THE POWER OF ENGLISH AND ACADEMIC LITERACY: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND THEORETICAL, POLITICAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS. A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL.

by

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Abstract

THE POWER OF ENGLISH AND ACADEMIC LITERACY: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND THEORETICAL, POLITICAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS. A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

By Andrea Parmegiani

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My dissertation seeks to problematize widespread assumptions about language ownership in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, a country where English proficiency is a precondition for professional employment, political participation, and often, academic success, despite the fact that less than 10% of the population speaks English as a first language. My argument is based on a critical literature review and a case study.

Chapter I provides an excursus on the fundamental conceptual tools of analysis (language, power, identity, and discourse) and is followed by a historical overview of how language and identity have been used to define and challenge power relations in South Africa. I discuss the discrepancy between South Africa's language policy and practice and I review the literature produced by theorists who have engaged in a critical discourse about the power of English. I show how the limitations of these theories can be ascribed to the "birthright paradigm," or a set of assumptions about language, power and identity that restrict language ownership to the native speakers of a language. I suggest an alternative model for understanding language ownership built on the assumption that additional languages can be fully appropriated.

Chapter II discusses my research methodology, which comprises a questionnaire, ethnographic observations, and in-depth interviews. My research

questions look at black South African students' language practices, their attitudes towards language ownership, and towards language policies.

Chapter III presents my findings and Chapter IV discusses their epistemological, political, and pedagogical implications. Epistemologically, the assumptions of the birthright paradigm do not do justice to the complex socio-linguistic reality of black South Africans such as the students in my sample, who have taken ownership of English as an additional language in various ways. Politically, the birthright paradigm reifies the linguicist effects of English as a dominant language and the power of English to function as a proxy for race for maintaining inequality. Ironically, the birthright paradigm also impedes the promotion of marginalized indigenous languages. From a pedagogical point of view, questioning the birthright paradigm can help students exercise discursive ownership as they appropriate the dominant language.

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I am very grateful to my colleagues at Bronx Community College, where I am now working on a tenure-track. Dr. De Naples, chair of the English Department, has

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Table of contents

List of tables

Introduction

This dissertation explores the relationship between language, power, and identity and questions common assumptions about language ownership. I have a personal vested interest in this exploration and in arguing that theorists, language rights activists, educators, policy makers, and anyone engaging in conversations about language, power and identity should move beyond the notion that a person's own language is necessarily only his or her mother tongue.

Italian, not English, is my mother tongue. Yet, because of life vicissitudes, I have come to claim English as my own language. More often than not, this claim is denied because of widespread assumptions about what makes language a speaker's "own language."

My family moved from a small town outside Milan to Kuwait when I was eleven years old. A couple of weeks after I arrived, I was placed into an American school. My only exposure to any language other than my mother tongue came from having taken one year of French as a compulsory subject the year before I left Italy. Before school started, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend an American school. I had always had a fascination for different languages and cultures, and like many children growing up in Italy in the seventies, when I thought of America, all I could think about were the wonderful things I saw on television. I had no doubt that I wanted to make that language -- and the things that came with it -- "my own".

On my first day at the American School, I discovered that things were going to be much more difficult than I had thought. In many ways, my new school did feel like a movie, but it was not dubbed, nor were there any subtitles. And I had to find ways to function in a language I did not understand, if I wanted to continue to do well

academically. When I got home that day, I realized how difficult my life was going to be. My only homework assignment that night was to read one paragraph in my geography book. It took me the rest of the day to make some sense of a few sentences. What would I do when all my teachers would start giving me homework and ask me to read chapters, write essays, and take tests and exams?

During my first two years at the American school, I spent more time studying than I would the rest of my life, including graduate school. Thankfully, my academic performance reflected my endeavors. When I got my first report card, none of my grades were below a B, and by the end of the first year, my name was added to the honor roll. Ironically, when I started getting As in English as a subject, I still struggled to have a basic conversation with a fluent English speaker.

My family and I returned to Italy unexpectedly the year before I completed high school because the political situation in the region was becoming unstable. By then, English had become mine. I never used it at home, but while living in Kuwait, I spent most of my life immersed in this language, doing homework, reading, talking to friends, and using it as a lingua franca whenever I had to interact with anyone outside my family and the very small Italian expatriate community. If anything, the only problem I saw myself possibly having with language might have been having to carry out complex academic tasks using my mother tongue.

For my first two years in Italy, I didn't have to confront that problem. My parents found an international school within commuting distance from my suburb. In this school, students were placed in sections according to their mother tongue, and by the time they got to high school, they took half of their courses in an additional language, which could only be either English, French, or German. I was placed in the English mother tongue section, taking French as my first additional language, and

Italian as an optional, second “foreign” language. From that point on, I was labeled as “English” in that school, despite my non-native accent and the fact that I didn’t have anyone to speak English with once I got home. For the first time, I started using English when writing in my journal, which I had always kept in Italian while living in Kuwait.

The problem started after I finished high school and I enrolled at a university in Milan, where everything was taught through the medium of Italian. The feeling I got when I started reading the text books I had bought for my first year courses was very similar to the feeling I had when I came home from my first day at the American school and I had to struggle with that paragraph from my geography book. What was different was that this time, I had no particular desire to take ownership of the medium of instruction. There was no question that I could function quite effectively in my mother tongue in non-academic contexts, and rather than investing time and energy in mastering an abstract and abstruse academic jargon that seemed to be designed to make learning as difficult as possible, I would have preferred to improve my command of the other languages I was learning. English, French, and German, which I had begun to study on my own, opened up world views and ways of thinking that were providing me with a much wider range of possibilities for defining who I was and the way I wanted to live my life. Italian, especially the variety that was used in my text books and by my professors seemed to narrow down this range of possibilities. In my mind, my mother tongue confined me to a smaller world which felt conservative and provincial; my other languages, especially English, were my way out of that world.

To make sure I would do well academically despite my limited knowledge of academic Italian, I worked very hard, as I did when I started studying at the American

school. This time, however, there seemed to be no correlation between my academic performance and my hard work. And this time, I couldn't even justify my poor academic performance with the notion that I was studying in a language that was not "my own language." But eventually, that was exactly what I did.

I disowned Italian, banishing it from my innermost sphere. I refused to read and write in Italian, unless it couldn't be avoided. Instead, I read and wrote in English as much as I could, seeking to escape to a world where cultural norms were less stringent and where I could have more freedom to be who I wanted to be. And when I found myself still struggling to pass my first year courses when students who had started at the same time as I did started graduating I could say to myself and the rest of the world, "this is happening because English, not Italian is my own language."

Ten years after I started, I finally finished my degree. A few weeks later, I was in New York, trying to build a new life for myself in a world where I could use the language I had adopted as my own. It was then that I had to confront the fact that my claim to the ownership of English was not recognized by people who could easily detect that this language was not my mother tongue. Ironically, I was labeled as "English" when I was living in Italy, and most of my private life took place in Italian. In New York, where I hardly ever used my mother tongue, the "made in Italy" label followed me whenever I opened my mouth. Fortunately, this didn't stop me from pursuing a career as an English scholar. A year after I began my graduate studies at the City University of New York, I was able to start teaching English to native speakers at the university level.

While I was working on my Ph.D., I went to South Africa as an exchange student, in part, to escape the post-9/11 political climate in New York. At the University of Cape Town, I began a theoretical exploration of language, power, and

identity that has made me more aware of widespread assumptions about language ownership and of the need to question these assumptions. My exploration was rooted in the work of Pennycook (1994a, 1998), Phillipson (1992) and several other critical language theorists who have denounced the dire socio-political effects of the spread of English as a national and international lingua franca, in South Africa and other parts of the world. In my dissertation, I shall refer to this literature as "the critcal discourse" about the power of English.

The way English was constructed within the critical discourse often clashed with the way I had come to see the power of English: for me, it had been a weapon of empowerment; in the work of the critical language and literacy scholars that I read, English was often constructed as a weapon of oppression. And the rhetorical pillar of these constructions was the notion that English is oppressive because it is not the "own language" of many of the people who have to use it on a daily basis to succeed in school and to be employed as professionals.

Spending time in South Africa, not just in the immaculate, Anglophone suburb that surrounds the University of Cape Town (UCT), but also in "homelands," the destitute, rural areas where black people were forced to live under apartheid, made me see where critics such as Pennycook and Phillipson were coming from. For students who lived in villages with no running water and electricity, where parents are often illiterate, where English is virtually never heard, where even teachers struggle to communicate in this language, and where the legacy of apartheid education is alive and kicking, learning through the medium of English presented insurmountable challenges that I did not have to face while attending a private American school with sons and daughters of the Arab elite and of the wealthy expatriate community. Nevertheless, I remained very uncomfortable with the way many voices within the

critical discourse assumed that the ownership of English -- and of the power that comes with it – is a native speaker's prerogative.

In order to come to terms with the tension between the way I felt about the role English had had in my life, and the disempowering effects of the hegemony of English that I could not help notice in South Africa, I wrote a mini-dissertation for a master's degree at UCT where I argued that the power of English is ambivalent; it can both empower and disempower, depending on how it is used. I began by acknowledging that, given the dire effects of the dominance of English, both locally and globally, a critical discourse about the power of this language is essential. This is particularly true for South Africa, where English is a precondition for academic success, professional employment, and meaningful political participation, even though this language is used as a mother tongue by only 9% of the population. But I also argued that a critical analysis of English as a dominant language should not stop short of considering the extent to which English can function as a weapon of empowerment, once it is effectively appropriated. I discussed epistemological, pedagogical, and political limitations of critical theoretical approaches that do not take sufficiently into account ways in which the power of English can be harnessed by non-native speakers. I concluded by suggesting a model for understanding language ownership that can make English a language of inclusion, rather than a language of exclusion.

