tell us, here's the tutor but then there are no classes for tutorials. So now coping with that thing is not easy...In our first*

*year it was compulsory so that's how we developed the eager [ness] to go to tutorials."*

**Y3s2:** *Yes, ok tutorials, coz in my 1<sup>st</sup> year, in [name of module] the tutor was helping so much and if you have a problem she was always there, but since then they'll tell you that there's a tutor and the contacts and everything but then you have to book and when you go there then the person is not available so you just give up the person is not responding sometimes*

The above student aired mixed views about tutoring while on the other hand there were responses that were overtly critical of tutor support:

**Y1s1:** *We're not the same, some people are struggling, although there are tutors like they won't be patient with you and they just call something out and*

Both the lauding and critique are pertinent points to consider in pursuing an effective critical theory student support system that includes tutoring. On the one hand, the participants' negative responses should be seen as an injunction to review and structure support systems in ways that will not only be responsive to students' needs but that will also ensure functionality and efficacy. They should also be critically evaluated with regard to their validity and implications for efficiency.

In view of the responses that were given to the various questions, and in particular those that pertained to the way in which participants required support, I posit the view of a multi-pronged and synergised student support system which would also factor in the technological shift in education as discussed in Chapter 2. This view is partially supported by the collective responses of lecturers and students, my own knowledge gained experientially in my capacity as a curriculum practitioner, and through explorations of theoretical knowledge about a scholarly approach to tutoring and pedagogically appropriate student support (Neary and Winn, 2008).

While the concept of multi-dimensionality in student support is not new, I want to foreground and highlight the significance of a synergized student support system. In this view of student support, emphasis is placed on a contextually-dictated and systemically orchestrated support system which should be underpinned by a systemic provision of equitable learning experiences for all students.



This support system is undergirded by inclusivity and cognizance of the multi-dimensional and holistic nature of support. Ben Okri's (2015) view on the issue came through, albeit tangentially, during his address when he noted:

“We need an education that...awakens [students'] genius rather than one that merely fills them with facts.”

For the context of this study, this argument means that there should be a balance in the education offering that makes provision for critical support that does not create a dependence and entitlement mentality. Instead, this system should foster a culture of critical consciousness that takes into account the language and identity-related challenges with a view to reinforcing an appropriate independent learning capacity.

A further feature of the recommended CT3S system is its prioritisation of the assumption that if one part of the whole system is dysfunctional, it affects the effective functioning of the whole system. The reason for drawing attention to this feature is to emphasise the importance of ensuring that every component of the system functions effectively as it ought to. In this case, students and supporters are regarded as pivotal parts of a system where individual parts have to perform at optimal level to ensure the success of the whole system. In this system, and within the context of this study, this recommendation also entails a customised promotion and cultivation of meta-cognition, self-management, and self-regulatory practices and praxis.

The inherent critical pedagogy imperative is that teachers/educators/tutors should know how their students make meaning so that they can create tutor session curricula that encourage critically conscious students who strive to learn more (Kincheloe et al, 2007:165). As a researcher, I hold the view that exposure to a culture of critical scholarly rigor will cause the pre-service cohort to envision or re-envision themselves as co-creators of and co-contributors to knowledge. With this consciousness they would be equipped as scholarly change-agents who will, as education practitioners find their role in responding to the multifarious educational challenges and identified social ills.

This belief is eloquently and aptly articulated by Kincheloe et al. (2007:166) when they point out that:

Critical teachers are scholars who understand the power implications of various educational reforms. In this context they appreciate the benefits of research especially as they relate to understanding the forces shaping education that fall outside their immediate experience and perception. As these insights are constructed, teachers begin to understand what they know from experience. With this in mind they gain heightened awareness of how they can contribute to the research in education...In the critical school culture ...teachers are seen as researchers and knowledge workers who reflect on their professional needs and current understandings. They are aware of the complexity of the educational process and how schooling cannot be understood outside of the social, historical, philosophical, cultural, economic, political, psychological contexts that shape it. Scholar teachers understand that curriculum development responsive to students needs is not possible when it fails to account for these contexts.

