The Hegemony of English in Primary School Education: South Africa's Language Identity Struggle

by

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DEDICATION

Though you would like to quit, you must persist
Cause where there's a will, there's a way.

The relentless thirst for learning
Is often rewarded to him who is waiting.

Despite the obstacles we face
And all the other challenges in place

Living within God's grace
Will always bring us solace.

I would like to dedicate this mini-dissertation to the Lord above. It is by His grace that all things come to pass.

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary society has seen the English language rise to great heights. It has become the most important language in trade, industry and education. In South Africa, speakers of Indigenous African Languages (IALs) consider English to be indispensable for economic emancipation, despite only a small percentage of the population being fully versed in the language. Moreover, the status of English as a global language and its reputation as the language of opportunity has been reported by researchers as being an enticing incentive for parents to opt for English for their children. However, the hegemony of English has been reported to have adverse effects on IALs and, importantly, on learners in term of their use of the language in the education sector. Despite the many years of enquiry and the numerous policies drafted, mother-tongue education remains an ideal that has not been achieved and English continues to dominate. Therefore, it is important to investigate the current state of affairs and to identify the definite the whys and wherefores of the English hegemony. This mini-dissertation shows that South Africa's language history impacts greatly on parents' choices of language of learning and teaching (LoLT); it makes various recommendations for creating a sound and successful education system.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA: Annual National Assessments

ANC: African National Congress

ARED: Associates in Research and Education Development

ASS: Annual Surveys of Schools

CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CNE: Christian National Education

CoE: Council of Europe

DBE: Department of Basic Education

DoE: Department of Education

ELT: English Language Teaching

HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council

IAL: Indigenous African Languages

IIAL: Incremental Introduction of African Languages

L1: First language or mother-tongue

L2: Second language

LoLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

MLDS: Multilingual Demonstration School

MOI: Medium of Instruction

NLB: National Language Body

NLU: National Lexicography Unit

PANSALB: Pan South African Language Board

PIRLS: Progress in Reading and Literacy Study

PLC: Provincial Language Committee

PRAESA: Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa

SAMCEQ: Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SGB: School Governing Body

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

UNESCO: United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE, PURPOSE OF THE STUDY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language and identity are two concepts that are so tightly interwoven that one characteristic of language use is sufficient to correctly identify a person's membership of a particular group (Tabouret-Keller, 1997:317). Consequently, language does more than just create a person's identity; it also allows for the identification of a speaker's social group membership (Gumperz, 1982:239). This point can easily be illustrated by looking at South Africa which has a society where languages have been used as tools of empowerment and discrimination during the apartheid era to facilitate an ideology of oppression against its non-white population (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004:248). Throughout the history of South Africa, language has been controlled and handled instrumentally (De Kadt, 2005). English and Afrikaans have, consecutively, been foisted upon black South Africans as official languages and further reinforced by their continued use in education as well as for research purposes – thus, leading to the advancement of these languages and the depreciation of others.

Hegemonic ideologies of this type often lead to symbolic domination in institutional practices, such as education (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004:254). Strong opinions are often expressed in the debates on language, especially when assigning prestige and status to a language. These opinions often reflect a group's sentiments with regard to society and culture. Unfortunately, indigenous African languages (IALs) have been viewed negatively by Africans themselves. This negative attitude is said to be engrained

in a terror of social change experienced by the post-colonial elite (Obanya, 1999:89-90). It is feared that minority groups will obtain greater status through the official recognition of their language and, thereby, threaten the rule of the elite. With the struggle related to the language issue, comes a struggle for control and power (Ngugi, 1986:4). In terms of their power, languages do not only allow people to communicate but they also act as influential cultural or linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1993:45).In South Africa English has achieved a high level of cultural/linguistic capital as a result of its global hegemony as well as its status as the language of the British colonisers. For this reason English is said to facilitate a better chance of upward mobility as well as prosperity. Bourdieu believes that once a language has achieved official status, it is said to have great linguistic capital as it will, most likely, be used in the spheres of education, the economy and politics. However, Bourdieu's (1993) notion does not work in the South African context because although South Africa presently has 11 official languages, it is not feasible to say that they all have the benefits/cultural capital associated with official languages (Alexander, 2011). This can be clearly observed in the language situation in the country where English is considered to be the ruling language in trade, industry and education and it is seen as being indispensable for economic emancipation by numerous Indigenous African Language speakers (De wet, 2002:120) - despite the fact that only a small portion of the population is functionally literate in English (Kaschula & De Vries, 2000:3).

According to the South African Demographics Profile of 2016, only 9.6% of South Africa's population has English as a home language (Index mundi, 2016). However, English is widely used in the South African education system and, hence, promotes its cultural hegemony. Moreover, parents from the rural areas seem to regard English as

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the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) as being more beneficial for their children for them to compete on a global stage (Gardiner, 2008). For this reason English as the LoLT is seen by black parents as an opportunity to achieve upward social and financial mobility. Due to its negative effects on education in Indigenous African Languages (IALs), several scholars, such as Neville Alexander, Kathleen Heugh and Kwesi Prah - amongst others, and language practitioners, have explored the issue of English dominance in the education sector. In striving to comprehend this hegemony and to promote IALs, researchers have identified factors that may possibly be responsible for sustaining it. However, after many years of scrutiny and several policies being implemented, the future of education in IALs is no brighter and English is achieving an even higher status.

Accordingly, English dominance in the education sector of the country is still an important issue in post-apartheid South Africa and the necessity to identify the indubitable reasons for this occurrence remains imperative. Hence, new perspectives on the rationale behind the English hegemony are still required. The relationship between English and IALs is one that is dichotomous in nature in that English possesses a more illustrious position in education compared to IALs (Alexander, 1999). Furthermore, scholars, such as Webb and Kembo-Sure, have labelled African communities as diglossic zones since "in Africa the colonial languages have been put on a pedestal and can be characterized as High languages, whereas indigenous languages are Low languages" (Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2002:104). Despite constitutional provision, the 9 official Indigenous African Languages (IALs), i.e., Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996), do not enjoy the status promised them. In an attempt

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to remediate the situation, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) drafted the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy in September 2013 with an aim to promote and strengthen the use of IALs by all learners in schools, and to raise the confidence of parents to choose their own languages (DoBE, 2013:5). Moreover, it is Kwesi Prah's opinion that because of the status enjoyed by "languages of colonization" - in our case English, these languages tend to be languages of education and literacy whilst IALs are reserved solely for informal situations (Prah, 2000; Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2002:103).

1.2   RATIONALE

In the context of education, several researchers cite positive outcomes when pupils learn in their preferred IAL. According to Prah (2000), "all education of Africans should be done in the mother-tongue. It is in these languages that their genius is grounded. African languages will permit the masses to participate most effectively not only in knowledge reception but also in knowledge creation" (Prah 2000:72-80). This statement indirectly suggests that the hegemony of English in African education systems has a negative effect on learners' academic performance. According to the Global Competitiveness Index of 2011-2012, South Africa is 127th of 142 countries with regard to the quality of primary education and 133rd in terms of the quality of its education system (Schwab, 2011:323). Such a dismal ranking demonstrates the inefficiency of existing policies. The problem has been raised amongst education experts and reasons, such as a lack of funds and ignorance of the education problem, have been suggested.

According to Mutasa (2006), even after more than 50 years since several African countries obtained independence from the British, the dominance of English is still heavily felt in African education and no concrete progress has been made in the

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education sector despite the efforts of the continent's great scholars (Mutasa, 2006:69). A hiatus can be noticed in terms of the many research studies and their findings. The indisputable and actual reasons behind the English hegemony in the education sector of South Africa have yet to be addressed because despite the numerous reasons given by scholars and other experts and the different established policies, little or no improvement has been observed in the education sector. In post-apartheid South Africa the ANC government has attempted to right the wrongs of the past by officially recognising 9 IALs, in a quest to promote equality in all official languages and to provide educational opportunities for all learners. However, its attempt to remedy the situation has been inadequate as despite granting official status to the IALs, their status and cultural capital are gravely out of balance (Alexander, 2011) and English continues to dominate (Silva, 1997). In this mini-dissertation it is posited that giving official status to IALs is plausible in theory but when, in practice, these languages are not used for the benefits and enhancement of South African citizens in keys sectors, such status becomes pointless. An example of this futility can be seen in the fact that although measures have been taken to promote multilingualism and mother-tongue education, 80% of schools use English as a medium of instruction (Oliver, 2009).

In an attempt to unite the country and to build a new multicultural South Africa, the constitution - drafted in 1996 – attempts to elevate the status of IALs. To succeed in this endeavour, the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) was created to help design and protect policies that contribute to the advancement of all languages. In addition, the Bill of Rights also makes provisions for all children to receive an education in the official language of their choice (CRL Commission Act, No. 19, 2002). However, the enforcement of this policy has proved to be difficult, despite the government's best

intentions. The government's struggle to enforce and implement these rights is evident when investigating the issue of Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). The use of the home language or English as the language of instruction has been a controversial issue both in government and in the media. With an objective to promote multilingualism and to protect South Africa's variety of cultures and languages, the Ministry of Education was empowered by the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (Department of Basic Education, 2013:7). According to the Language in Education Policy, subsequently adopted in 1997, learners should be able to choose the language in which they prefer to be taught when applying to be admitted at a particular school (Language in Education Policy, 1997). The main aims of this policy were to "promote and develop all official languages and to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, South African Sign Language as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication" (Language in Education Policy, 1997).

Although the Department of Education (DoE) aims to promote the notion of pride in, and the use of, indigenous South African languages, the majority of schools across South Africa use English as the LoLT. According to a national sociolinguistic survey conducted by the PANSALB in 2002, 80% of institutions use English as the language of tuition in the wider educational setting (Olivier, 2009). Furthermore, it was found that "only 22% fully understand political, policy and administrative related speeches and statements made in English" (Olivier, 2009). Studies concerned with educational performance have traditionally focused on lack of funds and resources and teacher qualifications – amongst other topics (Dalvit, Murray and Terzoli, 2009: 34).

Though many South African scholars and those from other parts of Africa have attempted to contest the hegemony of English in the education sector based on its socio-economic benefits, they appear not to have highlighted the role of language history as well as the educational history of the country as a contributing factor in parents' choices of LoLT for their children's education (Olivier, 2009). In terms of previously cited reasons, this study sought to investigate undisputable reasons for the dominance of English in the South African education sector in the hope to empower parents and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to make informed and rational decisions in their choice of the LoLT. In this study the history of language as well as that of language education in South Africa was explored; the advantages and disadvantages associated with both English and mother-tongue education were examined; and the influence of South African language history on the choice of LoLT was determined. This report ends with conclusions drawn and makes some recommendations.