This dissertation is an attempt to delve deeper into issues of language, power, and identity that are relevant for language ownership. It will combine a more thorough theoretical analysis with an empirical study. Chapter I will begin with an excursus on the fundamental conceptual tools of analysis. Language, power, identity, and discourse will be discussed within a multi-theoretical perspective that draws extensively on post-modernism and on an application of Bourdieu's theory of

language and symbolic power. I will then provide a historical overview of how language and identity have been used to define and challenge power relations in South Africa from colonialism until the transition to democracy in 1994. The discrepancy between South Africa's language policy – which grants equal status to eleven official languages – and practice – will be discussed. This discussion will be followed by a review of the literature produced by theorists and language rights activists who have engaged in a critical discourse about the power of English in order to bridge the gap between language policy and practice in South Africa. Because the local power of English is inextricably related to the global power of English as an international lingua franca, my review will include seminal works of critics who have written about the power of English globally and in contexts other than South Africa. After discussing epistemological and political limitations of these theories, and how these limitations can be ascribed to problematic assumptions about language, power, and identity, I will suggest a model for understanding language ownership built on the notion that additional languages can be fully appropriated.

Chapter II will discuss my research methodology. It will begin with an exposition of my rationale for exploring language ownership empirically at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a formerly white university that is actively trying to increase the enrollment of black South African students, who, in most cases, are not native English speakers. A set of overarching research questions will be articulated. These questions will seek to problematize common assumptions about language ownership by looking at black South African students' language practices and attitudes towards their language repertories. My questions will also explore what these students have invested in their processes of appropriating English as an additional language, and how their investment shapes their attitudes towards language

policies. I will present my rationale for choosing both quantitative and qualitative research methods and I will discuss issues related to questionnaire design and ethnographic investigation. In particular, I will report my attempts to gain entry to the field, moving from the position of outsider to the position of partial insider.

Chapter III will present and discuss my findings. Each section will report a key finding that emerged from the questionnaire and delve into its significance by exploring relevant discourses that I collected while engaging in classroom observations and in in-depth interviews with a focus group. The sections of this chapter will be organized according to the following themes: micro-ownership, macro-ownership, investment (Peirce, 1995), attitudes towards language policies, and discursive ownership.

Chapter IV will conclude my dissertation by looking at the epistemological, political, and pedagogical implications of my argument. Epistemologically, I will highlight how the data I collected shows how widespread assumptions about language ownership are inadequate for producing theories of language, power, and identity that reflect the complex socio-linguistic reality of speakers of English as an additional language in multi-lingual settings such as South Africa. Politically, restricting the legitimate ownership of English to native speakers is a way to use language as a mechanism to re(produce) social stratification after the demise of apartheid. Given the way language ownership is racialized in South Africa, there is the possibility that people's mother tongue could be used as a proxy for race for maintaining inequality.

Pedagogically, a critical approach that takes into account both the empowering and the disempowering potential of English and invites students to look at this ambivalence of English in the context of their lives can be a very effective way to make it easier for students to appropriate the dominant language.

Chapter I

Concepts, Context, and the Debate

1.1. Concepts

1.1.1. Language

The object of inquiry of language study is a matter that has been debated throughout time. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to provide a detailed historical account of the various ways in which language has been conceptualized by those who have studied this phenomenon scientifically or philosophically. What is of relevance for this dissertation is to retrace the paradigm shifts that have lead to an understanding of language as a phenomenon that is inextricably related to identity and power relations.

Ferdinand de Saussure, who is often thought of as the founding father of modern linguistics (Rivkin and Ryan, 1998, p. 265), brought about a paradigm shift that moved the focus from a diachronic to a synchronic approach to the study of language (Sampson, 1980; Richter, 1998). In the 19th Century, a philological approach to language study was concerned primarily with tracing the evolution of modern languages from proto-languages such as Sanskrit and Indo-European. Breaking away with the philological tradition, Saussure adopted a synchronic perspective by looking at language as a system of signs existing at a particular point in time. This system is based on the arbitrary relationship between a signifier, or a symbol which takes the form of a sound or the graphic representation of a sound and a

signified, or the meaning attached to the symbol (Sampson, 1980, p. 139; Richter, 1998, p. 810).

Saussure draws a distinction between the way language is used by individual speakers (parole) and the abstract system of signs which ought to be the object of the scientific study of language (langue).

> But what is language [langue]?[1] It is not to be confused with human speech [parole] of which it is only a definite part, though certainly an essential one. It is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty. Taken as a whole, [parole] is many sided and heterogeneous, straddling many areas simultaneously – physical, physiological, and psychological – and it belongs to both to the individual and to society; we cannot put it into the category of human facts, because we cannot discover its unity.
>
> [Langue], on the contrary, is a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. (Saussure, in Rivkin and Ryan, 1998, p. 267)

For Saussure, "langue is not complete in any speaker; it exists *perfectly* only within a collectivity"[my emphasis] (in Rivkin and Ryan, 1998, p. 269). As we will see, it is precisely the notion that language can exist "perfectly" and that it is equally accessible within a collectivity that has been critiqued by socio-linguists, and critical linguists whose work has focused on the relationship between language, power, and identity.

Chomsky's quest for a "Universal Grammar" underlying the rules of meaning-making in all languages is based on an understanding of language as an innate human faculty that resides in the brain, rather than in a collectivity. Nevertheless, Chomsky's theory is based on assumptions that are very similar to Saussure's. Like Saussure, Chomsky used a dichotomy to set the parameters of what constitutes language in terms of scientific inquiry. Chomsky drew a distinction between linguistic

[1] In Rivkin and Ryan's edition, langue and parole are translated respectively as "language" and "speech." I have chosen to use the original French terms to avoid confusion.

"performance," or the way individual speakers actually use language in reality, and "competence," or the way native speakers would use their mother tongue if they were not subjected to emotional and psychological factors that interfere with the production of speech acts. For Chomsky, only the perfect knowledge of a language that is produced by an idealized native speaker can lead science to the discovery of the principles that govern Universal Grammar. Linguistics should be

> concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts in attention and interests, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying knowledge of the language to actual performance [. . . .] To discover the properties of Universal Grammar and core grammar we must attempt to abstract away from complicating factors of all sorts, a course that has its hazards but is inescapable in serious inquiry. (1965, p. 3)

Hymes' theory of communicative competence is rooted in the rejection of the abstractions of Chomsky's paradigm. For Hymes a study of language based on the kind of ideal speaker-listener that Chomsky postulated did not say enough "of this world, where meanings may be won by the sweat of the brow and communication achieved in labor" (1971, p. 272). According to Hymes, language is imbedded in the social to the point that he rejects the use of the term sociolinguistics because it implies the existence of other branches of linguistics that study language out of a social context:

> Hymes would be unhappy with the characterization of sociolinguistics as a subdiscipline of linguistics and [has] proposed instead a 'socially constituted theory of language.' Hymes rejects the notion that language has an existence apart from the social reality of its users. (Cullen, 1994, p. 413)

Unlike the founding father of structural linguistics, Hymes was not interested in *langue* (the abstract, idealized, sign system that can only exist in a collectivity of

speakers), but in the way humans actually use this system to communicate in a social context (something that Saussure would have placed within the realm of *parole*). But Hymes was trying to move away from the dichotomy that characterizes Saussurian and Chomskian linguistics. For Hymes, a sign system that allowed communication among human beings could not be studied in isolation from the larger system of social interaction of which it is part and parcel.

In order to move beyond Saussure's and Chomsky's paradigms, Hymes coined the term communicative competence, a concept that included not only the speaker's ability to use the system to produce utterances that are grammatically correct, but also his/her ability to use language in ways that are appropriate for the social circumstances in which it is used. Acquiring a language, therefore, entails not only mastering its grammar, but also understanding the social norms that prescribe the way in which a language must be used in different situations:

> A normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate accomplishments by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values and motivations concerning language, its features, and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes toward, the interrelation of language with the other code. (Hymes, 1971, p 278)

Bourdieu's understanding of language has had a seminal impact on the critical discourse about English as a dominant language. Bourdieu's objections to the abstractions of Sassure and Chomsky are very similar to the ones put forth by Hymes. Bourdieu argues that

> Chomsky's notion of competence is an abstraction that does not include the adequate use of competence (when to speak, keep silent, speak in this or that

> style, etc.). What is problematic is not the possibility of producing an infinite number of grammatically coherent sentences, but the possibility of using an infinite number of sentences in an infinite number of situations, coherently and pertinently. Practical mastery of grammar is nothing without mastery of the conditions for adequate use of the infinite possibilities. This is the problem of *kairos*, of doing the right thing at the right time, which the sophists raised. (Bourdieu, 1997)

.

Bourdieu, however, puts a much greater emphasis on power relations than Hymes when looking at what determines whether or not a speech act is considered appropriate in a given social situation.

> Competence is also the capacity to command a listener. Langauge is not only an instrument of communication, or even knowledge, but also an instrument of power. A person speaks not only to be understood, but to be able to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Hence, the full definition of competence as the right to speech, i.e., to the legitimate language, the authorized language which is also the language of authority. Competence implies the power to impose reception. Here again, one sees the abstractedness of the linguistic definition of competence: the linguist regards the conditions for establishing communication as already secured, whereas in real situations, that is the essential question. He takes for granted the crucial point: namely, that people talk and talk to each other, are on 'speaking terms,' [sic] that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen, and those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak.
>
> An adequate science of discourse must establish the laws which determine who (*de facto* and *de jure*) may speak to whom and how. (1997, p. 648)

Evidently, Bourdieu believes that Saussure's and Chomsky's abstractions miss the point of language studies. Rather than on grammaticality, linguists should focus on "legitimacy," or the symbolic value attached to speech acts produced by subjects who are constantly using language to negotiate power relations. Rather than being based on a collective "treasure" (Saussure, in Bourdieu, 1997, p. 43) that is equally accessible to the members of a linguistic community, verbal exchanges take place in inequitable linguistic markets, where subjects use language differently and where

there is no "linguistic communism" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 43): some ways of speaking are considered better than others and are a precondition for being able to compete for symbolic and material resources. According to Bourdieu, it is not so much grammaticality that determines whether or not a speech act is legitimate, but power relations. In any linguistic market, the ways of speaking of the elite are taken as the "norm" or the "standard" to which all speakers should aspire, but which only a few should be able to master. In order to function as a mechanism that re(produces) inequitable power relations, access to dominant ways of speaking needs to be restricted. Bourdieu refers to this concept with the phrase "profit of distinction."