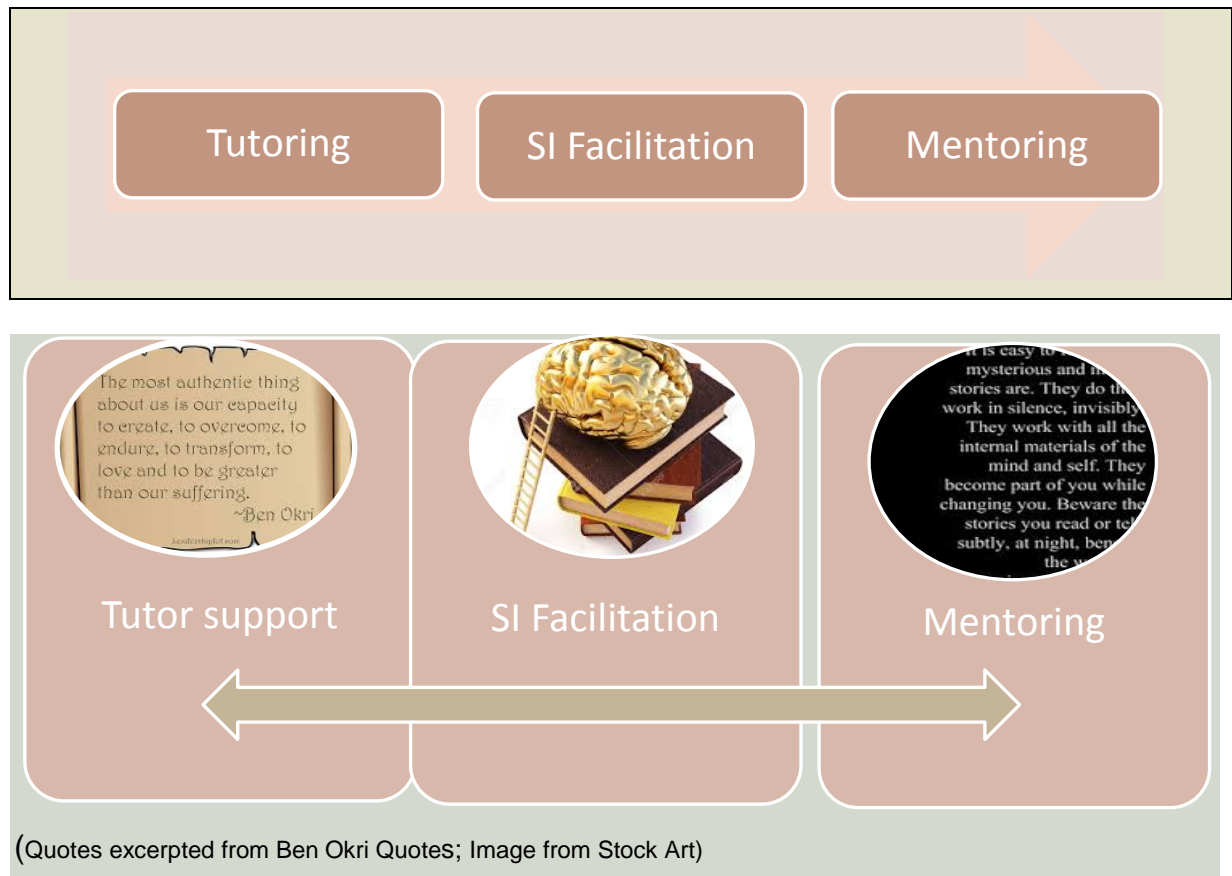
### 6.2.3.1 Constituents of the CT3S

The academia conventionally provides student support in a variety of ways however, for purposes of the context of the study I will only foreground the ones below in relation to their significance within the agenda and orientation of the study:

- **Tutors** are envisioned as a pivotal part in the provision of synergistic academic support that should include research and critical engagement with the underlying agenda of inculcating a culture of critical consciousness as per the agenda of the study (Freire, 1970; Rall, 2002; Kincheloe et al, 2007; Kincheloe, 2008).
- **Mentors** are regarded as ideally positioned to offer a wide range of contextually-dictated support services including where applicable, psychological support with the intention of promoting and driving a transformative and critical emancipatory agenda through critical moral consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, Mezirow, 2008;
- **SI Facilitators-** are envisioned as supporters who provide discipline-specific support that is intended to serve as scaffolding opportunities for knowledge and content assimilation and production. The support should be for facilitators to create disciplinary epistemological access for students outside of the lecture-hall context. This is also meant to provide students

with opportunities for asking discipline-specific questions in a non-intimidating environment.

Below is a diagrammatic representation of the CT3S system. The diagram has been adapted for contextual illustrative purposes:



**Figures 9 & 10: Pillar 3**

Tutors, in this context, are regarded as key staff members who should co-ordinate and provide ongoing scholarly and reflective support. Within the CT3S, tutors should be regarded as the primary facilitators of support who will collaborate with mentors and SI Facilitators to ensure that appropriate support synergised is provided to students. The appropriate holistic support would entail looking specifically at and foregrounding the factors that contribute towards epistemological access and the ontological development of students under their care. Slabbert and Hattingh (2009:49) echo my sentiments about the objective of holistic student support by stating that: "the aim of education is to empower students/learners to maximise - completely develop and fully utilise their human potential [fundamental human virtue]

through facilitating life-long learning [resolving real-life challenges] in order to create a safe, sustainable and prosperous future for us all.”

That is to say, within this conceptualisation tutors should approach their role from a social justice, critical emancipatory and transformative learning perspective. This will entail a reflectivity that constantly interrogates and critiques the appropriateness of their practices in contributing towards the creation of enabling learning environments. In addition, student supporters should see themselves, as co-constructors of knowledge that is undergirded by a philosophy of critical consciousness and critical moral consciousness as these constructs are conceived of in this study. Ideally, tutors should be selected on the basis of their passion and demonstrable propensity for critical and scholarly enquiry for personal developmental purposes and in pursuance of a social justice agenda.

### **6.2.3.2 Language and epistemological access within the CT3S**

Language has been regarded as a key factor in facilitating epistemological access in this in this study. Epistemological access has to do with, “providing students with opportunities to understand the context in which particular domains of knowledge are constructed and to construct knowledge in these ways themselves” (McKenna, 2010:8). This perspective is also in keeping with the post-modernist notion of learning as being a process of transformation that also implies a change in identity (Mezirow, 2000). As such, the study perspective has been that the academic institution is strategically positioned to explore the manner in which this transformation is actualised and to expose students to a holistic epistemology (Miller, 1997) as part of its mandate.

As pointed out previously, the envisaged success of the CT3S hinges on an awareness of the significance of a synergistic approach to student support. Synergy, in this instance, refers to the whole system’s ability to accomplish more than what a sum of the parts can accomplish. It further takes into account the importance of team efforts and the recognition that none of us as individuals is as good as each of us in collaboration and as a team (Senge,1990). According to Senge, synergy is the highest activity of life which creates untapped alternatives. It values and explores the mental, emotional and psychological differences between people. It involves the

individual's interactions with other constituents of the system which entails systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models and building shared vision.

Consequently, part of the purpose of this support system should be to dispense with the notion of monolithic English, which according to Blommaert (2010), creates an order of indexicality that accords a high status to and favours the language practices of white L1 speakers of English. This is confirmed by the responses of students who felt othered and less than in classrooms where they had to engage in the presence of L1 speakers. The tutor spaces would then, in cognition of these ideological orientations and wherever possible and applicable allow for linguistic support through trans-languaging (Williams, 1996; Makalela, 2015), code-switching (Cook, 1991), and heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981).