1.3   THE PURPOSE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Language is one of the most important components of culture (Brothy, 2012). Through language, culture can be defined, shaped and eventually handed down to the next generation. Language and culture are so intertwined that different changes experienced by a culture can be detected in the transformation of the language associated to it. Moreover, language is an essential part of being since it is an exclusively human attribute which allows people to communicate and, therefore, distinguishes them from animals (Brothy, 2012). The importance of language and cultural rights is addressed by the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity of the UNESCO which states that "culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, values systems, traditions and beliefs"

(Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity, 2002). Similarly, the aims and objectives of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, as stated in Section 185 of the South African constitution (CRL Commission Act, No. 19, 2002), are to "promote respect for the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities; to promote and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance and national unity among cultural, religious and linguistic communities, on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and free association; and to recommend the establishment or recognition, in accordance with national legislation, of a cultural or other council or councils for a community or communities in South Africa" (CRL Commission Act No. 19, 2002).

Over and above the rights stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity of UNESCO and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, the significance of language and literacy for the development of a society needs to be recognised. As reported by Prah (2007), a community cannot evolve to "modernity if the language of literacy and education are only within the boundary of the small minority" (Prah, 2007:4). The aims and objectives of the Commission for Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities clearly indicate that the post-apartheid constitution of South Africa addresses the issue of language. The language issue is one that is sensitive in nature and has, therefore, been intensely debated in the new South Africa. Formerly, this debate was only held between two linguistic groups: the English and the Afrikaans communities. The clashes between the two languages as well as between IALs can still be felt today as preference is given to a particular language to the detriment of others - despite recently published statistics. According to the mid-year population estimates

conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2014, there are 54.96 million people in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Furthermore, the census of 2011 reveals that the mother-tongue of 22.7% of the South African population is isiZulu, followed by 16% isiXhosa mother-tongue speakers, Afrikaans is at 13.5%, English at 9.6%, Setswana at 8% and, finally, Sesotho is at 7.6% (Index mundi, 2016). Despite the low number of mother-tongue speakers, English is held in high regard by all its users due to the widespread belief that English is the key for a brighter future. Moreover, the geographical distribution of English is more extensive than the 10 other official languages; the bulk of its speakers can be found in urban areas (Kamwangamalu, 2007:264-265). The linguistic tension between speakers of Afrikaans and English is one that has lasted many decades. There is a continuous fight for control, especially when it comes to the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT).

Comprehending the language issue in the current education system means taking cognisance of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid-based education and in order to understand the existing language dynamic, one has to delve into South Africa's language history in an attempt to explicate the hegemonic power of certain languages over others. Setting a well- founded basis for all subsequent discussions regarding issues associated with the theme of language and education in post-apartheid South Africa initially requires a discussion of the power struggle between Afrikaans and English and its effect on black South Africans.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary question in this study is: *Why does English have such a dominant position in South African society, especially in the education sector?*

With the aim to posit an hypothesis that will serve to answer the primary research

question, answers to the subsequent subsidiary questions needed to be provided:

- *What is the history of language education in South Africa?*

- *What is the position of English in the South African school system? (establishment of English' hegemony as LoLT in the school system)*

- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of using English as LoLT?*

- *What is the position of African languages (mother-tongue education) in the South African school system?*

- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of using mother-tongue as LoLT?*

- *How does the history of language education in SA affect the choice of LoLT?*

1.5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.5.1   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is the qualitative content or document analysis. Content analysis can be described as "a wide and heterogeneous set of manual or computer-assisted techniques for contextualized interpretations of documents produced by communication processes in the strict sense of that phrase (any kind of text, written, iconic, multimedia, etc.) or signification processes (traces and artefacts), having as ultimate goal the production of valid and trustworthy inferences (Mio, 2016:213).

This method was used because written data such as journal articles, books, policies and governmental reports were collected and analysed in order to provide a hypothesis and answer the research questions. This methodology was deemed suitable to this particular study because it allowed the researcher to not only gain insight into the phenomenon being studied, i.e. the hegemonic ideologies present in the South African education sector, but to also explore the depth and the complexity of the language issue in South

African education. Furthermore, the researcher opted for content analysis to frame the discussion on language history and its influence on LoLT because it assisted in examining the previously published research on this particular subject and to also detect the hiatus present in existing research.

Moreover, this particular style of research allowed the researcher's voice to be ever-present throughout the paper and to self-reflect about her position and role in South African society. As stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), "Behind all research stands the biography of the gendered researcher, who speaks from a particular class, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:21). Evidently, every research methodology has both strengths and limitations (Krippendorf, 2004). Content analysis allows the researcher to have valuable historical insights through the examination of texts. Moreover, because the use of human subjects is not required in this type of research, content analysis can be a non-invasive instrument which permits the analysis of interactions. Also, since content analysis relies upon hard facts (contrary to discourse analysis) this type of research can be said to be relatively "exact". Despite its numerous strengths, content analysis has certain limitations. Firstly, this particular research methodology can be extremely time-consuming as large numbers of texts need to be analyzed and it has a tendency to be inherently reductive when analysing complex texts (Holsti, 1969). Secondly, content analysis often lacks a theoretical base. Finally, the analysis of data can be greatly limited by the availability of material (Krippendorf, 2004).

1.5.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study was developed based on the theory of linguistic imperialism, a term

coined by Robert Phillipson (1992). Linguistic imperialism can be described in the following manner: "[…] the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here, structural refers broadly to material properties (for example: institutions, financial allocations) and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties (for example: attitudes, pedagogic principles)" (Phillipson, 1992:47). According to Phillipson, the English language is utilized to preserve and perpetuates socio-economic inequalities since "English linguistic imperialism is one example of Linguicism, which is defined as ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (Phillipson, 1992:47).

Therefore, it is on the basis of this theory that the researcher posits throughout this study that though colonialism has long ended, African countries still remain under the control of the western world. Contrary to the past, the instrument of domination and hegemony is the English language. Thus, those with proficiency in English are deemed more civilised and receive more benefits to the detriment of speakers of IALs (Kamwangamalu, 2003). Phillipson (1992) describes this phenomenon with terms such as 'anglocentricity' were words such as superiority, civilization and progress are associated with English and those such as inferiority, backwardness and regress are associated with other languages. This study uses these hegemonic ideologies to portray the domination present in the education sector. The English language and the instruction thereof have been observed to have influences of an imperialistic nature. As is the case in South Africa, the imposition of English on IALs has led to their relegation

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to a low status and prestige. The ideology of linguistic hegemony is often linked with the constant spread of language in an imperialist setting. Phillipson (1992) posits that English linguistic spread has been legitimized and legalized by using two principles: *ethnocentricity* and *education policy*. The term *ethnocentricity* refers to the judgement of other cultures based on one's own standards, as is well illustrated by the development of different Zulu variations by British missionaries, with the one closest to the English form associated with the Elite or upper-class (Gilmour, 2006:121). To further elaborate Phillipson's idea of the expansion of English, we advance that Africans themselves view IALs negatively due to the history of language education in the country (Kamwangamalu 2003). For that reason, English is believed to provide upward mobility and success (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2002).

Also, a literature review was included in order to perform a research synthesis which will allow for the critical evaluation of material already published. This will assist in integrating and evaluating previously published material, towards clarifying a problem. In said literature review I define and clarify the problem; summarize previous investigations to inform the reader of the state of research; identify relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature; and suggest the next step or steps in solving the problem.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The lack of unity between South Africa's different language groups can be seen to have taken place over a long period of time; white hegemony can be traced back to colonial times - before the advent of the apartheid era. The domination and subjection experienced by black South Africans changed from being a standard occurrence in society to being a regulated structure under the apartheid government. During this time language was not only a differentiating trait but also an instrument of discrimination, segregation and separation.

2.1   AFRIKAANS AND BRITISH CONQUESTS

Historic records show that it was the Portuguese who first arrived in southern Africa as their ships used the marine route around the Cape of Good Hope (South African History Online, 2015). In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established a settlement in Table Bay; it constructed a fort and set about replenishing its fleet with fresh food supplies (Mesthrie, 2002:14) with no intention to exploit the land. This Dutch colony soon expanded and became relatively autonomous; from 1652 to 1795 the Cape of Good Hope was occupied and then colonised by Dutch settlers. A knowledge of Dutch, which later evolved into Afrikaans, was essential for access to resources as well as employment until the Cape fell under the control of the British when they took in 1795 (Kamwangamalu, 2002:1).

Although they briefly relinquished the Cape back to the Dutch for about 3 years, the British took over once more in 1806 in order to ward off the French. In 1814, the Cape of

Good Hope was decreed a British colony which ultimately led to a bitter resentment between the two parties and fuelled the development of Afrikaans in apartheid South Africa (South African History Online, 2013). It was the objective of the British to create a society that was completely their own and to achieve that aim they proceeded to "Anglicise" the territory. In the words of Rodney Davenport: "Anglicisation sought to replace Dutch with English in all spheres of public life" (Davenport, 1991:40). The first instance of complete segregation of indigenous groups in South Africa occurred before apartheid when the British drove the Xhosa off their lands and took over the entire western area. The success of the British in controlling Southern Africa, coupled with their inability to fit in with their fellow white colonists, created a rift between them; the British granted access to all resources to speakers of English which caused the Dutch-speaking Boer population to make a point of differentiating themselves in terms of language and referring to themselves as "Afrikaners" since they considered themselves to be natives of Africa - unlike the British (Mesthrie, 2002:17).

Because of their dissatisfaction with British rule, the Afrikaners migrated east and north in what was called the "Great Trek". As they moved to what is today known as KwaZulu-Natal, black African rulers appealed to the British to protect them which marked the beginning of British indirect rule on the African continent (Gilmour, 2006:129). British "protection" involved Africans being relocated to specific sites called "locations" and separating them from the white population (Gilmour, 2006:127). subsequently, the British proceeded to assert their hegemony by exercising a form of cultural control *via* missionary education (Ngugi, 1986:9). During its supremacy which lasted until 1948, English was the official language of the colonies; it was used as the medium of instruction in schools and in all official documents.

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The missionaries in Africa acknowledged the fact that preaching the word of God to Africans required them to learn the various indigenous languages (Gilmour, 2006:54-64). Upon arriving in modern day KwaZulu-Natal to protect the indigenous population, the British missionaries proceeded to study the Zulu language extensively. Variations in Zulu were recognized, but a specific form of Zulu associated with the upper-class or elite was considered to be the best one to use for evangelical purposes (Gilmour, 2006:121). As a result other variants of Zulu, as well as other African languages, were deemed to be inferior. According to Alexander (2003), Zulu students are still conscious of the inferior status previously given to African languages as they attempt to detach themselves from their 'inferior' language/culture and seek greater achievement and prosperity by using the English language (Alexander, 2003:96).