> Since the profit of distinction results from the fact that the supply of products (or speakers) corresponding to a given level of linguistic (or more generally, cultural) qualification is lower than if all speakers had benefited from the condition of acquisition of the legitimate competence to the same extent as the holders of the rarest competence, it is logically distributed as a function of the chances of access to these conditions, that is, as a function of the position occupied in the social structure. (1991, p. 56)

As we will see, Bourdieu's conceptual vocabulary lends itself particularly well to a study of how language shapes power relations in a country such as South Africa. *De jure*, the post-apartheid constitution sought to move the country as close as possible to a situation of "linguistic communism" by granting official status to nine indigenous African languages, in addition to the former two colonial languages. *De facto*, the linguistic market often limits the "right to speak" of those who have not mastered English, as this language is a precondition for being allowed to speak in communicative situations where high levels of symbolic and material resources are allocated. Access to English is far from equitable. As a first language, it is spoken only by 9% of the population, and as an additional language, it is much more likely to be mastered by the members of the upper middle class. As many critical linguists have

done, either implicitly or explicitly, I will draw on Bourdieau's conceptual vocabulary extensively in my argument.

1.1.2. Power

Like language, power is a notion that is readily understood, but whose meaning is very difficult to pin down. Merriam Webster's dictionary defines this word in broad terms that reflect the elusiveness of this concept: power is "the ability to produce an effect." This definition opens up a set of questions that need to be explored in order to understand why a socially relevant study of language cannot leave aside power relations. Who is the agent or the force behind the ability to exercise power? How does this ability manifest itself? What sort of effects can be ascribed to power? In discussing these questions, I will draw on Marxism and post-structuralism, two grand narratives that have been very influential in shaping the critical discourse about the power of English.

Marx's "dialectical materialistic" approach locates power in "relations of production," or the economic realm of the human condition. The methods through which the necessities of life – such as food, clothing, shelter, etc. – are produced in an economy create social relations between antithetical classes that are defined by inequitable power relations: a dominant class that is able to accumulate wealth by controlling the means of production, and a dominated class that is forced to sell its labor for less than its value in order to survive. The power struggle between those who accumulate wealth and those who subsist is the motor of history.

Marx was not a linguist, but language, as a tool for cultural production, does play an important role in his theory because it reflects the dominant class's ideology,

or a belief system that justifies the existing power relations through codes, law, religion, art, and a political discourse that is presented as commonsensical.

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real men as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else other than conscious existence and the existence of men is their actual life process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-processes. (Marx, 1998, p.391)

There is one strand of Marxist thought that sees a univocal, deterministic relationship between the economic base (or relations of production) and cultural production. According to this strand, culture would merely "express the values, ideals, and imperatives of Capitalism" (Rivkin and Ryan, 1998, p. 233) and even the mental universe of human beings would be shaped by the dominant ideology, since individuals would only be able to think thoughts that are made available in society by cultural production (Richter, 1998, p. 387). Hence, the dominated contribute to their own domination by internalizing the value system of the dominant class. Marx refers to this notion as "false consciousness." I will return to this notion as it has been used by prominent critical language theorists to construe pro-English tendencies on the part of native speakers of marginalized languages in countries that have been under British domination.

Raymond Williams is a Marxist theorist who has critiqued formulaic interpretations of the relationship between the "base" and the "superstructure." Moving closer to post-modern epistemology, Williams put forth a less monolithic

conception of base and superstructure and a more dynamic and conflictual relationship between relations of production and culture:

> We have to revalue 'determination' towards the setting of limits and the exertion of pressure, and away from a predicted, prefigured, and controlled content. And, crucially, we have to revalue the 'base' away from a fixed economic abstraction and towards the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships containing fundamental contradictions and variations, and therefore always in a state of dynamic process. (1998, p. 493)

Drawing on Gramsci, Williams suggests the notion of hegemony as a locus of power that is shaped by both material and cultural forces that are always in tension, creating dynamics that are constantly evolving. Hegemony is a primary socially constitutive force that is pervasive:

> Hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such depth, which saturates society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the substance and limit of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any formula derived from base and superstructure. (p. 494).

At the same time, however, hegemony is not static or monolithic.

> We have to emphasize that hegemony is not singular; that indeed, its own internal structures are very complex and have continually to be renewed, recreated, and defended; and by the same token, that they can be continually challenged, and in certain respects, modified. That is why instead of speaking of "the hegemony," a "hegemony," I would propose a model which allows for this kind of variation and contradiction, its sets of alternatives, and its processes of change. (p. 495)

Williams' interpretation of hegemony lends itself particularly well to an analysis of how English, as a dominant language, shapes power relations. On the one hand, it can help theories avoid simplistic understandings of language as politically

neutral means of communication. As we will see when looking at discourse, each language contains ways of thinking that constitute "the substance and limit of common sense for most people under its sway." While seemingly neutral and commonsensical, these ways of thinking place human beings into subject positions that are characterized by power imbalances. At the same time, however, Williams' notion of hegemony eschews overly deterministic theories that see subjects' mental universes as being trapped in discrete, fixed, and unassailable ways of thinking that support the interests of those who hold power.

The work of Foucault has been particularly helpful in moving beyond the limitations of monolithic and deterministic conceptions of power that have grown out of certain interpretations of Marx's theories. For Foucault, power is rooted in discourse, rather than in the ownership of the means of production. I will provide a discussion of discourse in section 1.1.4, as this is a key notion in understanding the relationship between language, power, and identity. For now, I would like to highlight that for Foucault (1980), discourses are ways of using language in conjunction with other symbols in order to create systems of power/knowledge. These systems confer power by establishing what counts and what doesn't count as valid knowledge. In his construction, Foucault puts great emphasis on rejecting the notion that systems of power/knowledge are determined unilaterally by a unified center of power. First of all, the causal relationship between discourse and power is not unidirectional: "discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, it is the power which is to be seized." Discursive production is indeed "controlled, selected, organized" in every society (Foucault, 1990, p. 1115), but this control is not

centralized and exercised through a series of static hierarchical relationships. For Foucault, power

> must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable (. . . .) Power is everywhere, but not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (. . . .) Power is not something that is acquired, exercised, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points in the inter-play of non-egalitarian and mobile relations. (1998, p. 1473)

1.1.3. Identity

Identity is a concept that lends itself to a seemingly unproblematic definition: most people would probably define identity as "who you are." What is subject to debate is what determines who you are and how these determinants shape your identity. Class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation have been taken as fundamental determinants of identity by those who have looked at this construct theoretically and politically, to challenge disempowering subject positions. As we will see in sections 1.2.1-1.2-3, in South Africa, language is a fundamental marker of identity that intersects in many interesting ways with race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

According to Woodward, identity is rooted in the self, but also in the social realm of human experience: it gives individuals a social position in the world they are living in by providing a link between their "selves" and the larger social structures to which they belong (2002, p. 1). To be constructed as socially meaningful, identity markers rely on the notion of difference. In other words, categories ascribed on the basis of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and language are often created in terms

of binary oppositions such as black/white, male/female, middle class/working class, heterosexual/gay, native speaker/non-native speaker, etc. (p. 35). These binaries (re)produce power imbalances between subjects by elevating one term of each dichotomy and downgrading the other. Hegemonic discourse often presents a white social identity as better than black; male as better than female; middle class as better than working class; heterosexual as better than gay, etc. From a feminist perspective, Cixous (1998) has examined archetypal dichotomies that are coded in terms of gender, such as "day/night," "head/heart," "father/mother," and she has exposed how the male term of each binary is invariably presented as superior to the female counterpart. From a post-colonial perspective, Said has looked at how Western cultural production has constructed an idealized construction of a Euro-American "Self" built in antithesis to negative constructions of cultures that are rooted in other parts of the world (the "Other"). He refers to this Western-centric, "othering" process as "Orientalism":

> Orientalism is never far from . . . . the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying 'us,' Europeans as against all 'those non-Europeans,' and indeed, it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of a European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. (Said, 1987, p. 7)

Identity politics seeks to challenge these power imbalances by taking marginalized identity categories as a starting point for demanding social change. One political strategy for trying to bring this change about is to embrace oppressed social identities by taking pride in their uniqueness and by challenging the ways in which the subjects who inhabit these identities are disempowered by dominant discourses. Another strategy is to deconstruct the dichotomies that trap identities into fixed categories that either confer or deny access to power.

With the influence of post-structural epistemology in the humanities and the social sciences, essentialism has become a fundamental term in academic conversations about identity. Essentialism refers to the tendency to construe identity as a set of innate, fixed, monolithic categories that a subject either possesses or does not. These characteristics are innate in the sense that they are often ascribed to a subject on the basis of birth. They are fixed in the sense that they cannot be changed; a subject is stuck with them for life. They are monolithic in the sense that they are seen as shaping each subject homogeneously, as if there were no difference within the category itself.