To summarise, the envisaged advantages of the CT3S for the creation of optimal learning environments are:

- Participatory collaboration and collegial engagement
- Responsibility and concern for social justice
- Personal and professional development
- Scholarly critique
- Reflectivity and reflexivity

The relevance of all this for purposes of this thesis is that it is in congruence with the study's focus of placing an emphasis on holistic development, particularly as it relates to the members of the pre-service teacher cohort. This is because of their position as those who have the potential to turn the tide of the status quo of education as Foundation Phase teachers. This further positions them for ensuring that the right foundation for facilitating multi-modal epistemological access and holistic ontological development is built into the lives of the learners that will be placed in their care. It is also envisioned that structured and synergised holistic support will serve the purpose of empowering them for their own development, so that they will be able to empower their learners from a position of wholeness and wellness. The theoretical thread that connects the elements of this responsive support agenda is that of the Transformative Paradigm as part a bricoleuric framework.

### 6.3 WHAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT?

In addition, expectations *vis a vis* the reality, such as institutional/faculty/departmental needs vs tutor capacity and tutor-tutee ratios or mentor-mentee, should be borne in mind. Best practices, such as those reflected through the Finnish success story, along with policy implications and their relevance to and contextual implications for practice should also be taken into account. The value accorded to quality teacher training and the teacher's position contributed towards the country's success.

The recommendations he presented, as outlined below, are worth noting and bear further relevance for the transformational agenda of this thesis:

- The prioritisation of education at a national policy level;
- Wide participation in national and municipal curriculum development;
- Positive media visibility for purposes of enhancing the education system
- Strengthening of teacher education faculties and departments
- Paying attention to improved work conditions and salaries of teachers
- Enhancing the competencies of school leaders and administrators
- Development of school infrastructure

The above are in consonance with the study's view of effecting an ethos of quality teacher education at various levels as part of inculcating a *modus operandi* of critical consciousness in Foundation Phase Education. Of further significance for this study, is the fact that teacher-researchers advocate developing a classroom community in which all the participants are responsible for critical analysis and reflexivity (Kincheloe et al., 2007).

By extension, as part of the strengthening of teacher-training objective and agenda, this would also include tutor sessions as hubs of critical consciousness and spaces for the cultivation of the principles of critical moral consciousness as part of students' graduate attributes. In addition to the above, provision should also be made for the creation of reflective spaces for support providers. These spaces can be created through reflective questions (Kincheloe et al., 2007) that probe critical awareness pertaining to strengths, skills, and competencies that are congruent with support

offered. These reflective spaces would allow for self-critique that promotes personal holistic development on the part of the educators/supporters as well.

In addition, a critical theory approach to student support would also entail taking into account inclusive values such as considering student differences, taking into account diversity factors and practicing fairness, allowing for equitable class participation and raising awareness about support and guidance. The findings have revealed that even though the students who have been selected as participants in this study displayed similar traits and characteristics, they were not a homogenous group. This means that the support system should take these nuances into consideration.

Support sessions should be spaces where students do not experience othering on the basis of their accent or limited English language proficiency. As pointed out by a lecturer who was one of the participants, there should be no linguistic arrogance. In addition, there should be no discrimination on the basis of ideological differences or any other differences. Students should thus be exposed to an environment of critical tolerance where they realise that it is possible to differ without animosity and acrimony or fear or recriminations.

The support sessions should thus be critical spaces that allow students the opportunity to present their opinions and add their voices to critical debates or express themselves freely in relation to the subject under discussion. In addition these should be spaces that should provide opportunities for the exploration of ideas of how they can make meaningful contributions towards changing the status quo of wide-spread societal anomalies and how they can, as educational practitioners contribute towards the restoration of moral rectitude and societal regeneration.

Students should be made aware of the different components of the support system, so that they can fully utilise the support structures to their advantage in order to facilitate their academic success. This means that the members of the support system should be *au fait* with all the services that are on offer in order for them to make appropriate referrals and or cross-referrals.

A strong emphasis should be placed on fostering a spirit of holistic excellence. Mediocrity should not be tolerated and there should be a focus on the inculcation of a culture of holistic excellence in the students in preparation for their being

dispensers and imparters of knowledge to their learners. There should, in general, be a passion for upholding a high level of conduct accountability and sessions should be characterised by an infusion of high levels of critical consciousness.

In the final analysis, the recommended synergised student support system should be tailored according to situational dictates. However, regardless of the situational structure, the overall objective should be to ensure that it is contextually responsive in creating critical hubs and optimal learning environments for students' holistic success.

#### **6.4 POSSIBLE FURTHER RESEARCH**

The recommendations that have been presented in this chapter point towards the need for further research. The areas of further possible research, though not comprehensive, are identified as follows:

- The impact of the components of the three PoET's approach, with specific focus on the Black L2 BFP cohort, through longitudinal and tracer studies.
- The implications for transformative praxis within the BFP as education practitioners in the Foundation Phase through the inculcation and actualisation of a culture of critical consciousness.
- The creation of holistic critical teaching and learning hubs and implications for transformative praxis.
- The contribution of critical emancipatory research theory and a bricoleuric approach to responsiveness and ultimate societal transformation.
- The applicability and possible contextual relevance of the Finnish success story for the South African context.

#### **6.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter proffered responsive recommendations pertaining to the issues that were raised in the preceding chapters. These were presented as the bricoleuric **3 Pillars of Educational Transformation (PoET)** approach. The three pillars that were presented as conceptual recommendations within a culture of criticality that has implications for a pragmatic application are:



- **Epistology** – This refers to a holistic approach taking into account epistemology and ontology as convergent components in the creation of teaching and learning environments. This should be done in relation to contextual dictates and as such cannot be based on prescriptive measures. What this means is that curriculum designers and developers should be allowed to use their discretion regarding their response to a needs-analysis driven ‘epistemological response’ that takes into account both language and identity factors in the design of curricula.
- **PIE=AR strategy** – An overall responsiveness to the language issue as it pertains specifically to the BFP cohort. The idea posited through this strategy is to work with the realities of situational language and institutional contexts and dictates while still working towards the ideal of MT/HL instruction.
- **CT3S strategy** – The Critical Theory Synergised Students Support System is geared towards fostering and inculcating a culture of critical consciousness that takes into account the language and identity-related challenges that are faced by this cohort. This support system, as envisioned in this study, would be facilitated through various hubs of criticality that would better position these students for the acquisition of the graduate attributes that ought to foreground change agency.