From the 1840s to the 1890s the British were actively involved in conquering southern Africa (Daniel, 2011). It was during this time that the Afrikaner nationalist movement began to prosper and with that came the creation of the *Society of Real Afrikaners* on 14 August 1875. According to S. J. du Toit, one of the movement's founding fathers, the object of the society was to protect "our language, our nation and our land. " Galvanized by their sense of pride, the Afrikaners rebelled against the British hegemony and started trading with Germany (Thompson, 2001:135-139). The strain between all the ethnic groups, aggravated by the imposition of English on the Afrikaner populace, inevitably led to the Anglo-Boer war which lasted from 1899 to 1902 during which many black South Africans died. Although they won the war, the British did not achieve its expected outcome which was to extinguish Afrikaner nationalism. Instead, the Afrikaners became even more nationalist and proclaimed their difference and their fate to govern South

Africa and "its heathens" (Thompson, 2001:135). Contrary to what they expected due to open British criticism of the treatment that Africans suffered at the hands of the Afrikaners, Africans saw their movements further limited after the war (South Africa History Online, 2013).

It was always the objective of the British to unify their colonies within South Africa (Thompson, 2001:148). The imperial government, therefore, approved the unification of all colonies in 1910 and English as well as Dutch became the official languages of the new united South Africa (Mesthrie, 2002:18). However, indigenous African languages were not considered since their speakers were not seen as members of the colonies. Despite the ever-growing tension between the British and Afrikaners, they came to the mutual agreement that black South Africans were inferior and, therefore, had no right to any formal education, leaving it to the missionaries to provide an education for black students. In 1925 Afrikaans became an official language, replacing Dutch and exercising more control in government. Although the country was officially unified, in reality it was anything but united. The Afrikaners saw themselves as being previously oppressed and then proceeded to impose their hegemony by oppressing non-Whites (South African History Online, 2013). Unfortunately, for Whites to thrive relied heavily on the poverty of Blacks and so by 1939 only about 30% of black children attended school (Thompson, 2001:164). Nineteen forty-eight saw the advent of apartheid which was a strict form of discrimination and seclusion, entrenched in racial difference. Under this regime, the education system underwent a total metamorphosis; it became mandatory for all white children to participate in public education, using English or Afrikaans as the language of learning and teaching

2.2 THE SOWETO UPRISING

Several black South Africans attended schools founded by religious organisations before 1953 where the quality of education was of a high standard as it was the same schooling provided in schools for white South Africans. Be that as it may, after the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, all financial aid to religious schools was withdrawn, forcing religious orders to sell their schools to the government. The Bantu educational system was put in place to force Africans into the role of mere labourers in an apartheid society. As such, education was considered to be part and parcel of the whole apartheid system (South African History Online, 2013). To illustrate the previous point, H. F. Verwoerd, the architect of the Bantu Education Act (1953) said:

> *There is no place for [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. It is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community* (South African History Online, 2013).

After this event, Christian National Education (CNE), which stated that a person's opportunities as well as their responsibilities were determined by their ethnic identity, was put in place. Six years later, the University Education Act prohibited existing higher institutions, i.e. universities, to accept black students. In the Bantu education system mother-tongue education was compulsory for the first 8 years of schooling, while also learning English and Afrikaans as secondary languages (Mesthrie, 2002:19). Although this policy seemed to follow the guidelines of the UNESCO declaration on mother-tongue education, it was simply a strategic method of dividing and separating black South Africans in order to better exert control over them (Reagan, 2001:55). This regime

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was not only about controlling Blacks politically but also culturally. The government oversaw ways in which the different languages were to develop and what messages were transmitted through those languages. In order to do so, a systematic standardisation of each African language took place and it was the role of language boards to design the curriculum to be taught in Black schools as well as instruct Blacks on how to speak their mother-tongue properly (Bailey & Herbert, 2002:66-67).

In pursuance of a tight grip on all cultural aspects associated with Blacks, the Afrikaner government wanted to foist the use of Afrikaans as the LoLT on learners in all former Black schools and, simultaneously, lower the standing of English by implementing the Afrikaans Medium Decree. The rationale behind this move was that lowering the status of mother-tongues would ultimately demonstrate their inadequacy, while validating the fact that Afrikaans was the better language because of its use in the public sphere. Students strongly opposed this rule and a conflict ensued between the government and black pupils. On 16 June 1976, Black students rose up and marched in protest against the new decree. Unfortunately, they were met by the police who unmercifully opened fire on them in what is known today as the Soweto Uprising. After this tragic event English emerged as the language of prosperity and freedom from apartheid and Afrikaans was associated with oppression, discrimination and the loss of dignity. From that point onwards English continued to grow and exert its hegemony over the 10 other official African languages (Kamwangamalu, 2002:2). This overview of South Africa's language history serves to explain the provenance of the English language and its relation to other South African languages to comprehend its dominant position in South African society.

2.3 THE HEGEMONY OF ENGLISH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

The spread of English was based on the enlargement and extension of the British Empire (Spichtinger, 2003). Moreover, according to Phillipson (1992), the British Empire sustained its rule through English language teaching (ELT). Contrary to the opinion expressed by David Crystal (1997:110), English was not just "in the right place at the right time"; Phillipson (1992) proposes that the spread of English was pushed and promoted by a premeditated control of all social, intellectual, political and economic factors in order to "legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources" (Phillipson, 1992:47). The historic spread of English and its continued dominance - even in post-colonial settings - has been accomplished through what Phillipson terms "linguistic imperialism." Linguistic imperialism is defined as the dominance affirmed and maintained by the enactment and perpetual reestablishment of elemental and cultural imparity between the English language and other languages, i.e., dominant vs. dominated cultures (Phillipson, 1992:15). The re-enactment and reconstitution of cited inequalities is to be found in one of the key principles of linguistic imperialism: English education or language teaching.

In the new South Africa questions surrounding language are tightly entangled with education as it is the main instrument dedicated to the promotion and the instruction of language (Murray, 2002:435). In post-apartheid South Africa, the constitution of the country granted both equal rights and official status to the following languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Setswana, Sesotho, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele and Northern Sotho (SouthAfrica.info, 2015). Furthermore, the constitution declares that on account of "the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate

the status and advance the use of these languages" (South African History Online, 2016). In order to accomplish these goals, the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) was created and provision was made under the Bill of Rights for "everyone [to have] the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account equity; practicability and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices" (South African History Online, 2016).

Despite government policies and provisions, challenges still exist. Although only 9.6% of the population has English as their home language, it is considered to be both the language of trade, industry and education and indispensable for economic emancipation by numerous Indigenous African Language speakers (De wet, 2002:120). Moreover, English is the LoLT in about 80% of schools - even though only 25% of black South Africans are functionally literate in English; it is the language of choice of most South Africans (Webb, 2002). Research shows that the dominance of English in the education sector becomes a serious issue when students are not fully competent in the language which prevents them from developing into full members of society.

In recent years, academics and language experts have started to see language as a probable factor that determines students' educational failure or success. According to Anne Johnson, "the tongue spoken back in the 1300s only by the 'low people' of England, as Robert of Gloucester put it at the time, has come a long way. It is now the global language" (Johnson, 2009:131). Lewis *et al.* (2016) maintain that there are

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approximately 339 million English mother-tongue speakers and about 603 million speakers of English as a second language across the world. Language experts and ethnographers have also predicted that more than half the world will become proficient in English by 2050. According to Jiang (2011), globally the language of politics, communication, trade and commerce is English. Former conservative or traditional countries, such as China and India, have readily accepted English as a global *lingua franca*. These staggering numbers have undoubtedly encouraged researchers to explore the reasons behind the quick spread of English. Undoubtedly, English is seen and heard everywhere around the world - in schools, in the media and on the internet. South Africa has not escaped this trend where there seems to be a westernisation in the people which inevitably helps the promotion of English in the country (Memela, 2011).

With the objective to promote multilingualism and to protect South Africa's varied cultures and languages, the Ministry of Education was empowered by the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (Department of Basic Education, 2013:7). According to the Language in Education Policy, subsequently adopted in 1997, pupils should be able to choose the language in which they prefer to be taught when applying to be admitted to a particular school (Department of Education, 1997:3). However, the enforcement of this policy has proved to be difficult. Despite the government's best intentions, a large number of parents, especially black South Africans, prefer their children to learn and to be taught in English instead of their mother-tongue or home language from primary school level. Amongst academics who are pro-English is Professor Jonathan Jansen who suggests that educators introduce English from Grade 1 as the LoLT; his assumption is that the introduction of English as early as possible is the ideal to become fluent in English

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(Taylor & Coetzee, 2013:2). In a similar vein, certain schools have opted for English as the LoLT from Grade 1. The introduction of English in Grade 1 or the "immersion model" has also been prescribed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) of the Department of Basic Education (2011).

The principles of the immersion model suggest that mother-tongue instruction inevitably delays the acquisition of English. This is supported by the "critical-age hypothesis" which, basically, states that acquiring a language should be done during a specific period of a child's life when full native competence is achievable. De Wet (2002) and Reagan (1985:76) observe that knowledge of English is seen to be essential for economic empowerment because it is the dominant language of trade and industry (De Wet, 2002). Researchers also point to the importance of language in politics as a reason for the use of English as the medium of instruction. According to the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB), only 22% of South Africans who have English as a second or third language can comprehend statements made by government officials in English (De Wet, 2002). Despite this fact, English is the language of choice for most public figures to address the public (Pan African Language Project,1998, as cited in De Wet, 2002). It is also the language used in 85% of all parliamentary meetings (Pan African Language Project, 1998, as cited in De Wet, 2002). Strauss, Van der Linde and Plekker (1999) suggest that the status and the use of the language are the main factors which convince parents and educators choose English over any other language as a medium of instruction. Professor Rajendra Chetty (2012) lists many advantages of knowledge of English, including the following:

- A good command of English helps to reduce socio-economic disadvantages in post-apartheid South Africa.

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- English can serve as a unifying factor in a multilingual society, where people may be at odds in terms of ethno-linguistic issues.

- Providing a knowledge of English is legitimate and empowers learners.