Holliday, Hyde, and Kulman (2004), among others, have taken a very strong stance against essentialism when looking at how people are defined in terms of culture:

> Essentialism in the way we see people and culture is the same essentialism which drives sexism and racism. The equivalent condition, culturism, similarly reduces and otherizes the individual and underlies many of the problems in our world today. By otherization we mean imagining someone as alien and different to 'us' in such a way that they are excluded from our 'normal,' 'superior,' and 'civilized' group. Indeed, it is by imagining a foreign Other in this way that 'our' group can become more confident and exclusive. Essentialism therefore needs to be defined strongly, recognized, and fought against wherever it is found. (p.3)

Hooks (1998) would probably disagree with such a strong stance. She accuses white, post-modern critics of failing to see that given the long history of oppression, African-Americans have just begun expressing a voice that is challenging white supremacy, and this voice has needed to affirm a shared history in order to be heard:

> The post-modern critique of 'identity,' though relevant for renewed black liberation struggle, is often posed in ways that are problematic. Given a pervasive politic of white supremacy which seeks to prevent the formation of a radical black subjectivity, we cannot cavalierly dismiss a concern with identity politics (….) Considering that it is as subject one comes to voice, then the postmodern critique of identity appears at first glance to threaten and close down the possibility that this discourse and practice will allow those

> who have suffered the crippling effects of colonization and domination to gain or regain a hearing (….) Should we not be suspicious of post-modern critiques of the subject when they surface at a historical moment when many subjugated people feel themselves coming to voice for the first time? (pp. 132-133)

Nevertheless, she also calls for the need to move away from essentialism in order to adopt a post-structuralist approach in identity politics.

> The critique of essentialism encouraged by the postmodernist thought is useful for African-Americans concerned with reformulating outmoded notions of identity. We have too long had imposed upon us from both the outside and the inside a narrow, constricting notion of blackness. Postmodern critiques of essentialism which challenge notions of universality and static overdetermined identity within mass culture and mass consciousness can open up new possibilities for the construction of the self and the assertion of agency. (p. 133)

Post-colonial critic Bhabha sees the concept of "hybridity" as crucial for opening up the new possibilities for the construction of the self and the assertion of agency that hooks is referring to. For Bhabha, it is "theoretically innovative and politically crucial" to think beyond "narratives of originary and initial subjectivities" (1994, p.1) defined by monolithic and overly deterministic conceptions of identity markers such as race, class, gender, and culture. Instead, we should "focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (p.1). The "in between" spaces of cultural hybridity that open up when binaries such as Orient and Occident melt into continua could actually constitute sites of resistance against hegemonic discourses that limit possibilities for the construction of the self.

While I reject hooks's color-coded sweeping generalizations about the way critics and activists have responded to post-modernism within identity politics, I find her stance towards essentialism very productive. To some extent, essentializing is unavoidable when engaging in identity politics, as redressing power imbalances between the polarities that lie at the heart of inequitable social structures entails the

affirmation of a common denominator on the part of those social categories that have been oppressed. At the same time, breaking these polarities by embracing hybridity, as Bhaba recommends, can be an even more radical way to fight social inequality.

I have found Weedon's post-structural conception of identity particularly useful for theorizing about language and power relations without falling into the trap of excessive essentialism. Writing from a feminist perspective, Weedon claims that language is a primary site for the construction of subjectivity and power relations:

> Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organizations and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed*. The assumption that subjectivity is constructed implies that it is not innate, not genetically determined, but socially produced. Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices -- economic, social and political -- the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power. (1987, p. 21)

Peirce (1997) expounds on the salient characteristics of subjectivity highlighted by Weedon.

> The conception of subjectivity as a site of struggle is an extension of the position that social identity is multiple and contradictory. Subjectivity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power in which the person takes up different subject positions -- teacher, mother, manager, critic -- some positions of which may be in conflict with each other. In addition, the subject is not conceived of as passive: he/she is conceived of as both subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community and society. The subject has human agency. Thus the subject position that a person takes up within a particular discourse is open to argument. Although a person may be positioned in a particular way within a given discourse, the person might resist the subject position or even set up a counter-discourse which positions the subject in a powerful, rather than a marginalized position. . . . In arguing that subjectivity is multiple, contradictory and a site of struggle, feminist poststructuralism highlights the changing quality of a person's social identity. (1997, pp. 15-16)

The importance of Weedon's and Peirce's highlighting of the role of agency in identity construction will become clearer in the next section where I will discuss the notion of discourse. For now, I would like to underscore three qualifiers that can be

used to clinch the importance of Weedon's and Peirce's conception of identity for the rest of my analysis: identity is de-centered, contested, and fluid. Identity is de-centered in the sense that it is not determined by just one factor, but by many factors. All these factors contribute to placing an individual in an inequitable social order; hence, identity is contested, for it is a constant site of struggle for power. While engaging in this struggle, subjects are constantly repositioning themselves using their identity markers in different ways in order to maximize their opportunities of self-empowerment. Hence, identity is fluid; a person's subjectivity evolves over time and as he or she moves across different social settings.

1.1.4. Discourse

Even though I have used the word "discourse" earlier in this dissertation, I have chosen to provide a full discussion of this term in this concluding section of my theoretical framework because "discourse" is a conceptual tool of analysis that is very useful for understanding how issues of language, power and identity come together in critical studies of language.

The term discourse can have a variety of meanings. Pennycook (1994b) mapped out the ones that are most commonly used in language studies on a spectrum that stretches from more politically neutral to more politically charged understandings of the term. In applied linguistics, discourse refers to "supersentential language use" (pp. 116-117); that is, to those speech acts that involve the use of more than one sentence. In this discipline, discourse analysis involves the study of how the combination of sentences creates larger units of meanings, such as paragraphs, essays, conversation, speeches. This approach looks at the social context that surrounds

supersentential language use in terms of communicative purposes, but it stops short of examining the power relations that shape the speech act in question. In other words, it assumes that the rules governing the way sentences are combined in a given context can be reduced to a communicative, functional purpose that does not affect and is not affected by power relations.

Critical discourse analysis, instead, uses the term to examine how language creates power relations. In Fairclough's terms, the ultimate aim of this discipline is to "correct a widespread underestimation of the significance of language in the production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power" (in Pennycook, 1994b, p.121). This goal calls for a definition of discourse that captures the socio-political elements that come into play in a linguistic exchange.

I find Gee's distinction between "discourse with a small d" and "Discourse with a capital D" particularly helpful in understanding how language, as a social practice, contributes to shapes identity and power relations. For Gee (1996, pp. 127-128), "discourse" refers to the focus of applied linguistics, which is the study of the rules governing meaningful, supersentential utterances such as conversations or written texts. "Discourse" extends beyond this notion by encompassing the socio-political factors that determine whether or not an utterance is considered appropriate in a given setting. "Discourses" involve speech acts but also values and behavior codes; they consist of "saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations" which shape who we are.

> Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes . . . . A Discourse, then, is composed of ways of talking, listening (often, too, reading and writing) acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects in particular settings at specific times, so as to display a

> particular social identity. Discourses create social positions. (Gee, 1996, pp. 127-128)[2]

The idea that "Discourses create subject positions" is crucial for understanding the intricacies of the relationship between language, power and identity. Gee equates discourses to identity kits "which come complete with costumes and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize" (p.127). These "social roles" yield different levels of material and symbolic resources: hence, "Discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society . . . Control over certain Discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status)" (p. 132).

Like Bourdieu, Gee believes that access to those ways of speaking that are most profitable in terms of symbolic and material capital is not equitable. According to Gee, this is because discourses can be fully appropriated only through a process of unconscious acquisition that depends on socio-economic factors, rather than through a conscious learning process that can be the result of free choice. For Gee, deliberate attempts to learn a discourse that a person has not been socialized into can lead, at best, to "partial acquisition," which "marginalizes." In fact, "dominant groups in a society apply rather constantly tests of the fluency of the Discourses in which their power is symbolized; these tests become both tests of natives, or at least, fluent users of the Discourse and gates to exclude non-natives" (p. 146). Using Bourdieu's terminology, we could say that those who are able to produce "legitimate" speech acts seek to protect their "profits of distinction" (Section 1.1.1)

I fully agree with Gee that access to dominant discourses is not equitable, but I don't believe that people's position with respect to discourses can be as easily

[2] The notion of discourse I will take as a tool of analysis will be much closer to "Discourse with a capital D" than to "discourse with a small d." For convenience's sake, however, I will write it with a small d, unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence or I am quoting Gee verbatim.

categorized as he claims. For Gee, discourses produce "insiders" (people who have had full access to a discourse through the acquisition process), "outsiders" (people who are excluded completely from the discourse), and the "colonized" (people who occupy a marginal position because they can only claim a partial command of the discourse) (p. 155). I see the boundaries between discourses as being too blurry and fluid for them to be used as a basis for such a clear-cut taxonomy of subject positions. Discourses are not tight compartments; they conflict, overlap, and change over time, place, and social setting. For example, Weedon (1987) points out that discourses about femininity vary not only "from culture to culture and language to language," but also "within different feminist discourses and are subjected to historical change" (p. 22).

I will posit a less deterministic relationship between discourse and subjectivity. While it is important to see discourses as socially constitutive forces that play a crucial role in determining who we are and how we can position ourselves in terms of power relations, I argue that agency also comes into play in the construction of the self (Weedon 1987; Peirce, 1995). While there are certainly socio-economic factors that limit the range of "identity kits" a person can have access to throughout his or her life, I also believe that individuals are not only passive recipients of these kits, but, to varying degrees, draw on them selectively, as they make choices about their lives. This is not to say that who we are, how we are seen and the amount of social goods we can claim with our social identity can be constructed merely in terms of free choice. If that were the case, we would all adopt "ways of talking" that put us in a position of privilege and there would no such thing as social stratification. A critical language theory must start from the assumption that there are structural factors that prevent an equitable distribution of social goods. At the same time, however, a theory that

envisions the possibility of progressive socio-economic change must not reduce humanity to unaware victims or beneficiaries of a system whose workings are understood only by a limited number of like-minded intellectuals. This is why I will recommend extreme caution in using rigid interpretations of Marxist concepts such as "false consciousness" and "hegemony" to account for possible discrepancies between what critical theorists recommend, and what the subjects of these theories believe. Like Pennycook (1994b), I will argue that it is important to realize that "our ability to act in the world is constrained" but that it is "nevertheless crucial here to allow for human agency rather than constructing a model in which all is constructed by socio-economic (or other) relations" (p. 126).