In this chapter I presented three overarching bricoleuric recommendations that I coined as the Pillars of Educational Transformation (PoET) approach. In the next and final chapter of this thesis I provide a summary of the study which will also serve as a thematic thread that links the phenomena of language and identity in relation to the academic portraiture and performance of the cohort that forms the fulcrum of this study.

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## CHAPTER 7

### REVIEW AND SUMMATION OF THE STUDY

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#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter I use the summary of pivotal points of the study as presented in five chapters to create a cohesive thread of the thematic concerns and motifs of the study. I also take a further look at the bricoleur's perspective and how it was applied in this study. In summation, I reflect briefly on my research journey and I finally conclude the study with closing comments.

#### 7.2 REVIEW OF THE STUDY

The section below is review of that constitutes summaries of the chapters of the study.

##### 7.2.1 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1

In chapter 1 I used, as a point of departure for the study, the quotation by Newman (1852 in Ker, 1976). His book on "The Idea of a University" presents accurate and instructive views and ideas about the purpose of a university education. His assertion that the purpose of a university is to raise both the intellectual and moral tone of society provides an apt and instructive premise for the study's views about the convergence of language and identity. In this regard, I pointed out in chapter 1 that, for purposes of the argument presented in this thesis, language is linked to the intellect and identity to morality.

I asserted that language, as a cognitive factor, has implications for epistemological access, while identity, as an affective factor, has implications for the ontological development of the Black BEd Foundation Phase cohort as students at a previously white institution, the University of Pretoria. I also stated that the study was intended as a response to the EU/DHET mandate to strengthen the qualitative offering of the BEd Foundation Phase programme. I pointed out that because of the paradigmatic dictates of the study and the theoretical concerns pertaining to the pre-service teachers, the fulcrum of the study would have critical emancipatory and transformative leanings.

A historical background of teacher education was provided to situate the study and to provide a background of the study within the South African educational context. The study also looked at the present situational realities that constitute part of the educational canvas the study seeks to make a contribution to.

The assumptions were posited as follows:

- Language and identity jointly have implications for the academic performance of students because of the potentially debilitating effects of codification (Bernstein, 1990) and meritocracy (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004).
- Power relations are embodied in classroom communication (Taylor, 1994; Bourdieu, 1997; Mayes, 2010).
- Under-preparedness has cyclical connotations which confirm the connection between education and the economy (Bernstein, 1990; Teese & Polesel, 2003; Jensen, 2009).

The Finnish success story was referred to, as presented by Salhberg (2007) and corroborated through the lecture by Prof Jukka Alava (2014), for its relevance in the South African education context. The advances of transformation that have been made by the South African state were discussed with a view to look at the inherent potential for transformation (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). The arguments presented by Jansen (2010) and Minister Blade Nzimande (2014) about education were also brought into focus in order to emphasise the need for responsive solutions that would bear the desired fruits of transformation. Furthermore, the key question for this enquiry was posited as:

“How does the convergence of language and identity affect the academic performance and portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase students?”

The related sub-questions emanating from this were:

- How do Black Foundation Phase (L2) students cope with English as a medium of instruction in an institution of higher learning?
- How does language influence cognition (knowledge reception and production) in academic performance?

- What effects do students' identities have on their ontological development?

The overview, as presented in Chapter 1, thus served as a basis and backdrop for the study.

## **7.2.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2**

In Chapter 2 I reviewed the literature and discussed the conceptual framework of the study.

Within the context of this study, the phenomenon of language was associated with literacy practices which facilitate the reception and production of knowledge (Christie, 2002; Halliday, 1989). It was also regarded as a means towards epistemological access. In this regard, language posed itself as a barrier that oftentimes made it difficult for the students to perform at optimal level.

The study set out to look at the validity and implications of the assertions by Street (1995), Gee (1990), and Boughey (2005) respectively, as they pertain to the convergence of language and identity with regard to the academic performance of the BFP cohort. In this study, identity was presented as the ability of the students to constructively critique their situations with the positive effect of contributing towards their own ontological development (Taylor, 1994; Mayes, 2010; McKenna, 2010)). An association was also made between identity and critical moral consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004), personal transformation, and renaissance (Okri, 2015).

The background of teacher education was looked at (De Vos et al., 2005:11, Bergh, 1995; Davies, 1991; Rajah, 1993), including the situational realities of teaching in South Africa (Teacher's league of South Africa, 1991; Jansen, 2011; Chrisholm, 2010). This was brought into focus to indicate a possible added dimension to the portraiture of this cohort. The deduction made was that students enter into this career path by default, thus having implications for their performance (epistemology and morale (ontology)). The potential impact on performance was looked at in view of the link between motivation, staying power, and performance (Walhstrom & Williams, 2002).

The study problematized the convergence of language and identity and situated it within the developmental context of the strengthening of the BEd Foundation Phase

Education as it pertains specifically to the Black cohort. This underlying developmental concern necessitated a transformational approach towards the convergence of language and identity in academia with specific reference to the BFP student cohort. The role of this convergence in academic performance and appropriate graduate attributes was shown to bear relevance for the students in this study. It was argued, specifically that the factors that have a bearing on the students' academic performance and holistic development should be explored.