The above points advanced by Professor Chetty are indeed valid. One cannot completely disregard English as it does not only hold the status of official language in South Africa (and many other African countries), but it also possesses significant power internationally. As literature has shown, English is the language used in parliament, in the economic and trade sectors and in tertiary education (De wet, 2002:120). The notions of legitimacy and empowerment put forth by Professor Chetty (2012) are portrayed in Silva (1997), who states that "English remains the politically 'neutral' language for public use: President Mandela's speeches are almost invariably in English; national conferences are held largely in English; in Parliament, although all official languages may be used, English is predominant; tertiary education is in English, with the exception of some Afrikaans-language campuses […] At his level English is a national asset and 'liberator', in that it offers international access and a tool for communication between language groups" (Silva, 1997:6). However, one needs to bear in mind the adverse effects that English immersion from grade 1 can have on the cognitive development of a child (Heugh 2002).

Because it is the language used by the state and for the publication of most official documents by the government, English may be regarded as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993). Therefore, South Africans' ability to communicate in English assists in the evolution of the nation (Chetty, 2012). Other academics also state that English as a LoLT is beneficial for the following reasons:

- Learners will be sufficiently proficient in English to reach tertiary levels of education and to compete in an academic setting globally.

- English as the LoLT is economically beneficial since most learning materials are already in English and, therefore, there will be no need to translate books.

- English enhances global communication.

Globalization as a phenomenon is a strong incentive for learning English as around the world English is used to partake in politics, communication, trade and commerce. Even countries that have been deemed traditionalists in the past, such as China and India, have readily adopted the English language as a global *lingua franca* (Jiang 2011). English plays a key role in global affairs as it is not confined to the political and economic spheres. English also blossomed in different spheres such as music, the Internet and film (Crystal 1997). Furthermore, according to the 'Engo' model which is a tool used to measure a language global effect, English has shown that it is a language of consequence by spreading its borders linguistically (Burns & Coffin, 2001:31).

Professor Andrew Foley, a member of the council of the English Academy, suggests that at present indigenous languages require a great deal of work in standardisation and codification as well as regularisation and modernisation - a task which is proceeding slowly, if at all. Indigenous languages lack the technical, technological and scientific vocabulary of the majority of languages, with even educated users frequently falling back on impromptu neologisms, Anglicism or mere direct lexical borrowing. Perhaps, most daunting is that there are large dialectal deviations between the putative standard forms of languages and the actual varieties used by people in different regions. These

include differences between abstruse and otiose written modes and informal spoken modes, between prestige and koine varieties and between 'pure' and 'impure' strains. It is, therefore, not simply a matter of choosing to use a particular language as a medium of instruction, but a slow process of developing a satisfactory standard form and then persuading the wider speech community to accept it, learn it and use it more or less exclusively in both written and spoken forms (Foley, 2002:55). This is reflected in the data collected in the Annual National Survey of Schools which shows that teaching in English leads to better performance in both English and Mathematics tests.

These "pro- English" views fall under the principle of linguistic imperialism. According to Phillipson (1992:47), linguistic imperialism can eventually lead to linguicism which may be defined as discrimination against other languages which causes them to become endangered and then extinct or simply to lose their prestige due to the high status of English (Webb& Kembo-Sure, 2002:114). An example of linguicism - as developed by Phillipson - would be the development and attribution of educational resources in one language to the detriment of others or "when a priority is given to one language for teacher training and curriculum development" (Phillipson, 1992:55). The different reasons given by academics to justify their choice of English as the LoLT meet the criteria for maintaining the pre-eminence of English globally. Phillipson's theory suggests that for English linguistic imperialism to occur, the following must take place:

- **Monolingual fallacy**: English should be taught solely without any reference to a learner's home language.
- **Early-start fallacy** (immersion model): English should be taught as early as possible to achieve native speaker proficiency.

- **Maximum exposure fallacy**: The more English one comes in contact with, the better it is learnt.

- **Subtractive fallacy**: The less a student speaks other languages, the better their English will be.

Phillipson (1992) adds that promoters of linguistic imperialism arguments' include the following:

- **Functional incentive**: English is a global language and is, therefore, useful for international communication, relations and it is representative of modernity.

- **Intrinsic incentive**: English allows for upward mobility and is economically useful, contrary to other languages.

- **Extrinsic incentive**: English already has many speakers and resources and, therefore, allows for cost-efficiency in the education sector of a nation.

At the other end of the spectrum, using English as the LoLT in a country, such as South Africa, may have several disadvantages. Phillipson suggests that "the tension between English as an invasive, imperialist language and the promises that it holds out is not straightforward" and that "arguments in favour of expanding the use of English must be weighed against concern about educational and social inequality deriving from continued use of English." (Phillipson, 2008:10). Using English to teach African children, whose home language is not English, will anglicise them to the detriment of their cultural identity (Matsela, 1995:50). In addition, speakers of IALs who attend English medium schools with learners who have English as a home language do not perform as well as the native speakers of English and, as a result, leads to high drop-out rates (Dalvit,

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Murray and Terzoli, 2009). Moreover, Visagie (2010) maintains that "English as LoLT poses a possible threat of us neglecting our other ten official languages and their associated cultures and traditions."

Nevertheless, it is the researcher's belief that the socio-economic advantages listed by other academics are not a sufficient incentive for parents' choice of English. Firstly, although researchers have stated that full functional literacy in English ensures upward mobility (Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2002), statistics provided by the World Bank prove otherwise. According to a report by the World Bank, between 2000 and 2014 the unemployment rate in South Africa was about 34% (World Bank, 2015:37-38). The same report also states that "by 2014 South Africa had one of the lowest employment and labour-force participation rates and highest unemployment rates by upper middle-income country standards" (World Bank, 2015:38). Van der Berg *et al.* (2011) suggest that the quality of the South African education system indicates that an increase in years of schooling is not supplying the labour-market with the skills needed. In other words, our education system has not equipped young people for the labour market. In its 2012 report entitled *South Africa Economic Update: Focus on Inequality of Opportunity* and again in a report called *South Africa economic update — jobs and South Africa's changing demographics*, the World Bank proposes that:

> *The greatest priority on the supply side is to improve levels of educational attainment in South Africa. Getting basic schooling right is the first step to ensuring that school leavers and graduates have the foundational skills necessary to function in the modern workplace. Educational attainment not only shapes employment opportunities, but also provides the foundation for*

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further on-the job learning and training. This will not be an easy task. South Africa has already achieved almost universal school attendance and the challenge now is to improve learning outcomes by better training and support of teachers. (World Bank, 2015:47-48).

In addition, in a newsletter the Government Communication and Information System Department attests to the fact that "South Africa experiences a situation where there is a surplus of especially unskilled and low-skilled job seekers - caused largely by historically low levels of investment in African education" (GCIS, 2014).

Secondly, a lack of funds and resources in IALs is also a reason given as contributing to the choice of English as the LoLT. It is not plausible to say that there is a lack of funds when South Africa is the highest ranking country in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitive Index (Schwab, 2011). Also, according to the World Fact book (2012), expenses associated with education count for about 18% of the country's total expenditures and approximately R3 billion is spent annually on teachers' salaries (Alexander, 2011:324). Recent policies suggest that Department of Basic Education (DoBE) workbooks are available in all official languages for both Home and First Additional Language levels; that textbooks and readers are available in all official languages; and that teachers will be made available to teach the African languages (DoBE, 2013:13-14). Besides the workbooks, educational content and service providers, such as Macmillan Education, South Africa, provide materials for all grades, in all official languages and for all major subjects, including literacy.

Jointly, this structure also provides teacher training on their Macmillan teacher campus. Concerns about not being able to use an African language as the LoLT are unfounded

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since research on language development has shown that language can be developed through its use. Across Africa there are several instances where IALs are used for educational purposes. For example, in Senegal an organisation called Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED) publishes mostly in a local language, Pulaar, to respect and preserve the community's culture in terms of literature (Ouane & Glanz, 2010:23). Another case can be found in Somalia where Somali was standardised, an official alphabet based on the Latin script was adopted and the Somali terminology was expanded for formal education. After this development Somali was used as the medium of instruction up to year 12 in formal education (Ouane & Glanz, 2010:23-24). According to Griefenow-Mewis (2004), Somali's example demonstrates that a relevant and dependable language policy and the conviction that African languages can be used in every way possible are key elements for success. Furthermore, IAL experts are clearly available as may be observed in the Department of Arts and Culture's project, *The Reprint of South African classics in indigenous Languages*, where books which are regarded as literary classics were identified and reprinted in the nine South African indigenous languages (National Library of South Africa, 2013).

2.4   MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The debate surrounding mother-tongue education has been on-going ever-since the new constitution granted official status to 11 languages in an attempt to promote and to protect the diverse multicultural and multilingual nature of our country. Despite the constitution stating that "everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that

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education is reasonably practicable" (South African History Online, 2016), the term "reasonably practicable" has often been questioned. As English is the LoLT in about 80% of schools in South Africa (Olivier, 2009), it can readily be affirmed that most learners receive instruction/education in a language that is not their own; only 9.6% of South Africans have English as their mother-tongue (Index mundi, 2016).

For the purpose of this mini-dissertation, Alexander's definition of mother-tongue will be used: "[It is] the language of the immediate community or any other language with which the learner is very familiar. The Council of Europe (CoE) seems to accept the definition of mother-tongue as referring to "a child's principal language (or one of his/her principal languages) at the time of his/her first contact with the official education system, i.e., at the age of four or five." (Alexander, 2006:4).According to a report published by the Department of Basic Education (DoBE), learners are either taught in English from the first day of school to the last day of their matric year or they receive instruction in their mother-tongue for at least the first three years of schooling (DoBE, 2010:6). This is further confirmed by the Annual School Survey conducted by the DoE in 2007 which states that "in 2007, 65% of learners in the school system learnt via the medium of English, while 12% learnt via the medium of Afrikaans and 7% learnt via the medium of isiZulu. In effect, close to 80% of learners in the school system learnt via the mediums of English and Afrikaans in 2007" (DoBE, 2010:17).

This state of affairs is the norm in South Africa, where African languages are considered to be of secondary importance, despite research demonstrating the importance of mother- tongue education. As reported by Carole Bloch, "research from around the world has shown that it takes longer than three years to fully learn a language and the

best option is for children to learn through a language they know well for the first *six years* at school" (Cook, 2013). This early switch to a non-mother-tongue language, i.e., English, is a practice that needs to be urgently revisited as the current state of pupils' performance in South African primary schools is a cause for concern. When considering the several available international assessments of primary schools across Africa and the world, South African schools are said to be in a dire condition.

The TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Centre suggest that "the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study tested students in Grade 8 in 50 countries in the subjects of Mathematics and Science. Of the 50 countries that participated, including 6 African countries, South Africa came in last place" (TIMSS, 2003, cited in Taylor Spaull, 2013).The Progress in Reading and Literacy Study demonstrates that of the 45 participant countries which were tested in reading literacy, South Africa obtained the lowest ranking. Furthermore, only 13% of Grade 4 learners and 22% of Grade 5 learners were able to attain the Low International Benchmark of 400 (PIRLS, 2006, as cited in Spaull, 2013). Due to these incredibly low results, 87% of Grade 4 and 78% of Grade 5 pupils were deemed to be "at serious risk of not learning to read" (Spaull, 2013; Trong, 2010). Of the 15 countries that participated in the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, South Africa performed worse than most African countries; 10th in reading and 8th in Mathematics. Pupils, who had not reached Level 3 in the SAMCEQ tests, were said to be functionally illiterate and innumerate (SAMCEQ, 2007, as cited in Spaull, 2013).

The contribution of language factors in the above mentioned low results cannot be directly measured as other factors, including the quality of teachers; previous

disadvantages and socio-economic status also play a role (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). Nevertheless, several educators argue that language and language policy play an important role in the academic performance of pupils. It is proposed that educators prolong the use of mother-tongue and switch to English as the LoLT at a later stage. It is also suggested that it is important that pupils should develop their cognitive abilities in their first language so that they are able to acquire the necessary skills in a second language (World Bank, 2015).

While empirical studies on the influence of the language of instruction on educational achievement in developing countries, especially those in Africa, are scarce, several studies have been conducted to determine whether English or mother-tongue instruction should be favoured and also its effects on pupils' educational achievement. One such study was conducted by Taylor and Coetzee (2013) using datasets for all South African schools from 2007 to 2012. It was found that early exposure to English as the medium of instruction (MOI) for the duration of 3 years, Grades1 to 3, as opposed to 3 years of the mother-tongue as the MOI, has negative effects on pupils' performance in English literacy in later years, in Grade 4 to 6.

Another study by Thomas and Collier (1997) reveals that pupils who experienced dual language instruction have a higher success rate than those who were subjected to full immersion in English as the LoLT from Grade 1. Taylor and Coetzee (2013) carried out a study to determine the language-academic performance link; they constructed a dataset from combining information from the Annual Survey of Schools (ASS) from 2007 to 2011 with data from the Annual National Assessments (ANA). The results of this

study demonstrate that although instruction in English facilitates good performance in English and Mathematics tests, there is a noteworthy disadvantage in using English as the LoLT instead of the home language of pupils. The authors add that the results obtained after their study suggests that it would be beneficial for pupils in the poorest schools of South Africa to experience additional years of home language education.

Based on the UNESCO report by Carole Benson (2004) on *"The importance of mother-tongue based schooling for educational quality"*, other empirical studies that highlight the effects of mother-tongue instruction on academic success and that suggest the disadvantages of an early switch to English include the following:

- **The Yoruba Medium Primary Project (1970-1978)** indicates that pupils obtain better results when mother-tongue instruction is used as the LoLT for a full 6 years with the second language (L2) taught as a subject.
- **The River Readers Project** demonstrates that first language (L1) materials could be developed even with scarce resources.

Because of Africans' negative attitude towards their own languages, there seems to be a reinforcement of the dominance of English as well as the re-establishment of former language hierarchies with English at the top and the African languages at the bottom (Dalvit, Murray & Terzoli, 2009:48). This fact is congruent with the theory of linguistic imperialism which suggests that "hegemonic ideas tend to be internalised by the dominated, even though they are not objectively in their interest" (Phillipson, 1992:8).

Despite the widespread scepticism amongst South Africans with regard to mother-

tongue education, several authors have ardently promoted and encouraged mother-tongue education in the foundation years as a child's mother-tongue is the ultimate tool for establishing a sturdy basis for quality education. In addition, several policies and official documents have been adopted by government in an attempt to maintain home languages. One such document is the Revised National Curriculum Statement document (Bloch, 2012) which recommends that "the classroom should be a place that celebrates, respects and builds on what learners know" (DoE, 2002:9). Research has shown that learning in one's mother-tongue strengthens the language skills acquired in early childhood. Learning in the mother-tongue helps develop cognitive and communication skills and it promotes a feeling of belonging as well as self-confidence (Obanya, 2004). Phillipson (2009) maintains that "education in one's mother-tongue is a linguistic human right."

The previously mentioned National Educational Policy Act of 1996 does not only promote mother-tongue education, it also highlights the importance of additive bilingualism. According to the first paragraph of the policy, "most learners benefit cognitively and emotionally from the type of structured bilingual education found in dual-medium (also known as two way immersion) programmes …. The underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to the effective acquisition of additional language(s)." Local and international researchers have discussed the link between mother-tongue instruction and bilingual education at great length. According to Griffin (1998), the successful building of pupils' literacy skills can be achieved by starting to instruct them to read and write in their home language. She adds that those pupils who acquire reading and writing skills in their mother-tongue and then slowly move to the preferred MOI (English) achieve a higher academic outcome level than

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pupils who only learned in their second language. Carol Benson, in her study for the EFA Global Monitoring report of 2005, cites Dr Jim Cummins' (2000) pedagogical advantages of bilingual schooling as opposed to monolingual schooling:

- Learning to read occurs effectively and easily when children know the language.

- Students are able to participate when learning in a bilingual learning environment, allowing students and teachers to interact naturally.

- According to Cummins' (1999) interdependence theory, education provided in learners' own language will allow them to transfer this knowledge to the second language with no re-learning required.

Because pupils' second language knowledge is not sufficiently developed to use it solely as the LoLT, Benson (2004) recommends that learners should be introduced to bilingual schooling. Having the support of their mother-tongue knowledge will give them the required skills to learn content in a second language. Mother-tongue based instruction not only increases access to skills but also increases the quality of basic education by enabling interaction in the classroom and by facilitating the integration of previously acquired knowledge with the second language (Benson, 2004). Moreover, this approach results in the community feeling proud of its language and culture. To capitalise further on this sense of pride in the IALs and to elevate their status, the mother-tongue must be seen in print in the official context of schooling.

Despite the several revealed advantages of mother-tongue education, many parents choose English as their children's medium of instruction because it is offered as a second language in the majority of bilingual schools. Parents tend to assume that

fluency in English is equivalent to having a good job as English is considered to be the language that promotes upward social and economic mobility (Buthelezi, 2002). English, as well as other European languages, is a dominant language in post-colonial countries, such as South Africa. The objective of colonialism was not only to control people's wealth, politics and the economy but also to have a type of mental control over the populace which, ultimately, was obtained by undervaluing people's education and culture and also by elevating the language of the coloniser (Alexander, 1999). It can often be seen in former colonial states that language policies are prone to favour the colonial language at the expense of national and regional languages. However, efforts have been made in South Africa to remedy the situation through the implementation of language policies in education with the aim to "facilitate communication across all barriers of colour, language and region, while encouraging respect for languages other than one's own" (Alexander, 1999).

A language policy, made public on 14July 1997, was designed to build a non-racial nation in South Africa by promoting additive bilingualism and using mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in the foundation phase (Chetty, 2012). Additive bilingualism simply means that wherever possible children should be taught in their mother-tongue, and that additional language should be added instead of completely replacing it (Bloch, 2012). The policy also permits schools to choose any of the 11 official languages as the LoLT and this clause in the policy is a loophole often used by school governing bodies (SGBs) to opt for English as the LoLT instead of mother-tongue as the MOI. The drawing up of such a policy was an attempt by the Ministry of Education to advocate multilingualism and encourage the modernisation of the IALs. According to the ministry, in a post-apartheid era, knowledge of two or more national languages is a worthwhile

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strategy to create a sense of national unity. Many researchers hold that learning "several languages should be general practice in our society and being multilingual should be a major characteristic of being South African" (Makgato, 2014:933; Bengu, 1999).

The value of mother-tongue education has been demonstrated extensively over the years by several researchers. According to Hilary Janks (2010), the learning processes of African children and their sense of self are at risk when they are required to learn in English (Janks, 2010;11). Cummins (2001:18) maintains that "children perform better in schools when the school effectively teaches the mother-tongue and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language." However, many oppose the use of mother-tongue as the LoLT, blaming the lack of resources or materials in indigenous African languages for the inaptitude of the mother-tongue as the LoLT. Bloch (2012) supports a previous statement by saying that little progress is being made in terms of implementation strategies for the new language policy, due to the fact that most children are taught in another language by teachers who speak English badly. Therefore, poor teacher training and a continuing lack of resources contribute to the non-implementation of policy. Obanya (2004) agrees with Bloch (2012) by stating that the multilingual intention of the language policy in education has really not been realised in practice because English and Afrikaans are used for instruction purposes - as was the case during apartheid; the nine remaining languages serve only in the first three years of schooling. Certain researchers also express the fear of a loss of culture and cultural identity if mother-tongue education is disregarded in favour of English (Matsela, 1995:50). For these reasons, many educators and language professionals recommend that IALs should be further developed and used as languages of learning and teaching to preserve South Africa's cultural heritage.

Learning and teaching in a foreign language ultimately leads to poor academic performance, as can be observed in the high drop-out rates in many rural schools which may be caused by the early switch to English as medium of instruction; many children may not be familiar with English (Alexander, 2011; Wolff, 2002). Obanya (2004) suggests that a poor mastery of one's first language before trying to acquire the language of instruction, i.e., English, will lead to diminishing bilingualism and, as a result, learners end up mastering no language at all. This is in accord with Cummins' theory of the *threshold level* which states that if one's competence and performance is inadequate in the first language or mother-tongue, acquiring skills in the second language will be difficult and may lead to academic or educational failure. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure, opting for English as the LoLT may, in fact, be an obstacle to the growth of learners' academic potential, because "if they cannot understand the language being used for learning and teaching, they cannot learn or be taught" (Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2002:115). They go further by adding that language problems are often mistaken for academic failure or learners' real inability to learn, as language turns out to be the main barrier to learning.

According to Nel and Theron (2008), switching to English as the LoLT at a later stage will probably lead to successful academic results. Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh (2002) agree and add that in the switch from Bantu education where IALs were used for eight years of schooling to the use of English as a medium of instruction, there was a very low pass rate in the matriculation examination (Dalvit, Murray and Terzoli, 2009). Although such results were obtained under Bantu education, Professor Rajendra Chetty, in his paper entitled *The status of English in a multilingual South Africa,* maintains the following:

In fact, the struggle was not against English, but the forced use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction to maintain racial domination. Even in the promotion of African languages during apartheid, it was not a linguistic or language rights imperative, but rather a political tool of the regime to foster ethnic divisions and to keep black learners away from English which was a language of power and access (Chetty, 2012).