I have found Thesen (1997) very helpful in finding a way to reconcile the need to take into account both structure and agency when looking for ways to reconceptualize language ownership and in the analysis of my empirical data. Thesen points out the limitations in the way that some critics have used the notion of discourse to describe "the complex and contradictory stances that accompany the acquisition of English in complex settings." With its excessive emphasis on the structural aspect of identity formation, discourse theory

> overlooks the focus on individual accounts. Learners are categorized according to a limited set of identity markers, which results in a deterministic view of identity in terms of the researcher's imposed categories. (p. 488)

In order to understand the complex interplay between "the individual and the social," or how identity construction results from "the dynamic interaction between the fixed identity categories that are applied to social groupings (such as race, gender, ethnicity, language) . . . and the way individuals think of themselves as they move

through the different discourses in which these categories are salient" (p. 488), Thesen suggests using the notion of "voice" in conjunction with the notion of discourse:

> Discourse is about constraints, codes, and restrictions on language in institutional settings. This view stresses the social envelope in which literacy events take place and the way these discourses create insiders and outsiders in the educational process. The construct of voice carries with it the individual perspective which is often silent in large institutions . . . . These two categories [should be] held against one another in a state of tension; they are linguistic representations of the fundamental tensions between structure and agency in social life. (p. 494)

Like Thesen, I shall seek to hold discourse and voice in tension in my critical review of the corpus and in the analysis of the qualitative data that I have collected.

Another aspect of discourse that is important to highlight for my argument is the notion that discourses are "resistant to criticism and self-scrutiny" and that "the Discourse itself defines what counts as acceptable criticism" (Gee, 1996, p. 132). For Kress (1985) this is the essence of discourse:

> Discourses are systematic-organized sets of statements which give expression to the meaning and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe, and delimit what is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension, what to do and what not to do) with respect to the area of concern of the institution, whether marginally or centrally. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to the way a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. (p. 7)

In my critique of the critical discourse, I will try to challenge a tendency to proscribe -- often implicitly -- "what is possible to say and not possible to say" in the critical conversations about the power of English (section 1.3.1).

1.2. Context: Language, Power, and Identity in South Africa

This section serves a double purpose. One purpose is to illustrate the concepts I have discussed in the previous section by looking at how power, language, and

identity have shaped South Africa's society from the earliest white settlements until the present. South Africa was probably the last country in the world to abandon institutionalized racial discrimination as a mechanism to ensure power imbalances among social groups. South Africa officially did away with the system of racial inequality called "apartheid" in 1994, when the first democratic elections were held, and it adopted a constitution that is considered among the most progressive in the world. Nevertheless, the power imbalances inherited from the past continue to persist, albeit under slightly different guises. With the implementation of strong affirmative action policies, which are often referred to as "Black Economic Empowerment," there has been the emergence of a black middle class that enjoys a standard of living that would have been for "whites only" during apartheid. The number of black people who have joined the ranks of the middle class, however, is very small compared to the number of people who continue to live in abject poverty. In fact, it can be argued that the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" has widened after the transition to democracy, even if it has become slightly less racial:

> Eight years after the [1994] political transition, changes in the distribution of socio-economic power have benefited the more or less 10 million blacks in the two bourgeois classes and have had hardly any effect on the 22.5 million blacks in the middle lower and lower lower classes. The 7.5 million in the upper lower class may have benefited only marginally.
>
> Members of the poorest half of the population are still relatively undereducated, unskilled, without formal jobs, and deprived of information about their rights and opportunities. They are unorganized, and – except in a few isolated instances – unable to exert pressure on the government. Their basic human needs remain unmet, perhaps even more so than in the past. (Terreblance, 2002, p. 35)

In this section I will highlight the important role language has played in creating and maintaining inequality throughout South Africa's history. Language has been used to create essentialized ethno-linguistic identities that have allowed the white

minority to keep its power by balkanizing the majority with "divide and rule" tactics. Language has been used in the struggle for hegemony between white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and white English-speaking South Africans. The outcome of this struggle has led to periods of "Dutchification," "Anglicization," and "Afrikaansization" of South Africa's linguistic market, which facilitated the socio-economic advancement of each respective language group. Most importantly, language has been used as a gate-keeper to exclude from opportunities of socio-economic empowerment. Even today, despite the fact that the "New South Africa" is based on a constitution that puts nine African languages on a par with English and Afrikaans, lack of proficiency in one of the former colonial languages, especially English, traps native speakers of African languages in the predicament of the poor described by Terreblance. Without English, or, to a much lesser extent Afrikaans, it is virtually impossible to acquire marketable skills, education, and a job in the formal sector, even at a menial level. Nor is it easy to form lobbies that can exert significant pressure on the government, despite the fact that the vast majority of the people who have gained political power after 1994 are native speakers of African languages themselves.

The other goal of this section is to provide the necessary background information for my literature review and for my empirical study. My literature review will focus on the critical discourse about the power of English in South Africa and it will point out some limitations of this discourse. Conversations about the power of English in South Africa often refer to speakers' attitudes towards the languages that are spoken in this country. Hence, in my historical excursus, I will focus on those events that have shaped language attitudes that reify the inequalities that characterize South Africa's linguistic market. I will conclude by taking a closer look at these

inequalities, highlighting the contrast between South Africa's language policies and practice. In terms of policies, I will look at how the constitution seeks to create the conditions for "linguistic communism" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 43) by embracing an "ecological approach" that promotes linguistic diversity and multi-lingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). I will then discuss how language practices *de facto* make English a *sine qua non* for academic success, professional employment, and meaningful political participation.

1.2.1. The Colonial Period (1652-1910)

Portuguese sailors under the command of Bartholomeu Dias are believed to be the first Europeans to have set foot in South Africa in the second half of the 15th Century, but it was not until 1652 that attempts were made by the Dutch to establish a permanent settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. Initially, the settlement was intended to be merely a fortified refreshing station for ships passing by en route to and from the East Indies, where the Netherlands had strong commercial and military interests. More than a Dutch colony, the Cape was the commercial property of the Dutch East India Company, a joint venture comprising several undertakings that were granted a monopoly by the Dutch government to exercise trade with India and Indonesia. With time, the company released some of its employees from their contractual obligations and helped them to settle at the Cape of Good Hope on small holdings as "free burgers," or independent farmers.

The indigenous people that the Dutch settlers encountered at the Cape were distinct from the speakers of Bantu languages who migrated to Southern Africa from the Niger-Congo region during the iron age, and who were referred to as "black,"

"African," or "native" during apartheid. The Khokhoi and the San were two aboriginal nations that had lived in Southern Africa for at least 8000 years before the first white settlements (Terreblanche, p. 154). The languages spoken by the descendents of these nations are an endangered species, as the Khoikhoi and the San have been largely assimilated into the black community, or the "cape coloured" community, which is made of people of mixed racial heritage, many of whom are the descendents of the slave population and are native speakers of Afrikaans. The Khoi and the San have also been significantly reduced in numbers as a result of clashes with the Dutch and epidemics brought by the Europeans (Mesthrie, 2002, pp. 14-15).

Even though the descendents of the settlers used various means, including raids, to coerce some indigenous inhabitants into *de facto* slavery, the bulk of the slave population of the Cape came from other parts of Africa, especially Madagascar and Mozambique, the Indian subcontinent, and the Indonesian archipelago. Approximately 63,000 slaves were imported in the period that went from 1652 until 1808, and in the 18th century, their number began to exceed the number of free burgers who had settled at the Cape. According to Meshtrie, the slave population of the cape was

> possibly the most diverse in the world in terms of origins, religion, culture, and language. The roots of the large coloured population of the Western cape go back to this period, with a multiple ancestry that involves the [Khoikhoi and the San], Eastern and African slaves, and the offspring of European and non-European. (2002, pp. 14-15)

The diversity brought to the Cape by the slave population played an essential role in shaping the linguistic features that set apart Afrikaans from its parent language, Dutch. It is an interesting historical irony that a language that has been used as a symbol of racial purity and as an instrument of white supremacy during apartheid

(Kwamgamalu 2001) owes a good part of its distinctive features to a racially mixed speech community that has been regarded as inferior throughout centuries of white domination.

The British first took control of the Cape in 1795 for its strategic value as a naval base. The colony was handed back to the Dutch in 1803 but fell back under British rule in 1806 during the Napoleonic wars. What followed was a period of Anglicization that had very important historical and socio-linguistic consequences. The following statement by the Governor of the Cape, Lord Charles Somerset, of the British colonial authorities' illustrates attitudes towards the language spoken by the descendents of the Dutch settlers:

> They were only a little over thirty thousand in number, and it seemed absurd that such a small body of people should be permitted to perpetuate ideas and customs that were not English in a country that had become part of the British empire. Already, Sir John Cradock has issued a notice that no one who did not understand the English language would be appointed to any post in the civil service. (Malherbe, 1925, p. 57)

To ensure "that ideas and customs that were not English" would not be perpetuated, in 1822, Somerset issued a series of proclamations prescribing the exclusive use of English for all official documents and for proceedings in courts of law. Most importantly, English supplanted Dutch as the medium of instruction in public schools, and teachers "were expected to use their best efforts to promote Afrikaner acceptance of British rule" (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 366). Understandably, such policies created resentment among the Afrikaners, who began to form a sense of national identity around their native language (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 366; Hexham 1991, p. 132). By then, this language had become Afrikaans, a creolized variety of Dutch that diverged significantly from the variety spoken in the Netherlands, which prior to the arrival of the British, was still used for high functions.