In a nutshell, the review of the literature and discussion of the conceptual framework focused on the transformational agenda of this thesis, with a view to proffer insights into solutions for the problems that were linked to epistemology and ontology. This transformational agenda is tacitly supported by Rall (2000) when he states that, in essence, educators have a mandate to teach students to attain success in academia. He also states that, beyond that educators have ideological agendas that reflect their orientation in relation to whether they adhere to traditional standards or whether they adopt progressive agendas. This orientation was further revealed through the concept of the bricolage (Kincheloe et al., 2007) which, for purposes of the study, was conceptualised as a multi-perspectival and multi-theoretical tapestry that is held together by the Transformative Paradigm. The theories that are associated with this paradigm, namely, Critical Theories and Transformative Learning theories, were discussed in relation to the study.

While it was pointed out that the link between education and the economy was not part of the study's direct focus, it was still important to highlight this link because of the PDI status of the BFP cohort under study. This is because the cyclical implications of education, as seen from a social justice agenda perspective, warrant appropriate holistic responsiveness. The concern for quality education is not just a concern for the improvement of education, but also a response to the underlying assumption that quality education has implications for the improvement of students' living conditions and consequently for the improvement of academic performance and eventually for the economy (Jensen, 2009). The link between education and the economy was confirmed by Jansen (2010) in his critique of the disjuncture between the enormous expenditure on education and the poor standards of quality in South Africa.

The asset-based approach was highlighted over a deficit approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006) in this study, since adopting an asset-based approach allowed for taking into account the student's tenacity and resilience in making it to university in spite of their disadvantaged backgrounds. The data showed the various ways in which the participants have demonstrated the utility of an asset-based approach. Students evinced coping strategies and fortitude in adapting to unfamiliar terrain and surviving all the odds to enter university and their ability to further survive in a 'codified' environment (Marshall, 2010).

For purpose of this study it can be said that an asset-based approach (Ebersöhn and Eloff, 2006) was presented as harnessing students' strengths in order to 'counter' the challenges of the dominant culture of academia. The need for paradigmatic shifts and attitudinal adjustments in terms of inculcating a culture of 'belonging' and agency was also emphasised (Taylor, 1994; Kincheloe et al., 2007). In particular, the literature pointed towards the fact that the BFP cohort should not see themselves as mere pre-service teachers but as critically conscious researchers of societal transformation from a critically empowered position (Freire, 1970; 1994; Mahlomaholo, 2009; Kincheloe et al., 2007). Furthermore, they should be critically conscientized to envision themselves as Foundation Phase educators who are change agents in the making and who have a mandate to lay a good and solid foundation of education through transformative praxis (Mezirow, 2000).

### **7.2.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3**

This chapter paid detailed attention to the paradigmatic issues pertaining to data collection. Furthermore, I looked at the relationship between the researcher and research subject(s) with specific regards to the issue of values, and as they pertained to this research with the view to validating the research design. Justification was provided for according narrative a primary position with regards to choice of participants and how this methodological choice informed the research design as a whole.

I validated the choice of interviews as the most commonly used method for generating data in qualitative research (Greef, 2005), by pointing out that interviews were also a convenient way of overcoming both distance and time in this context. In particular, multi-layered interviews were used in this study for their appropriateness

with regard to the evidence that this study sought to verify about the phenomena that have been linked to the academic portraiture and performance of the BFP cohort.

#### **7.2.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4**

In Chapter 4 I discussed the data collection processes and the data that was accrued. The responses of the interviews were presented verbatim in relation to the key concerns of the study. In some instances, the responses corroborated the assumptions while in others some of the assumptions were refuted.

The interview questions pertaining to codification were structured in a manner that was intended to examine the bearing of the participants' exposure to the English language in the pre-university context. A key finding explore in this chapter was that: there is a codification system that disadvantages those who enter the system of higher education from low socio-economic backgrounds while privileging those from higher income groups.

Verification of this assumption's relevance for the cohort was revealed when they were requested to discuss their exposure to the English language in the pre-university social context and school-context respectively. Even though their responses were varied, there were commonalities with regard to their exposure to both contexts. Their responses provided evidence that students who had had limited prior exposure to English were challenged when they had to access/retrieve information in an unfamiliar code (Bernstein, 1990; Jensen, 2009). This was also supported by the data that was gleaned from the interviews with the lecturers.

The participants' responses pointed to the fact that they especially struggled with expressing themselves in English in classrooms where their peers were L1 speakers of English. This brought to the fore the role of power relations and their bearing on students' participation and performance (Mayes, 2010). In addition, in some instances, the data reflected that students found it difficult to comply with academic writing standards in spite of the fact that there was a module that was specifically designed to assist students with those issues because everything was done in English. Three themes and their categories emerged that confirmed the connection between language and identity in the cohort's academic portraiture and performance.

## 7.2.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5

In this chapter, the research findings were discussed in relation to both the sub-research questions and the key research question. As mentioned throughout the study, students who formed part of this cohort were more often than not L2 speakers of English who were also likely to be 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students. These two factors were related to the conceptualisations of language and identity in the study. In the instance of language, the data confirmed that they had limited or no prior exposure to English as the language of learning and teaching. The ramifications of codification, within the Bernsteinian (1990) frame of reference, were confirmed.

This was also supported by lecturer **W1** when she pointed out the initial reticence of the students was informed by their minority language status in a previously white HE institution. The effect of power relations and the observation that the classroom/lecture hall is a site for power dynamics (Bourdieu, 1997; Mayes, 2010) also came into play. A tacit assumption was made about the effect/fear of being “othered” that the students felt, even though it was not overtly or explicitly stated in the interviews. For example, some of the participants expressed feelings of disempowerment, which made it difficult for them to participate actively in class.

The data also revealed that within a codified system of meritocracy (McNamee & Miller Jr, 2004), those students who had not had the advantage of prior exposure to codes that are compatible with the codes used in academia often fell into the ‘at-risk’ category, which in itself carried a potential for stigmatising them further. The participants also confirmed that they attended under-resourced schools in the past, which did not adequately prepare them to cope with the language-related challenges of academia. As a consequence, these students were ill-prepared for compliance with the standards of academic learning.