Cummins (1999) also suggests that acquiring the necessary literacy skills in one's mother-tongue makes it easier for learners to make the transition to a second language as medium of instruction which will, in turn, increase academic performance. According to Asmal (1994), IALs are only relevant in education if they receive support from the economic and private sectors. Moreover, Matsela (1995) believes that African languages should be standardised if their use as "high-function" languages is to be developed and improved. Chick (1992) makes the point that it is achievable to develop IALs by giving the example of how Afrikaans, which served domestic purposes, was extended to function in achieving many objectives in education and the economy. Nomlomo (2007) suggests that it is important to remember that using IALs as the MOI will permit parents to provide support for their children when learning in the home language as they will be able to contribute to their children's learning of essential material.

To further highlight the importance of mother-tongue education, Birgit Brock-Utne and Zubeida Desai (2010) conducted a study in Khayelitsha Township in South Africa and demonstrated that African children can effortlessly understand the significance of illustrations and delight in expressive writing when they use a language with which they

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are familiar. They also show the difficulties non mother-tongue English speakers have - even after having had the language as the LoLT for almost six years; studying in a language which learners have not mastered extensively slows down their learning process.

Several programmes have been developed in an effort to implement language policy in education and to promote mother-tongue based schooling. One such programme is the Multilingual Demonstration School (MLDS) programme developed by PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) since 1995. The programme's objective is to develop models which could be set up in state schools for teaching and learning in the multilingual context of South Africa. Undeterred by the many benefits and positive outcomes associated with mother-tongue education, several arguments have been made to support the removal of the IALs from the South African education system. It is often argued that education using learners' mother-tongue may give rise to schools that are racially divided. According to Stephen Grootes, an award-winning journalist and senior political correspondent for Eyewitness News, "linguistically segregating our classrooms will only lead to more trouble in the long run. It won't help anyone to be kept apart. And surely what South Africa needs now is integration, sweet integration" (Grootes, 2013).

Critics also posit that the IALs lack the technical terminology required for use in education (Dalvit, Murray & Terzoli, 2009:42); that teachers are not trained in IAL education; and that resources are severely lacking (Obanya, 1999:91). If it is granted that these arguments are indisputable, overcoming them is not impossible. Obanya (1999:92-63) proposes that "… demands for education could expand if appropriate steps

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are taken to go beyond Africa's numerous educational policy documents vigorously promoting African languages in schools by: harnessing societal resources as much as possible; getting into the schools the strategies of language acquisition in the wider society; enliven L1 teaching and learning by using resources other than the textbook; recognising the role of the L1 as the language of intimacy and ensuring that the foundations for education are laid in this language; and literacy and post-literacy promotion in the L1".

Similar to the above suggestions, numerous possibilities exist with regard to improving the status of IALs. The Language in Education policy includes the purpose to encourage multilingualism and to protect and raise the status as well as the integrity of South African indigenous languages. In order to reverse the *status quo*, IALs should be made relevant in education and other important sectors by receiving support from the economic and private sectors. It is also believed that African languages should be standardised if their use as "high-function" languages is to be developed and improved.

Conversely, the importance of English cannot be denied as it gives access to knowledge of international standards (Alexander, 2004). However, Alexander is of the opinion that continuous exposure to externally or internationally produced knowledge may possibly lead to cultural dependency. Simango (2009) supports Alexander's argument and points out that knowledge that is relevant to the South African context should be made available in a language that learners comprehend. A lack of resources is often stated as a reason for not using African languages in education; Simango counteracts this argument by insisting that there are several African academics that are able to produce knowledge and resources in IALs (Dalvit, Murray and Terzoli, 2009). Since African

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languages are linguistically equal to English - and other languages, they can be utilised for a variety of purposes and, therefore, the production of knowledge in African languages should pose minimal difficulties (Finlayson & Madiba, 2002). Although most IALs are used in novels, poetry and dictionaries, they have not reached the level of English and Afrikaans in terms of modern terminology and registers (Ministry of Education, 2003). In order to enhance and raise the status of IALs as languages of learning and teaching as well as their use in the public sphere, the ministerial committee appointed by the Ministry of Education in 2003 suggests that the following conditions should be met in order to promote and perpetuate the growth of languages (Ministry of Education, 2003:11):

- A greater number of speakers should acquire literacy skills in IALs.

- IALs should enjoy official recognition.

- IALs should be used in education.

- IALs should be introduced into electronic technology.

- IALs should be seen as an economic resource.

The committee argues that peoples' ability to read and write in their own language as well as their aptitude to use it to meet most of their daily needs contributes immensely to the growth and the improved status of a language. The committee adds that when an indigenous language is used as the LoLT, it plays a pivotal role in the growth of the language.

The reason given for growth is that the use of an IAL in the education sector will encourage development and the provision of teaching materials and resources, such as books, electronic technology and funding. Furthermore, it is suggested that a suitable

vocabulary in the various IALs should be developed to promote the involvement of all South Africans in the multi-faceted economy of the country.

The use of indigenous languages in the technological world will lead to their more accepted use in education and, generally, improve their status. Raising the status of indigenous languages in schools is a recurrent theme across Africa. For example, the former President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré, established an organisation called the *Mission for the Academy of Languages* to look into the development of a specialised academic structure for African languages (Ministry of Education, 2003:14). Several efforts have also been made in South Africa to promote IALs and mother-tongue education at the Foundation Phase; the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) has developed several structures, such as Provincial Language Committees (PLCs), National Language Bodies (NLBs) as well as National Lexicography Units (NLUs). It is important to recognise that South Africa has taken a step in the right direction as it has elevated nine indigenous languages to official language status through the Constitution of 1996, thus creating a certain level of consistency in legislation.

The introduction of policies, such as the Language in Education Policy and the South African Schools Act are meant to enable an environment for the introduction and development of IALs in primary schools, although challenges have been experienced. However, it is the responsibility of the national government to consolidate, support and maintain organisations dealing with language matters in order to truly raise the status of IALs in primary schools as well as in Higher Education.

CHAPTER 3

THE INFLUENCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE HISTORY ON THE CHOICE OF THE LOLT

For more than 50 years South Africa's language policy has been moulded by social and political motives. Indeed, the policy developed under the apartheid regime was designed to disenfranchise black South Africans. As much as attempts were made to alter the curriculum in order to create an equal system that promotes social and economic development, encouraging developments in the South African education system since the end of the apartheid era are yet to be seen. Despite the role it played during colonial times, English has been transformed into the language of aspiration, liberation and national unity for black South Africans (Alexander, 2011:311). As mentioned previously, English has enjoyed a status of prestige and is now the language of trade and government as well as the preferred language of learning and teaching. The confirmation and reinforcement of English hegemony is assisted by several factors, such as globalisation, world economy, commerce and trade, amongst others (Wright,

2007). Many scholars explain that the use of European or colonial languages work in the favour of the elite in developing African countries; it restricts IAL speakers from being empowered and, therefore, from actively participating in the country's economy. However, research has shown that there are numerous advantages to using IALs in the education of African learners. Despite all the evidence that clearly points to the importance of mother-tongue education, parents continue to opt for English as the LoLT (Gardiner, 2008). Their behaviour leads one to question whether the previously mentioned reasons given by academics really govern parents' choice of the LoLT. Despite the numerous research projects on the topic, little or no change has taken place

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regarding language policy in the education sector.

The issue of mother-tongue education is extremely controversial and is one that is highly political in nature. South Africa's history of apartheid served to diminish and discredit South Africa's IALs while simultaneously raising the status of the languages of those in power at the time, i.e., Afrikaans and English. However, Afrikaans did not achieve as high a status as that of English due to "the strong negative socio-political meaning attached to Afrikaans in many communities"; instead it was labelled the language of the oppressor (Webb, 2002). During the 1950s the language policy in place highlighted the differences between the diverse racial and ethnic groups with an aim to strengthen a separatist ideology while protecting and perpetuating White dominance. The self-proclaimed superior status coupled with the condescending attitudes of the white minority towards the black majority served to further deepen feelings of resentment and alienation in Blacks. Hartshorne illustrates this fact by stating: "What is appalling … is the unquestioning assumption of White superiority in all matters – that even on issues touching the everyday lives of Blacks and their children, Whites would presume 'to know better', to know 'what was good for' others, when in fact they were vastly ignorant of the needs and aspirations of those for whom they were prescribing" (Hartshorne, 1992:196).

Under Bantu Education provision was made to develop the mother-tongue for educational use, while simultaneously prioritising Afrikaans. Therefore, much like today, at the time speakers of IALs were obliged to use their mother-tongue in the Foundation Phase and only later on switched to Afrikaans and/or English. Academics have suggested that the policy of Bantu education had a positive impact on the academic performance of black learners - with an increase of 40% in the pass rates of matriculants -

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as they were allowed to learn in their mother-tongue. If such an improvement cannot be disregarded, it is essential to note that this policy was put in place by the former government's misguided motives. Bantu education, undoubtedly, had an underlying political motive - as stated by Bastiaanse: "(It) is educationally sound to use the home language of a child as medium of instruction in the lower primary school. But there is definitely a sinister political intent when so-called mother-tongue instruction sets out to exclude or retard the second official language (where it is English) during the most impressionable years …" (Bastiaanse, 1956:5, as cited in Mahlalela-Thusi & Heugh, 2002:245).

Simply put, in Bantu education the use of IALs were a disguise to postpone access to English which was considered to be the language of modernity (Mahlalela- Thusi & Heugh, 2002:245). According to Heugh (2000:24), in terms of the Bantu Education Act positive academic results were obtained which caught the apartheid regime unawares as such a positive outcome was not intended. Although academic performance greatly improved under Bantu education, parents were adamant that mother-tongue education would ultimately hinder the learners' academic and social successes (Webb, 2002:10). Parents' strong opposition to mother-tongue education can only be explained by positing that they inherited and internalised past negative emotions along racial lines and, thereby, rendering the advantages associated with using the mother-tongue as the LoLT almost meaningless. In addition, the stigmatisation associated with IALs being inferior (Webb, 2002:183) and the fact that in the apartheid era "African languages were approached as though they had no economic or cultural value" (Alexander, 2011:316) further cemented this belief. The stratification of South Africa's variety of language has evolved throughout the country's history in terms of continuous domination and

subjugation. Dutch, English and then Afrikaans became known as "legitimate languages" to the detriment of IALs. (Alexander, 2011:314).