Resentment against British rule, especially after the abolition of slavery in 1834, led to the Great Trek during which a significant part of the Afrikaans nation pushed into the interior of South Africa. When they reached the Eastern part of South Africa, the Afrikaners, also known as the "Boers," settled on vast stretches of land that lent themselves well to farming. These lands appeared empty, but they had actually been occupied by Nguni tribes whose ancestors had come to Southern Africa from the Niger Congo. These lands had been vacated as a consequence of the Mfecane, a series of intertribal wars that ravaged the socio-political landscape of the area and that led to the emergence of the Zulu nation as a regional superpower. Under the leadership of King Shaka, the Zulus had formed a centralized military state that had conquered and absorbed neighboring chiefdoms, spreading the language variety used by the ruling clan (Rudwick, 2006, p. 89).

The Zulus were eventually subjugated by the British in 1879, who had created the colony of Natal around what was to become the city of Durban. With the annexation of the Zulu kingdom, the British secured their control of all South Africa's coastline. In the second half of the 19th Century, the British imported over 150,000 indentured laborers from India (Mesthrie, 2002, p. 17) in order to meet the demand for labor on the sugar cane plantations of Natal. Subsequently, there was also was an influx of Indian traders who were better off financially than those who had come to Natal as indentured workers.

Meanwhile, the Afrikaans trekkers had founded two Boer republics: the Transvaal and Orange Free State, whose independence was recognized by Britain respectively in 1852 and 1854. The discovery of precious metals in the interior disrupted the equilibrium that had been created in the region and led to the Anglo-Boer wars (1899-1902), during which 26,370 Afrikaans women and children died in

British concentration camps, in addition to 14,000 black South Africans who were interned in separate facilities.

As a result of the atrocities suffered in these wars, Afrikaans nationalism grew, as did the Afrikaans nation's investment in their mother tongue as a marker of identity and as an ideological weapon for political struggle:

> The war renewed and strengthened ties of kinship between Cape Afrikaners and their brethren in the north of the country (Moodie, 1975, pp. 39); it replaced an old fragmented political order with a unified state (Ponelis, 1993, p. 53); it gave Afrikaners a much sharper image of themselves as distinct people (Atwell, 1986, p. 79) and it brought British imperialism sharply into focus as the single entity that the Afrikaner nationalism sought to mobilize against. The major unifying factor in the Afrikaner struggle against British domination was the Afrikaans language itself. (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 369)

It is important to notice how radically the status of Afrikaans changed as the leaders of the nation began to see its value as a weapon of collective empowerment for their nation. Before British imperialism became a serious threat to the political interests of the descendant of the Boers, Dutch and Afrikaans had co-existed in a diglossic relationship, with Dutch being used in high functions, such as formal education, politics, and religious service, and Afrikaans being used for informal communication. Until the end of the Boer war, even among Afrikaners, Afrikaans was sometimes referred to disparagingly as "Kombuistaal," or "kitchen language," an improper way of speaking that was considered much more adequate for talking to servants than for engaging in educated discourse. The following extract, which Ponelis quoted from an article which was published in 1857, exemplifies negative attitudes towards Afrikaans held by those who opposed the use of the Cape Dutch dialect in formal situations:

> The poverty of expression in this jargon is such that we defy any man to express thoughts in it above the merest common-place. People can hardly be expected to act up to sentiments which the tongue they use fails entirely to express. There can be no literature with such language, for poor as it is, it is hardly a written one. (In Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 369)

Pro-Afrikaans grassroots movements fought to change these perceptions with the overt intention of promoting the interests of the native speakers of this language (Webb and Kriel, 2000, p. 21; DeKlerk, 2002, p. 32). The following statement made by Afrikaans activist Dr. Malan at a language movement meeting in 1908 shows that activists were very well aware of the fact that language policies have very important repercussions on power relations:

> Raise the Afrikaans language to a written language, make it the bearer of our culture, our history, our national ideals, and you will raise the people to a feeling of self-respect and to the calling to take a worthier place in world civilization. (Pienaar, in Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 370)

It was not until 1925, however, that Afrikaans gained official status alongside English in the Union of South Africa. The Union of South Africa, which came into being in 1910, a few years after the British won the second Boer War, incorporated the two Boer republics and the colonies of Natal and the Cape, which together, comprise the territory that constitutes present-day South Africa.

As political power shifted from the Boers to the British, the black intelligentsia became hopeful that the socio-economic situation of the indigenous population of South Africa would improve. These intellectual leaders had been educated in English in missionary schools that lay the foundation for the emergence of a black elite. A group of these leaders, which included the novelist and activist Sol Plaatjie, formed the South African Native National Congress, a political movement that would evolve into the African National Congress, a major player in the struggle against apartheid,

and the political party that has enjoyed an absolute majority in South Africa's multi-racial parliament since 1994.

The hopes of the South African Native National Congress, however, were dashed in 1913, as the British authorities passed the Natives' Land Act, which was the first major step towards the establishment of an institutionalized system of racial segregation and inequality. The Natives' Land Act divided South Africa's territory into white areas and "native" areas, the latter being reservations for the black African indigenous population that is associated with Bantu languages. Eighty-seven percent of the land was allocated to the white population, and only 13% to its black counterpart, despite the fact that blacks constituted the vast majority of the population. The Natives' Land Act was the beginning of the "homeland" or "Bantustan" system, which balkanized the black South African nation into a patchwork of geographically fragmented ethno-linguistic communities.

In addition to providing good quality education to those black South Africans who were fortunate enough to attend mission schools, English missionaries were responsible for codifying the two continua of communication systems that allowed varying levels of mutual intelligibility within each of these groups of Bantu languages: the Nguni group, and the Sotho group. These language continua were standardized into discrete languages to facilitate Christian proselytizing among the indigenous population with the translation of the Bible and other religious texts (Mesthrie, 2002, p. 16; Kamwangamalu, 2001. p. 385). After it came to power in 1948, the apartheid government used these questionable linguistic boundaries to ascribe different ethnic identities to black South Africans and to relegate each ethnicity to a different homeland (DeKlerk, 2002, p. 32).

1.2.2. The Apartheid Years (1948-1994)

The Nationalist Party (NP) came to power in 1948 after defeating Jan Smuts' United Party, whose politics were considered too liberal by the white electorate who feared losing jobs and their identity if this party pursued its plan to make small steps towards racial integration (L'Ange, 2005, p. 224). The NP capitalized on these fears by winning the elections with an agenda that promised the protection of white privilege and "purity" with institutionalized racial segregation and with the determination to promote the interests of the Afrikaans nation and independence from Britain.

The winning of the 1948 election constituted a historic moment for the Afrikaners: their power was not only restored, but also extended to the whole of South Africa, including the old British colonies of the Cape and Natal. Without much ado, the NP implemented a series of vigorous "Afrikaanization" language policies that aimed at promoting the socio-economic uplift of its speakers. Prime minister D.F. Malan

> energetically set about replacing English speakers with Afrikaners whenever possible in government ranks. The civil service and the police become something of an Afrikaner preserve. There was an outright purge in the army and the air force. Out went the senior officers who had served with distinction in the war, and in came Afrikaners from the lower ranks, or wherever they could be found, even among the Nazi-sympathizers who had been interned during the war. Uniforms, insignia, and even some regimental names were changed in order to fumigate the armed forces of English taint. (L'Ange, p. 225)

In addition to being a pre-condition for employment in the public sector, Afrikaans was a compulsory subject in schools, and South African students could not graduate from high school without passing this subject. Afrikaans went from being

considered a debased dialect of Dutch to a national language wrapped in an ideological and religious mystique. Afrikaans was constructed as a "gift from God" which encapsulates the soul of the Afrikaans nation (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 370, 409). The last apartheid president P.W. Botha celebrated the elevation of the status of Afrikaans with the following words:

> We pay homage to the cultural leaders of the past, but we also stand humbly before the Creator of all languages and nations, grateful for this miraculous gift to our soul. (Webb and Kriel, 2000, p. 42)

As for institutionalizing racial segregation, the NP embarked on a project of social engineering that would ensure that South Africa would remain a white country that would continue to benefit from the large pool of unskilled, underpaid labor that had become essential for its economy. The black reservations that had been created with the Natives' Land Act were given a veneer of political autonomy, and in some cases, even independence so that each black South African could be given citizenship in a "homeland" based on his or her ethno-linguistic identity. In reality, however, these pseudo-autonomous geographical entities were puppet states controlled by the apartheid government:

> The self-serving expediency of the Bantustan plan was plainly manifest in its geography. Not only did the Bantustans amount to a very small proportion of the country as a whole, but few of them were of a whole piece, the rest comprising a number of parts separated by white territory. The 'independent' state of Bophuthatswana was an especially ludicrous scattering of six widely spaced bits, one of them 250 km away from the nearest other bit (….) The Bantustan map looked to the world at large more like a hoax than a serious concept. (L'Ange, 2005 p. 333)

Ensuring the separation of people of mixed racial heritage presented particular challenges. The "coloured" community did not have a "natural homeland" outside

white South Africa, and throughout the centuries, it had intermixed with the white community. The 1950 Group Areas Act, a second pillar of the apartheid structure, was an attempt to solve this problem by demarcating separate residential areas for the different racial groups living within white South Africa: the coloured community, the Asian community (mainly made of people of Indian descent) and those black South Africans who were in possession of passes, or temporary work permits that allowed them to live in white South Africa.

The pillar of apartheid that has had the most important consequences for language attitudes in South Africa was the Bantu education act, a body of educational policies whose explicit goal was to provide an inferior education for black South Africans in accordance with the inferior position they were expected to occupy in society. In 1954 Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd, who is considered one of the major architects of apartheid, introduced this legislation with a speech in parliament describing how the education that some black South Africans were receiving in English-medium missionary schools had become a "national problem."