The effect of these language-related experiences was then shown to have bearing on identity construction for the students, which further impacted their performance. That is, data provided evidence of the convergence of identity and language as factors that contribute towards the performance of the BFP cohort. The cohort, however, also confirmed tenets of an asset-based approach by demonstrating the capability to draw from their inner reserves to evince positive attributes like meta-cognition and self-regulation. This was seen as evidence of an ontological



development in circumventing language-related challenges, thus positioning the BFP cohort as critically conscious change-agents who, with further appropriate support, can engage in transformative praxis.

The summary for Chapter 6 is not provided because this has been done at the end of Chapter 6.

### **7.3 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS**

My research journey started out inadvertently and unwittingly when, as a new academic and a junior lecturer, I was entrusted with the responsibility to equip students that were labelled as 'at-risk' with the requisite skills to succeed academically. The initial assumption was that these students should be taught how to deconstruct academic texts and how to write texts that comply with academic writing standards. However, with the passage of time and through my experience with the students under my tutelage I realized that there were other factors that had to be taken into account in order for them to attain academic success. This led to me researching these factors without realizing that I was actually engaging in reflective and research-informed praxis. At that point, I wrote a reflective/descriptive paper for presentation in 2009, at the College English Association conference. Subsequently, I attempted to write an article that an esteemed professor informed me was atheoretical. In my quest for an appropriate theory with which to grapple with my experiential ideas, I was serendipitously and fortuitously exposed to Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) theory.

At that point, I realized that my ideological orientation was towards holistic student support and a form of social justice education that takes into cognisance all the other issues that should be taken into account in facilitating academic success. I further realized that, in the main, this orientation was situated within a larger and broader paradigm that seeks to bring about transformation through a critical reflexive enquiry stance, namely, the transformative paradigm. In this regard, the view by Newman (1852 in Ker, 1976) that a university is a place where enquiry is expanded, verified, and perfected and where flippancy is regarded as inconsequential and exposed by the collision of minds and knowledge captured the essence of my own contentions about the role of a university.

Consequently, over an extended period, my research journey as a doctoral researcher led me to the discovery of the notion of bricolage as an appropriate tool for the pursuance of the thematic aims and explorations of the assumptions of this study. This was done in keeping with the bricoleurs' perspective, which presents the view that bricoleurs are paradigmatic negotiators who fall into two main categories. That is, those who allow the research process to yield new insights and those who have a grander purpose in mind (Creswell, 2008). In this study, both categories of the bricoleur were pertinent to the purposes of the study, on the one hand, and in conformance with the first category, I had an expectation as a researcher that the data and research process would provide new perspectives. This first category meant that there was a presupposition of open-mindedness that made provision for new theoretical associations and that was not confined to one specific theoretical position. In this case, therefore, I did not have a cast-in-iron theoretical orientation that barred entry to or use of any other theory.

In the second sense of the bricoleur, however, I had pre-conceived ideas about adopting a transformative and emancipatory responsive strategy. This was based upon my own experience of total immersion and exposure leading to language acquisition as well as my view about individual and social transformation. My supposition in the first instance was, therefore, that learning environments and strategies should be geared towards facilitating exposure to the LOLT without taking into account other language strategies. In the second instance I was influenced by my own ideological orientation. Interaction with the research participants and exposure to their language challenges in a mono-linguistic setting, however, as well as exposure to the relevant literature resulted in a paradigmatic shift with regard to my preconceived ideas regarding language. My ideological orientation regarding transformation, however, remained the same.

The combination of paradigmatic shifts, a critical need for responsiveness to the situational realities and information from the findings dictated an attitudinal adjustment which resulted in the PIE =AR approach highlighted in Chapter 6, Pillar 3. There was a circumstantially-dictated agentic emancipatory objective which emanated from the aim of the study to be responsive with regard to the overall research mandate of strengthening the BEd Foundation Phase programme. To this

end, a combination of related theoretical orientations was used to attain the desired pre-determined outcome. The change-agency position of criticality (Kincheloe et al., 2007) and critical emancipatory orientation were deemed as well-suited to the overarching lens of the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2005; Creswell, 2005).

Some of the fresh perspectives that were gained through the research journey came from reviewing the current literature on the topic, which then led me to the need for a multi-theoretical approach. I thus used the Transformative paradigm as an overarching lens that formed the central focal point for Critical Emancipatory Theory, Transformative Learning and Critical Pedagogy (see Chapter 2) to capture a multi-focus approach. In this study, the bricoleur's multi-theoretical perspective was used as part of the qualitative research approach. This was done in alignment with the assertion by Denzin and Lincoln (1995:5) that, "...the multi-theoretical perspective positions the researcher as a theoretical bricoleur who works through and between multiple theoretical paradigms." This was substantiated in the study's multi-perspectival theoretical approach, under the umbrella of the Transformative Paradigm (see Chapter 2) and through the multi-disciplinary strategies that have been presented for appropriate responsiveness (see Chapter 6). Further support for this can be found in the view expressed by Newman (1852 in Ker, 1976) that "the aim of a University is a true enlargement of mind...the power of viewing many things at once." The bricoleuric stance can be regarded as both a tacit support for this assertion and a breaking away from mono-theoretical perspectives.

#### **7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The data collection could have made provision for the prior lived experiences of the participants by sourcing auto-biographical data. This would have allowed me to paint a more d portraiture of the participants. Again, the broader background information would have explained the nuances in some of the responses which could have been attributable to their pre-university experiences. An added limitation was the fact that the interview sessions coincided with examination times. This means that I had to schedule the sessions around their availability in relation to their preparations for the exam and actual exam sittings. A further constraint was that I also had to ensure that my availability was synchronized to theirs. This, at times, had a negative bearing on the sessions.

Also, tutors could have been invited as part of the study's participants to obtain their views regarding their role as tutors, in relation to the perceived views of the participants and the recommendations pertaining to their role. A future study could possibly include *in-situ* visits to the respective classrooms to get a better insight into these environments in relation to some of the claims made in this study.