Black parents turned to the anti-apartheid leadership for guidance in making their choices of the LoLT for their children. In the 1990s the African National Congress (ANC) decided to review its stance on language policy (Holmarsdottir, 2003:11). Because of the sense of division and discrimination heavily present in former language policies, the ANC endeavoured to provide one that promoted unity. It leaned heavily towards English for the following reason: "In building a unified South Africa, a new government may have to select a national language. In a multi-lingual context, such as South Africa, a linking or common language is essential…. Choosing any particular African language, on the other hand, carries a high source of potential conflict, since it will elevate one cultural group above others" (Hartshorne, 1992:209). Many researchers point out that the ANC has been biased towards the use of English both within the party and also as a possible option for the LoLT. This position of the ANC was heavily criticised as promoting and using IALs never seemed an option and the following quote from Alexander and Heugh (1999:6-7) serves to elucidate this: "Tragically, the Anglo centrism of the political, and to some extent of the cultural, leadership of the oppressed people in effect, if not in intention, ensured the predictable outcome of the rulers' policies. For it is a sad fact that the African (or black) nationalist movement did not react to cultural oppression in a manner similar to that of the Afrikaner (or white) nationalists.

At the critical time when Bantu education was being imposed on the black people, the leadership of the liberation movement across the board made a de facto decision to oppose Afrikaans in favour of English. The option of promoting the African languages

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while also ensuring as wide and as deep a knowledge as possible of the English language was never considered seriously for reasons connected with the class aspirations of that leadership. In effect, therefore, the hegemony of English, its unassailable position … became entrenched among black people. Because it was the only other language that could compete with Afrikaans as a means to power (jobs and status) and as the only means to international communication and world culture at the disposal of South Africa's elite, it became, as in other African countries, the language of liberation". It is interesting to note that those in its favour claim that English was the obvious choice and also that leaders of black Africans nationalist movements readily embraced the language at the cost of IALs as it is a neutral component of the language saga. However, they disregarded the fact that English also served to oppress and exclude Africans both during colonial times and during the apartheid era. Moreover, the so-called neutrality of English can be easily be repudiated since it was not only one of the official languages when the country first became British, but also full proficiency in English was a requirement to have access to certain jobs in the 19th century (McCormick, 2002:220).

Despite the rhetoric supporting the promotion of IALs in the educational sphere, black parents insist upon their children being educated in English as early as possible. Unfortunately, what parents do not seem to realise is that while a preference for English is quite strong amongst South Africans, proficiency in English is not - especially amongst teachers. Evidently, the English language competence of teachers significantly influences the pupils' acquisition of the language and their academic performance (Müller & Nel, 2010:646). This is a serious issue because low proficiency levels in the language prevent learners from achieving positive academic outcomes and limits their

progress at school. Pretorius (2002:191) believes that poor language education by educators with little competence in English is a major causative factor for inadequate second language acquisition and academic performance experienced in schools located in rural areas. This argument is supported by Chomsky, cited in Mitchell and Myles (2004:94), that difficulties encountered while learning a language and other concepts is initiated by "messy and fragmentary input, making abstract concepts based on limited examples of language" (Mel & Müller, 2010). In other words, teachers transfer their incomplete knowledge of English to learners which have a negative impact on their academic performance. This fact is further corroborated in a study by Stander (2001), in Nel and Müller (2010), who concludes that educators not only influence, but also transfer, their restricted English proficiency to their pupils. Several studies on academic underachievement have shown that there is an undeniable link between instruction and evaluation in English (Fleisch, 2008). In addition, research has shown that the standard of education in rural and township areas is influenced by five main aspects:

- Teachers' Illiteracy and poor subject knowledge;
- Poor punctuality, absenteeism and other obligations;
- Teachers' low expectations of children;
- Bad use of available resources; and
- Unsuitable methods of instruction.

A pilot study conducted in about forty schools in Gauteng Province by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in association with Stanford University focuses on the role of teachers in students' low level performance. Questionnaires were distributed to teachers to test their pedagogical knowledge of Mathematics; the scores obtained suggest that "South African teachers teaching Grade 6 do not have a high content and

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pedagogical knowledge of Mathematics" (Reddy *et al.,* 2013). The teachers' poor results were partially attributed to language issues in their inability to understand the questions. A comparative study of urban and rural schools in Arusha-Tanzania, conducted by Mlay Neema (2010), indicates that teachers' low English proficiency impacted negatively on students' performance. Unfortunately, researchers feel that this situation was inherited from South Africa's language policy under the apartheid regime. Several teachers, especially those who teach in schools located in the rural areas, were taught and possibly trained under the aegis of the Bantu Education policy when "dilapidated school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instruction, poor teacher training and a lack of textbooks plagued African education" (South Africa History Online, 2016).

Today, sentiments regarding language issues as compared to those in the apartheid era remain unchanged. In a democratic South Africa, English hegemony together with the marginalisation of IALs continues to be sustained for the sake of demonstrating the black population's rebellion against the apartheid regime, all its associated ideologies and their repudiation of the language of the oppressor, Afrikaans. As a result, black parents are strongly sceptical of any policy on the LoLT which resembles anything relating to the ideals of Bantu education. The dominated black populace has internalised the hegemonic ideas associated with English to such an extent that the dominant status of English is considered as "the natural state of affairs" (Phillipson, 1992:72). Similarly, black parents' adamant choice of English depicts what Ngugi refers to as "the colonised mind"; Africans consider colonial languages as prestigious languages that are languages of "administration, media, education, social mobility, diplomacy and international business transactions..." whereas they see IALs as only used for low functions - even though these languages are embraced within the home and at

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community level (Webb, 2002:104). This attitude is what Alexander (2005) calls *Static Maintenance Syndrome* or *Monolingual habitus* which refers to the fact that, in general, Africans love their languages and do everything to maintain them within the home and in the community, but they are strongly convinced that these languages cannot become languages of power (Alexander, 2011:317).

The hegemony of English in the South African education system is no longer a coercive action led by the white minority of South Africans; instead this hegemony is not only encouraged but perpetuated by black South Africans (Marback, 2002:356). Therefore, the downgrading of IALs continues as negative attitudes to African languages are, and have been, internalised by their speakers. Furthermore, these attitudes maintain and bolster the history of disparity and unfairness present in the country both during colonial times and the apartheid era, thereby reinforcing their status as inferior languages. For that reason, it may readily be suggested that language continues to be used as a tool of exclusion and marginalisation in post-apartheid South Africa, much as it was in apartheid South Africa. Sadly, the continuance of the dominance of English in South African society, without any foreseeable change in the near future, raises the question whether or not the current state of affairs does not favour only a certain group.

In terms of Bourdieu's theory of linguistic capital, the language question in South Africa might be considered to be a possible conspiracy. In fact, English is a linguistic capital and for it to have, or offer, any value on the linguistic market, it has to be an exclusive commodity. Considering previously given statistics, this commodity is held by only 9.6% of South Africans, making English an extremely valuable product to possess in order to solidify and consolidate the position of the dominant few in society.

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According to V. de Klerk, the shift to English is done by parents "from the better-educated and wealthier sectors of society, where they have seen the dividends that come from an 'investment' in English" (De Klerk, 2000:105). Bourdieu clearly explains this concept by stating that linguistic capital is an instrument of dominance and power and in order to preserve it, actors who "possess that competence" should "impose it as the only legitimate one in the formal markets and in most of the linguistic interactions in which they are involved" (Bourdieu, 1993:57). Alexander (1999:5) adds that the fewer people speaking the dominant language, the higher its value and its profit rates. Therefore, by encouraging the advancement of English, parents unknowingly linguistically support the social hierarchy, with English at the top and the IALs at the bottom (Alexander, 2003:96).

It is evident that attitudes towards certain languages greatly affect parents' choice of the LoLT for their children. According to Colin Baker (1992), there are 3 constituents of attitudes: cognitive, affective and readiness for action. Black South Africans cognitive attitudes towards Afrikaans, for example, can be seen in their opinions and convictions about the language. As mentioned before, Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor inevitably caused black people to have a negative attitude towards it. The affective constituent can be described as what black South African feel towards a language. Taking the example of English, this particular language is viewed to be "the language of aspiration, liberation and national unity" (Alexander, 2011:311) by black South Africans who have a positive feeling towards the language. The third component of attitude can be readily seen in black parents' choice of the LoLT. Parents choose to resist Afrikaans by selecting English as their children's LoLT. Presupposing that English is the more superior amongst all the languages in South Africa and that being fully

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versed in it means being more intelligent than non-English speakers, is an attitude that still exists. Kamwangamalu (2003:203-231) maintains that "… the Soweto uprisings reinforced Black people's hatred towards Afrikaans; boosted the status of an already powerful language, English, over both Afrikaans and African languages in Black schools and in Black communities at large; and led the Black South Africans to equate education in their own languages with inferior education".

It would be fair to say that no amount of policy amendment will correct the language situation if attitudes towards IALs being use as the LoLT remain unchanged. Professor Thabisile Buthelezi of the University of KwaZulu-Natal affirms that "a shift is needed in the attitudes of parents and teachers in order to develop and promote teaching in mother-tongue languages at schools in South Africa" (Cook, 2013). According to the professor, the challenges experienced in implementing the LoLT policy are caused by many factors. She suggests that they "include parent perceptions that their children are given higher status if admitted to study at schools where the LOLT is English; limited resources and skilled teachers to teach mother-tongue languages; poor attitudes among teachers who believe teaching in mother-tongue languages would lead to institutional racism; school governing bodies (SGBs) taking unilateral decisions on English being the LoLT at schools and school principals encouraging parents to promote English as the language of learning and teaching to increase learner enrolment" (Buthelezi, in Cook, 2013).

Academics recognise the fact that parents' experience of Bantu education and the discriminatory practices engendered by that policy have caused them to fully embrace English. For instance, Professor Jonathan Jansen of the University of Free

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State is of the opinion that "if our children are to stand tall, they must master the language used to exclude them, English" (Cook, 2013). According to Webb (2002), the attitude of parents towards English, Afrikaans and IALs serves as a great motivational factor in their choice of the LoLT. Parents are instrumentally motivated to use English as the medium of instruction due to historical factors which led to the belief that personal gain and success could be achieved *via* this particular language (Webb, 2002:120-121). In short, black parents' preference for English as the LoLT may be due to the wish for their children to be success in all spheres of life and for them to possess the power and status that was withheld from them under the apartheid regime.