> By blindly producing pupils trained on a European model, the vain hope was created among natives that they could occupy posts within the European community despite the country's policy of Apartheid. This creation of unhealthy "White collar ideals" is causing widespread frustration among the so called educated natives. This is the class that has learnt to believe that it is above its people and feels that its spiritual, economic, and political home is among the civilized community of South Africa, i.e. the Europeans, and feels frustrated because its wishes have not been realized. (Verwoerd, In Rose and Tunmer, 1975: 261)

The Bantu Education Act aimed to solve this "national problem" by taking control of black South Africans' schooling and placing it into the hands of the department of "Native Affairs," which implemented a "uniform educational policy,

consistent with the general policy [of apartheid] of the country" (Verwoerd, in Rose and Tumner, 1975, p. 261).

In addition to ensuring that black South Africans would receive an inferior level of schooling, Bantu education prescribed a language policy that reduced the use of English as a medium of instruction, increased the use of the mother tongue, and introduced Afrikaans as a compulsory medium of instruction. The apartheid establishment's fear of creating a class of educated "black Englishmen" is evident in Verwoerds' concern about black South Africans' "desire to show off their knowledge of English culture" (Rose and Tumner, p. 264). The introduction of Afrikaans had to do with the need to make black South Africans more productive as cheap laborers, especially in the farming and mining sector, where Afrikaans would often be likely to be the language used by the employers. Also, promoting Afrikaans as a lingua franca for interracial communication served the purpose of strengthening this language in the competition for hegemony with English, as reflected in the following extract from a paper published by the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organizations:

> We must see to it that the natives learn Afrikaans. That gives us another seven million people which will make our language the strongest in this part of the world. The Kaffir[3] who speaks Afrikaans . . . . can be our cultural servant as he is our farm servant. (In Malherbe, 1977, p. 73-4)

The increased used of the mother tongue was due to the fact that the apartheid government relied very heavily on essentialized identity categories to prescribe people's place in society, and language was a key instrument for marking and policing the borders of these categories. We have already seen that, as the Afrikaners came together as a nation, they rallied around their native language as a vital symbol of their

[3] The word Kaffir comes from the Arabic work "infidel." In Southern Africa, it became a disparaging term to refer to black people, who consider it extremely offensive.

national identity. In a similar way, the apartheid government used Bantu languages to create separate African nations, which, of course, were to occupy a much lower place in the country's social hierarchy.

The relationship between language, identity, and power relations was constructed as a "natural order of things" stemming from the will of God. According to this logic, "God had willed that there should be separated nations each with its own language, and that therefore, mother tongue education should be the will of God" (Malherbe, 1977, p. 101).[4]

The apartheid government saw instruction in the mother tongue as the perfect way to ensure that the "native" would not forget his or her culture and his or her place in society. The Eiselen Report, whose recommendations provided the basis for Bantu education, envisioned the following outcome for black South Africans' schooling:

> A Bantu child, trained and conditioned in Bantu culture, endowed with the knowledge of a Bantu language, and imbued with values and interests and behavior patterns learned at the knee of a Bantu mother . . . . The mother tongue should be used for at least the duration of the primary school. As the literary treasures of the Bantu languages are developed and their importance as means of communication increases, they should in increasing measure be recognized as media of instruction. (p.248-250)

In his parliament speech, Verwoerd made no secret of the fact that promoting the use of the mother tongue, while imposing Afrikaans and reducing access to English, was a recipe for maintaining a separate and unequal social order.

> There is no place for the [native] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor . . . . Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent on an education for which there is no specific aim but it is also

[4] For a fuller discussion of the role of religion, and especially of the Dutch Reformed Church, in supporting the way language was used in apartheid ideology, see Kamwangamalu, 2001, pp. 379-387; p. 391.

> dishonest to continue. It is abundantly clear that unplanned education creates many problems, disrupting the community life of the Bantu and endangering the community life of the European. (p. 266)

The resentment that these language policies in education triggered in the black population led to the Soweto riots of 1976, which were so virulent that the government had to modify its language policy. The use of African languages as official media of instruction was reduced, and black schools were left free to choose between English and Afrikaans as a language of learning after the foundational stage. Ninety-six percent of black schools had chosen English by 1978 (Hartstone, in Heugh, 2002, p. 17). Nevertheless, Bantu Education succeeded in its intent to provide an inferior level of education for black South Africans so that they would be excluded from competition with white people for much better remunerated employment. The legacy of this policy still plagues the education opportunities of the majority of black South Africans, who cannot afford to pay the higher school fees required to attend schools that used to be reserved for other racial groups. In addition, Bantu Education had a huge impact on black South Africans' language attitudes, who came to associate mother tongue instruction with the social engineering of the apartheid government.

> The black pupils saw education in their own mother tongue as a dead-end barrier to more advanced learning, as a lure to self-destruction and a trap designed by the apartheid Government to ensure that the black pupils did not acquire sufficient command of the high status languages.
> (Kawangamalu, 2001, p. 394; see also Heugh, 2002)

At the same time, English began to be seen as the key to a good education that could lead to professional employment and as an ideological weapon that allowed black South Africans from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds to come together in the liberation struggle against apartheid (Janks 1992; Meerkotter, 1986). According to Alexander (2000), an equation was created in the mind of black South Africans:

mother tongue instruction = oppression, and English = liberation. Alexander refers to this equation as a "truly baneful legacy of Apartheid that, next to the lack of political will among most of the leadership in this country, is the greatest impediment to the implementation of a successful policy of multilingualism" (p.17). Many critics agree, pointing out that the goals of mother tongue instruction, within a framework of policies aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2001), are antithetical to the goals of Bantu education. While the architects of apartheid used mother tongue instruction to create inequality with inadequate schooling, language rights activists seek to promote equality among native speakers of different languages by making sure that all children can benefit from the cognitive advantages of mother tongue instruction.

Nevertheless, changing negative attitudes towards African languages on the part of their native speakers, especially given the realities of the local and the global job market, remains one of the biggest challenges in making South Africa's linguistic market more equitable.

1.2.3 The "New South Africa" (1994 to present)

Apartheid officially came to an end in 1994 with the first democratic elections, after decades of social unrest, international sanctions, and financial costs had made the system no longer sustainable. The new constitution, which was passed in 1996, is considered among the most progressive in the world. In terms of language policies, the constitution acknowledges "the link between language, culture and development" (Mesthrie, 2006, p. 152) and the need to redress a status differential among the various

languages spoken in South Africa as part of the post-apartheid process of democratic transformation:

> Recognizing 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. (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, Chapter I, Section 6, article 2; see also The Department of Education, *South Africa's new language policy: the facts*, 1994: 4,6.)

In addition to the former colonial languages (English and Afrikaans), nine indigenous languages were given official status. These are isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Venda, and Tsonga. The first four languages (isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, and isiNdeble) are part of the Nguni cluster, which form a continuum of communication systems that presents a high level of mutual intelligibility and that it is spoken by 18 million people. Sepedi, Sesotho, and Tswana are part of the Sotho cluster, which is also characterized by high levels of mutual intelligibility and is spoken by a little over 10 million people. Venda, spoken by 1 million people, and Tsonga, spoken by two million people, are not mutually intelligible with any of the other official languages spoken in South Africa (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 372).

Table 1: Percentage of the population speaking each official language as their home language

IsiZulu	22.9%
IsiXhosa	17.9%
Afrikaans	14.4%
Sepedi	9.2%
English	8.5%
Setswana	8.2%
Sesotho	7.7%
Xitsonga	4.4%
Siswati	2.5%
Tshivenda	2.2%
IsiNdebele	1.5%
Other	0.6%

Census 2001

Besides giving eleven languages official status, the constitution makes provisions for the promotion and development of the almost extinct Khoi and San languages, sign language and

> German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Urdu, and [other languages] commonly used by communities in South Africa, and Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and others used for religious purposes. (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, Chapter I, Section 6, article 5)

It is worth noting that the languages used in South Africa include several "contact languages" or hybrid codes that came into being as speakers from different socio-linguistic backgrounds found themselves having to communicate with each other, especially in mining towns, which drew immigrants from all over Southern Africa and from other continents (Mesthrie, 2002, p. 17). These languages include Tsostistaal, Flaaitaal, Iscampto, and the pidgin Fanakalo, and while they do not appear in the census figures, they constitute an integral part of many South Africans' linguistic repertoires.

As for education, the new constitution prescribes that "every person shall be entitled to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable." Building on this principle, the Department of Education articulated a language in education policy with the following aims:

> a) to promote additive multilingualism, that is, to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional languages
>
> b) to promote and develop all the official languages
>
> c) to counter disadvantage resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching
>
> d) to develop programs for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages. (Department of Education, *Government Gazette*, no. 18546, 19 December 1997)

As we can see, South Africa's legislation concerning language policies seems to establish the perfect conditions for a very good "language ecology" where all language species are protected, enjoy the same status, and their speakers can count on being able to excercise their linguistic human rights as envisioned by the UNESCO *Declaration of the Rights of Persons belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities* (1992). Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, and Kontra, critical scholars who are in the forefront of language rights activism, have praised the work as South Africa's policymakers as exemplary for having succeeded at "having language rights enshrined in the constitution" (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2001, p. 143).

The realities of South Africa's linguistic market, however, are very different. While the constitution prescribes equality by stipulating that "all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equally" (Chapter I, Section 6, article 5), in reality, "some languages and identity options are 'more equal than others'" (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004, p. 3). It is true that some inroads have been made in increasing the market value of African languages, after the 1994 transition to democracy. Most importantly, there are resources allocated to develop African languages; there is at least a minimal presence of indigenous languages in public institutions, and several universities, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal, are committed to the promotion of African languages as media of instruction and learning (Mesthrie, 2006, p. 156). Nevertheless, for most native speakers of African languages, a high level of English proficiency remains a precondition for academic success, employment in the formal sector, and meaningful political participation.