## 7.5 CLOSING COMMENTS

As part of its intentions this thesis set out to examine a representative sample of the Black African L2 cohort of BEd Foundation Phase pre-service teachers to determine the extent to which language and identity bear relevance for their academic success. To that end I was able to glean information that confirmed that language and identity-related factors bear significant relevance for their portraiture and performance with implications for their academic success. The reality and dominance of English as one of the media of instruction was looked at and this further demonstrated the intersection of these phenomena as it pertains to instruction, deconstruction and construction.

A further intention that was stipulated at the onset of the study was to present recommendations that are aimed at contributing towards the development of strategies that will have a bearing on the retention and successful completion of the BEd programme by the Black BEd Foundation Phase students. The study was further aimed at making a contribution towards the promotion of a culture of continuous and consistent multi-layered reflectivity and critical consciousness that will culminate in a scholarly and equitable critique as a potentially far-reaching critical emancipatory empowerment strategy. With regard to the afore-mentioned I made recommendations, in Chapter 6, in an attempt to contribute towards the realization of these initial intentions.

The findings of the study confirmed the assumptions that were made about language and identity, including further demonstrating the impact of the inter-play between language and identity. The data further pointed to the need for a bricoleuric response, as presented in Chapters 2 and 6. As a critical emancipatory academic researcher, it is my hope that this study will contribute towards the transformation of Foundation Phase Education through the creation of critical optimal learning environments as posited in the recommendations of this study.

In summation, at the onset of the study I posited that the purpose of education is to raise the intellectual and moral tone of society. I then made a connection between language and the intellect and subsequently with epistemological access. The phenomenon of identity was associated with morality and ontological development as they relate to the education cohort that is prepared to assume their positions in the profession that is popularly referred to as the “mother of all professions.” This interconnectedness yielded the construct of epistology, which was further associated with the inculcation of a culture of critical consciousness, critical moral consciousness, and transformative praxis.

It is envisaged that this study will make a substantive contribution to the corpus of knowledge as it pertains specifically to pre-service teacher preparation and, in particular, the BEd Foundation Phase programme, with specific regard to the convergence of language and identity as it pertains to performance and portraiture. It is further envisioned that this contribution will ultimately cascade and transcend to all facets and spheres of the societal spectrum to bring about transformation, particularly the type of transformation that will bring about the realisation of the African Renaissance.

The transformation for which this thesis is making a case is in alignment with the Okrian (2015) view that we are co-creators of our world. His vision is that, in order for us to successfully accomplish our mandate as co-creators we have to fully (in our entirety and in all the dimensions of our being) embrace who we are. My views are in consonance with the views he presents as a summons to, inter alia, strive towards who we ought to be through discipline, vision, intuition, spiritual values, toughness, perseverance, flexibility, listening, humility of asking for advice, and the wisdom of implementing good advice.

It is my hope, as a researcher, that this study will make a contribution towards the realization of this ideal. In keeping with the thesis’ focus I share my thoughts (the cognitive) and sentiments (the affective) through the poems (in Appendix 3). These serve as an illustration of the postulation I posited in the recommendations regarding the connection between the PoET, as the acronym representing the pillars of a transformation agenda and the bricoleur researcher in the position of a poet who is making a clarion call for multi-layered emancipatory transformative action.

Finally, this thesis, in its pursuit to contribute towards the improvement of the quality of teacher education, as it pertains specifically to the BFP pre-service cohort, has pulled together the threads of various disciplines and paradigmatic orientations. These threads, in their various nuances, encompassed the fields of education, sociology, philosophy, psychology and linguistics to weave together a kaleidoscopic tapestry of multi-theoretical and multi-logical knowledge. Thus, through such weaving, aptly illustrating the multi-layered concept of bricolage as a responsive critical responsive strategy in practice.

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# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1**  
Letters of consent

**Appendix 2**  
Concession letters

**Appendix 3**  
Reflective Poems

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Open Invitation/Consent Letter to BEd Foundation Phase students



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Date: September 2013  
To: BEd Foundation Phase students

**Re: Invitation/Consent to participate in a PhD (ECE) research project**

Dear Student

This serves as an open invitation to participate in a research project that will be conducted in the department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research is:

**“Language and Identity in the Academic Performance and Portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase Students”** The research will focus on language and identity and how these two factors influence the academic performance of Black BEd Foundation Phase students. It is envisaged that the research will provide information that will make a contribution towards the academic success of Black Foundation Phase students. The study is thus significant because it is aimed at contributing towards the improvement of the quality of pre-service Foundation Phase education.

Your participation in this research will entail structured, semi-structured and open-ended 1 hour interview sessions. You will be provided with details about the number of interview sessions, the nature of the sessions as well as the venue at which they will be conducted.

Furthermore, you will be required to write a structured mini essay. You will be provided with guidelines for writing the essay and you will be requested to submit at an agreed-upon time. I promise you that the information obtained from this study will be treated in the strictest confidentiality possible and it will be used for the purposes of this research only. Your names will not be revealed; wherever applicable, pseudo names will be used. Please note that you will be at liberty to withdraw your participation at any stage, should you no longer wish to participate in the research.

The information obtained from this research will be made available to you and can be used, in a controlled manner, by the University to make a contribution towards the quality of the BEd Foundation Phase programme. It is envisaged that the research will make a positive contribution towards Foundation Phase education.

I thank you, in anticipation of your participation in this research.

Yours sincerely

.....  
PBN (Tshetlo) Maseko  
PhD Student/Researcher: University of Pretoria  
Cell: 0834848718

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Please note that under no circumstances will your identity as an interview participant be made known to any parties/organizations that may be involved in the research process.

Student's signature:.....

Date:.....

Researcher's signature .....: Date:.....