The negative and disempowering attitudes towards IALs are best reflected in what Bourdieu terms the *linguistic market,* within which the owners of a certain cultural capital dictate the rule of distribution. In other words, if Africans put much stock in their languages and realised their high value, IALs would become as powerful and dominant as English and Afrikaans in all spheres of life. It is the belief of parents that because the IALs of the majority are so culturally deprived and still contain a strong sense of inferiority, these languages cannot possibly serve as a feasible foundation for economic and social development. Regrettably, South Africa's language history has had a massive impact on the medium of instruction and the current language crisis within the education sector is reinforced by parents' fear of the past repeating itself and, thus, robbing their children of a successful future.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

Similar to other African countries, South Africa is a multilingual nation. Language, as an essential part of a group's identity and dignity, has been manipulated to impose and reinforce the hegemonic power of certain languages over others by means of education and research throughout the history of the country. The different ideologies of dominance first presented during the colonial and later during the apartheid era, have led to the emergence of a symbolic hegemony in crucial institutions, such as the education sector, which has led to the development of Afrikaans and English to the detriment of IALs. Because the apartheid regime's motto of "divide and conquer" underlined all of government policies, the minority in power experienced social, political and economic growth whereas the black majorities were submitted to severe underdevelopment and lacked fulfilment in their lives. For a period of about 50 years, black South Africans suffered under the weight of different language policies which were put in place to exert cultural, political and social control. Subsequently, schools were the medium through which speakers of indigenous African languages were barred from having access to power and all other opportunities available to the white population. On the surface, Bantu education promoted and developed IALs - as is seen in the drastic improvement of the matriculation pass rate of black students. However, having detected the regime's malevolent intent of delaying access to English and, thereby, further hindering the growth and development of Blacks, students rose in protest in what is known as *the Soweto uprising*. After that morbid affair, English became known as the "language of the liberator".

In the new South Africa English continues to be considered the only language that allows for the betterment of the life of the population, despite the small number of mother-tongue speakers. For that reason, the aim of this mini- dissertation was to investigate the actual reason for the dominance of English in the South African education sector. Although academics have given reasons for this dominance, such as better job opportunities, upward mobility and it being a global language, the researcher argues that the reason behind South Africans' fascination with English goes beyond the obvious socio-economic advantages listed by many researchers and lies, instead, in the history of language as well as that of language education in South Africa.

In this research it is suggested that parents are unequivocally pro-English due to the past negative feelings along racial lines which they have internalised. At the height of apartheid, African languages were said to have no linguistic capital and to be inferior (Webb, 2002:183) and, therefore, it is hardly surprising that parents wanted better opportunities for their children. Along with inherited, negative attitudes towards IALs, came the elite and anti-apartheid political parties' (such as the ANC) partiality for English which served to further consolidate the belief that this particular language was the key to all the black population's woes. As previously established, colonial and apartheid language policies have barely changed and are still somewhat retained today. Such policies explain the poor academic performance of African learners during their school careers.

4.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

Change is urgently needed and it is believe that the following recommendations will assist in taking a step towards not only better academic achievement but also a much improved educational system. It is, therefore recommended

- •that parents should be made aware of the role that language plays in the academic achievement or underperformance of their children to promote IALs languages of learning and teaching. Because parents lack knowledge concerning the education process and are uninformed about issues pertaining to the development of language policy (Wolff, 2011), they often do not make choices that are educationally sound and beneficial for their children; instead they believe that they are enhancing their chances of academic success and upward mobility. To remedy the situation, awareness campaigns should be organised throughout the country to inform and instruct South Africans on the vitality of learning in the mother-tongue and the role that this action plays in the preservation of culture. Using the learner's mother-tongue or home language as the medium of instruction will not only assist in changing parents' negatives perceptions about their languages, but also create an African-centred curriculum that is more relevant to the African context. Moreover, including a learner's language and culture in class activities will facilitate parents' participation in their children's education. Decision-making in the programme development process should involve parents and members of the community for them to contribute to providing support for schools and even to assist in the development of materials. This will elevate schools to important positions within the community and also assist in changing parents' attitudes from overrating the role of English as the LoLT to recognising the

importance of IALs for the growth of education in South Africa. If this change is adopted and perpetuated, South African schools will produce proficient learners in both their mother-tongue and English. Parents will come to realise that this method of instruction will, ultimately, lead to their children more successfully participating in all relevant sectors of society, while preserving their cultural heritage.

• that in order not to impose one language on the entire country - as was done in the past, education officials should choose a mother-tongue, based on the language profile of the area. For example, in the Eastern Cape there are two predominant languages; according to the 2011 census, 78.8% of the population speak isiXhosa and 10.6% are speakers of Afrikaans. Therefore, for a high academic success rate, the two dominant languages in this province should be used exclusively as the LoLTs in the Foundation Phase and for as long as possible before transitioning to English as the LoLT. After the transition stage, the mother-tongue should still be used as a subject during learners' entire school careers. Furthermore, as there is a dominant language at provincial level and a language that is also spoken across the nation (Zulu has 22.7% mother-tongue speakers and is the country's other *lingua franca*), in addition to English school systems should be ready to provide trilingual education in order to balance the need to use the mother-tongue as LoLT with the need to be proficient in English as well as have access to the language used nationally.

• that in order to have an education system that is effective; that allows for upward mobility; and that permits participation by all South Africans, IALs should be updated and made relevant to the present society. Using these languages at

primary, secondary and even tertiary level would provide the means for their intellectualisation and empowerment. Implementing this recommendation will require a start in introducing various translation programmes and developing terminologies. As suggested by Alexander (2005:14), "scholars who have focused on the issue of intellectualization or modernisation of local languages are agreed that the translation of major works of literary and scientific creation that exist in the more 'developed' languages is one of the main mechanisms for bringing about and driving this process." This process is, indeed, possible as may be seen in the Department of Arts and Culture's project, *The Reprint of South African Classics in Indigenous Languages*, where books regarded as literary classics were identified and reprinted in the nine South African Indigenous Languages (National library of South Africa, 2013). Actions, such as that by the Department of Arts and Culture, will ensure prestige and status for IALs and they will assume an equal value to English and Afrikaans. Also, major government offices should employ translators and interpreters for better service delivery to those with no access to English.

- that experts involved in language planning in the education system should draft policies which are based on language politics that showcase South Africans' multicultural and multilingual identities. Knowledge production should be tailored in terms of the South African context as currently knowledge production is, mostly, in the colonial language. South Africa's languages and cultures should be taken into account to provide a firm foundation for social and cultural development and enrichment and, therefore, more resources – such as books, electronic technology, infrastructure and funding, in Indigenous African Languages should be made available. Optimising pupils' educational achievements can only be

accomplished by using the mother-tongue as the LoLT for as long as possible with English and the national language (Zulu) as subjects and, thereby, producing trilingual pupils. The preparation of materials in the IALs should be a shared effort between educators, linguists, publishers and language boards. However, it should be recognised that the community also plays a vital role in designing these materials as they can provide input about their language use and also offer their services to produce locally designed books - which will reduce costs. South Africa's multilingual and multicultural nature should be accentuated since several advantages, such as an increase in positive self- image and the development of cultural and identity pride – amongst others, have been reported by experts. It is of the utmost importance that parents and teachers understand the value of mother-tongue instruction and abandon the negative stereotypes associated with IALs.

- that the quality of teaching should be addressed. Dr Nick Taylor, the head of the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit, maintains that "the country's failing education system is embedded in teachers who can't teach…" (Cook, 2013). In addition, it has been established that in 2004 14.7 % of all South African teachers were under-qualified (Reddy *et al.,* 2013). Research has shown that teachers play a major role in the academic success of their pupils. One way to promote mother-tongue education and use would be to design programmes that guarantee quality training of teachers. Quality training of educators is important because instruction is not possible if teachers do not have sufficient linguistic knowledge of the IALs to be used in the classrooms. It is imperative that educators should have an excellent mother-tongue proficiency in pupils' home languages in schools for conducive learning experiences. On the other hand, English being an international language,

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should also be seen as a resource that can be appropriated by everyone and taught as a subject, instead of being seen as a threat. In order for efficient teaching and learning to occur using English and to optimise pupils' academic performance, it is essential that teachers should attain a high level of proficiency in English. Quality training of teachers in the home language would ensure that they develop the ability to solve the various problems pupils' come across when acquiring a second language. Programmes, such as the education course offered by Rhodes University to train teachers, should be promoted. In conjunction with that, teachers and educators should be motivated by providing them with incentives to develop their knowledge of course content. The incentives could include a variety of rewards, such as awards, bursaries, funding and an increase in salary. In order to enforce teacher excellence, teacher outcomes could be measured by means of an annual examination. Over and above that, all learners should be granted access to Early Childhood Development facilities which will give them a better foundation on which to build their cognitive and linguistic skills (Van der Berg *et al*., 2011); it would be helpful to pupils if they were provided with opportunities to practice their second language skills outside the classroom.

To conclude, this mini-dissertation has highlighted and addressed issues related to the language question in the South African education system. It has revealed how the country's language history has impacted on the choice of the LoLT in a democratic South Africa; it is primordial for South African language policies to promote not only bilingualism, but also multilingualism and even polyglottism as the norm. Therefore, the functioning of knowledge production and the distribution of African languages should be recognised if their linguistic capital and, in turn, their market value are to be relevant and

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the negative perceptions of IALs are to be disregarded. One must note that the purpose of this work was not to issue an ultimatum in choosing sides; South Africans should not be forced to choose between English and IALs as the LoLT. Instead, the researcher's viewpoint is that recognising South Africa's social history of language as the main reason for today's preferred LoLT will allow all parties involved in education to develop policies which are satisfactory and pertinent in the new South Africa. It is advocated that rendering indigenous African languages equal to English, and not replacing it, will offer a system that would meet the needs of a culturally, economically, linguistically, socially and politically developed South Africa.

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ANNEXURE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

5 September 2016

Dear Prof Tirvassen

Project:	**The hegemony of English in Primary school education: South Africa's language identity struggle.**
Researcher:	**ORL Coffi**
Supervisor:	**Dr KS Adeyemo**
Department:	**Modern European Languages**
Reference number:	**11120968 (GW20160902HS)**

Thank you for the well-written application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 5 September 2016. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail:tracey.andrew@up.ac.za
Kindly note that your original signed approval certificate will be sent to your supervisor via the Head of Department. Please liaise with your supervisor.

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Dr L Blokland; Dr R Fassell; Ms KT Govinder; Dr E Johnson; Dr C Panebianco; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Prof GM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Dr E van der Klashorst; Mr V Sithole

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

26 November 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have language edited and proof-read the mini-dissertation by Ophelie Romance Laure Coffi entitled:

The Hegemony of English in Primary School Education: South Africa's Language Identity Struggle

The language editing/proof-reading process included the checking of spelling, punctuation, syntax and expression. An attempt was made to simplify complex sentences and, where necessary, combine short sentences to clarify meaning. Attention was given to the use of various language elements, such as prepositions, consistency in language usage and formatting as well as tenses and capital letters.

Prof. Walter Greyvenstein (D Litt et Phil; TTHD; LTCL)

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