Supervisor's signature ..... Date:.....  
Yours Sincerely

.....  
PBN Tshetlo  
PhD Student/Researcher: University of Pretoria  
Cell: 0834848718



**Request for Permission:  
Letter to the Head of Department – Early Childhood Education  
University of Pretoria**



Date: September 2013

To: HOD Prof Cycil Hartell – Department of Early Childhood Education  
University of Pretoria

**Re: Permission for student participation in a PhD (ECE) research project**

Sir

This serves to request permission to conduct research in the Early Childhood Education department. The title of my research is: **“Language and Identity as Convergent Components in the Academic Performance and Portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase Students”**

The research will involve 9 Black BEd Foundation Phase students who will be selected according to the following broad criteria:

- L2 speakers of English with one (or more) of the 9 Black African languages as home language.
- They should be classified as Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs).
- Their pre-university education should have been in a PDI school specifically designated for such individuals and preferably situated in an area for PDIs (township and rural area).
- They should, preferably, but not necessarily be 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students.

It is envisaged that the research will provide information that will make a contribution towards the academic success of Black Foundation Phase students so that they will be equipped contribute towards the improvement of Foundation Phase teaching. The significance of the study lies in its aim to contribute towards the provision of pre-service teacher education that will have implications for Foundation Phase education.

I thank you in anticipation of your cooperation of acceding to the request to conduct this research in the Early Childhood Education department. I hope that the information obtained from this research will benefit the department directly by providing valuable insights into contributing towards the quality of education of the cohort under scrutiny in this study, with positive ramifications for Foundation Phase education.

Yours sincerely

.....  
PBN (Tshetlo) Maseko

Researcher/PhD Student: University of Pretoria – Cell: 0834848718

**Request for Permission:  
Letter to the Dean – Faculty of Education – University of Pretoria**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Date: September 2013  
To: The Dean: Prof Irma Eloff – Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria

**Re: Permission for student participation in a PhD (ECE) research project**

Madam

This serves to request permission to conduct research in the Early Childhood Education department of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research is: **“Language and Identity as Convergent Components in the Academic Performance and Portraiture of Black BEd Foundation Phase Students”**

The research is part of a DHET-EU-funded inter-institutional research project. The study will involve 9 Black BEd Foundation Phase students who will be selected according to the following broad criteria:

- L2 speakers of English with one (or more) of the 9 Black African languages as home language.
- They should be classified as Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs).
- Their pre-university education should have been in a PDI school specifically designated for such individuals and preferably situated in an area for PDIs (township and rural area).
- They should, preferably, but not necessarily be 1<sup>st</sup> generation university students.

It is envisaged that the research will provide information that will make a contribution towards the academic success of Black Foundation Phase students so that they will be in a position to contribute towards the improvement of Foundation Phase teaching. The significance of the study lies in its aim to contribute towards the provision of pre-service teacher education that will have implications for Foundation Phase education.

I thank you in anticipation of your cooperation of acceding to the request to conduct this research in the Early Childhood Education department. I hope that the information obtained from this research will benefit the department directly by providing valuable insights into contributing towards the quality of education of the cohort under scrutiny in this study, with positive ramifications for Foundation Phase education.

Yours sincerely

.....  
PBN (Tshetlo) Maseko  
Researcher/PhD Student: University of Pretoria  
Cell: 0834848718

## REFLECTIVE POEMS

**Poem 1: This is my Vision**

My vision and ideal is that one day  
we will not only have look to shores that are far away  
but that our children and their children will point to this nation  
and talk about fore-parents who chartered a way to the destination  
My dream is that trailblazers will rise who, in the midst of and  
against all odds, will be known as those who sacrificed  
self and time to avail resources to build a legacy  
to break shackles of ideological bondages for all posterity  
to rise in liberty above seemingly inescapable adversity  
to soar, through multi-layered knowledge that is emancipatory  
to rise to raise and to be free to live life as it ought to be  
This is my vision: the creation of a cyclical culture  
of critical consciousness

**Poem 2: Break free!**

Who says you have to be chained  
to your past?  
Who says you have to be bound  
never to be free from the torment of what might  
have been? Break free!  
Break free, put the past behind you  
where it cannot  
ever come back to taunt you  
It is a shadow that cannot  
take you captive. Break free!

Refuse the lie, resist the debilitating flow  
that draws you to a disempowered the past  
Break free and run to your tomorrow  
where greatness and prosperity awaits  
Like an oyster that waits to be opened. Break free!

Look closely at yourself and you'll see  
the God-given talents  
that no one can take away because you see,  
you can succeed, you are more than  
a conqueror, so Break free!

Break the fetters of the past  
What was has been  
You have what it takes so you must  
refuse to be bound. No eye has seen  
what lies in store. Now you can so embrace it and Break free!

There is a light that drives away the darkness  
that threatens and seeks to overwhelm  
The light of knowledge that disarms and obliterates the darkness  
The darkness cannot prevail when  
the light shines brightly. So Break free!

Shine on because no-one, nothing can hold you back  
You are an eagle,  
called to soar to great heights, don't look back  
Eagles don't stay on the ground, they fly  
So fly high and rise up to where you belong: Break free!

### Poem 3: Just walk away

Walk away from the past  
Choose to start afresh and to trust  
that there's a new world waiting to be explored  
you have to do is decide to just walk away

No one said it's not easy but you can  
Others have done it, so when  
The path has already been trodden  
Just follow the footprints and walk away  
Walk away, turn your back  
on the pain of memories that try to wreck,  
disempower, destabilise and hold you back  
Follow the directions in the Manual and just walk away

Follow the path that leads to victory  
Don't dwell on any plans that went awry  
You cannot change the past, choose the path of liberty,  
the way of wholeness and soundness and just simply walk away

Stop thinking about all of the mishaps  
and wondering what would have happened if perhaps  
this or that had happened (or not), just continue to press  
forward to the future and discover all of the hidden treasures  
that can only be found when you make up your mind to just walk away.

---oOo---