In terms of education, very little has changed: the quality of the education a student can expect to receive varies enormously according to the type of school he or she can afford to attend. For example, the teacher-pupil ratio in former white schools

is approximately 1:30; in former black schools, it is 1:60 in urban areas, and about 1:100 in rural areas (Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 396). Schools that used to be reserved for Indian and coloured students are generally better resourced than schools that used to be reserved for black students, but not as well resourced as former white schools. The major change is that former white schools have become multi-racial with a strong presence of middle class students from previously disadvantaged racial backgrounds. Former coloured and Indian schools have also attracted significant numbers of relatively more affluent black students in search of a better education with more exposure to English. The schools created by Bantu education cater to the poorest section of the black population.

Much as it was during apartheid, African languages are used as official media of instruction in former black schools for the first four years of primary school, after which a switch occurs to either English or Afrikaans. The vast majority of black schools choose English. After this switch occurs, however, African languages continue to be used extensively as *de facto* languages of instruction in varying degrees of code-switching with English. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon in former black schools, especially in rural areas, for teachers to have a limited command of English. Nevertheless, "matriculation" examinations, which determine whether or not a student can graduate from high school, can be taken only in English or Afrikaans.

It must be pointed out that a major impediment in promoting a greater use of African languages in education comes from the language attitudes of black South African parents, who, for pragmatic reasons related to the job market and for the "baneful legacy" of Bantu education (Alexander, 2003, p. 15), are not in favor of using their children's mother tongues as media of instruction. According to a survey carried out in greater Pretoria, 98% of black parents express a preference to see their

children educated through the medium of English; 1% prefer Afrikaans, and only 1% would opt for an African language (Roodt, in Kamwangamalu, 2001, p. 414).

The constitution prescribes that "any person may communicate in writing or orally with a government department in any official language" and that "any attempt by the government to act in any linguicist manner or to allow any language/languages to dominate others would be unconstitutional" (Section 3, Article 2). Yet, English clearly dominates in public administration. According to Pandor, 87% of the speeches that were made in parliament in 1995 were in English, less than 5% were in Afrikaans, and only 8% were given in the nine African languages that have official status. This, despite the fact that at the time, 80% of the parliament consisted of black South Africans who, in most cases, are native speakers of African languages (in Kawangamalu, 2001, p. 411). The Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG), a committee set up to advise the Department of Arts, Culture, and Technology on issues regarding language policy and practice, found that

> some cabinet ministers and directors-general refuse to respond to documents unless they are in English; at the provincial level, correspondence between Provincial Governments and the Central Government is conducted mainly in English; at the local Government, City and Town Council meetings are held monolingually in English because some councilors refuse to let other councilors speak in any other language. (LANGTAG, 1996, p. 47)

Countless more examples of the glaring discrepancy between language policy and practice can be found. Among others, Kamwangamalu mentions the "uneven distribution of airtime" on SABC, South Africa's public broadcasting corporation, which, according to a study he carried out, allocated 91.5% of the total and weekly airtime to English broadcasts, 5.6% to Afrikaans, and only 2.29% to the nine official African languages (2001, p. 403). He also notes that in formal events of national importance, such as the 1994 inauguration speech of Nelson Mandela, the annual

openings of parliament, the signing of the constitution of the new South Africa, and official announcements and press releases, English is used almost exclusively.

1.3. The debate

The gap between language policy and practice that we have just examined is the focus of critical discourse about language, power, and identity in South Africa. Often drawing on the work of scholars who have looked at the power of English internationally, critics have sought to challenge the notion that the dominance of English in South Africa is a "natural, neutral, and beneficial" phenomenon. Critics have sought to counterbalance mainstream perceptions of the power of English that tend to construe this language as a tool for collective and personal socio-economic empowerment with counter-constructions aimed at alerting people involved in the debate and the general public about the danger of the growth of English as a dominant language.

In this section, I will review seminal critical constructions of the power of English. Given that the power of English in local contexts such as South Africa is inextricably related to the power of English as an international lingua franca, my review will include arguments that apply to South Africa's linguistic market even if they have been made by critics who have looked at the power of English in different contexts. I will then discuss epistemological and political limitations of critical arguments that fail to take sufficiently into account the empowering potential of appropriating English as an additional language. I will argue that these limitations are rooted in essentializing and deterministic conceptions of language, power, and identity that are likely to create impediments for bridging the gap between language policy and practice in South Africa. As a way out of these political and epistemological

limitations, I will suggest reconceptualizing language ownership by returning to the post-structural and post-colonial recommendations that I highlighted in my discussion of language, power, and identity.

1.3.1. Critiquing the critical discourse: epistemological premises

In section 1.1.4. we saw that according to Gee (1996), discourses are "resistant to criticism and self-scrutiny," and that according to Kress (1985, p. 7), "they define, describe, and delimit what is possible to say and not possible to say." While I do not believe that discourses ought to be conceived of as tight compartments, I have certainly noticed a tendency to prescribe -- often implicitly -- "what is possible to say and not possible to say" in conversations about the power of English. In fact, my first encounter with the corpus of critical literature about the power of English left me with the feeling that debate about English as a national and international lingua franca was polarized. This impression came primarily from the second chapter of Pennycook's *The Cultural Politics of English* (1994a), where the author takes a critical look at the notion that the spread of English is synonymous with socio-economic empowerment by deconstructing the "set of possible statements" (Kress, 1985, p.7) propagated by institutions that promote the interests of neoliberal centers of power.

I was impressed with Pennycook's exposition of the lengths that countries such as the United States and Great Britain have gone to in order to promote the spread of their national language across the globe, and how this spread has served their economic interests (1994a, pp. 145-179). At the same time, however, it seemed to me that while neoliberal discourses created a "set of possible statements" about English that excluded any notion that the spread of this language might have any sort of

negative effects, the critical discourse that emerged from the second chapter of *The Cultural Politics* excluded, or marginalized, statements that I believe can be made about English as a weapon of empowerment.

My impression that within the critical discourse there was a tendency to dismiss, or at least underplay, the possibility that there might be any benefits in the growth of English as a lingua franca was confirmed as I read Phillipson's *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), and Ngugi's *Decolonsing the Mind* (1981), two works that have had a seminal impact in shaping the critical debate. I also noticed this tendency in several works that were critical of the power effects of English in post-apartheid South Africa (Ndebele, 1997; Alexander, 1992, 1993; Heugh, 2002). I will argue that the power of English is ambivalent. As the neoliberal discourse emphasizes, English provides opportunities for socio-economic mobility (Pennycook, 1994a, pp.1-35); as the critical discourse warns, English excludes from these opportunities and produces social stratification.

There are epistemological reasons for theorizing from the starting point that, as a weapon of empowerment, English is a double-edged sword. In order to challenge dominant discourses that re(produce) inequality, it is crucial to fight discourses' reluctance to engage in constructive conversations with different ways of thinking about inequality. Internal criticism is vital. Knowledge grows through a dialectical process through which thesis and anti-thesis constantly challenge and reshape our understanding of reality.

Throughout my analysis, therefore, I will seek to embrace this dialectical process by holding polar epistemological tendencies in tension with each other. When looking at "sets of possible statements" that construct the spread of English as a disempowering phenomenon, I will juxtapose a symmetrical set of statements that can

be made about English as a weapon of empowerment. When "sets of possible statements" rely too heavily on Marxist tools of analysis that emphasis structure but deny agency, I will juxtapose poststructuralist concepts that point to the importance of looking at subjectivity as a key concept for theorizing about language and social change.

The focus of my critical gaze will be the critical discourse. This is not because my sympathies lie with the neoliberal side, but because critical theorists have exposed quite effectively the dangers of presenting the spread of English exclusively in terms of a "natural, neutral, and beneficial phenomenon" (Pennycook, 1994a, p. 23). I believe that investing further intellectual energies in the deconstruction of these discourses would not do much in addition to preaching to the converts. Exposing the limitations of the critical discourse, however, might help us come up with more effective theories of language and empowerment.

1.3.2. Tools of analysis: critical discourse, critical model, and critical metaphors

As my perception of the critical corpus became more nuanced, I realized that several theorists have questioned some of the statements of the critical discourse without necessarily subscribing to the neoliberal view that the spread of English is always synonymous with socio-economic empowerment (Kachru, 1986; Widdowson, 1998; Granville et. al, 1998, Bloemmaert, 2001). Even Pennycook, whose discourse struck me as being vehemently "anti-English" in my first reading, had actually warned against the danger of degenerating into "totalizing tendencies" and "deterministic theses" if the discourse becomes too dismissive of the idea that English can empower (1994a, p. 69). Theorists who have constructed the spread of English in terms that are

very negative explicitly reject “the anti-English” label and concede, more or less reluctantly, that access to English must be given within the framework of additive bilingual educational policies aimed at promoting the learning and acquisition of both the mother tongue and of English as an additional language (Alexander, 2003, p. 11; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001, p. 143).

The “critical” vs. “neoliberal” discourse dichotomy seemed to be less and less productive as a tool of analysis for my literature review. It became clear to me that casting theorists either into “pro-English” or “anti-English” “sets of possible statements” was a move that did not do justice to the complexity of what the critics have said about English. Moreover, as I mentioned in section 1.4, I have come to see the boundaries between discourses as being too blurry and fluid to believe that people can easily be placed either into or out of a particular discourse. And even if discourses were indeed tight compartments, it would be impossible to come up with an exhaustive review of “the set of possible statements” that have looked at English critically. Critiquing the discourse, therefore, no longer seemed like a viable project. Instead, I started thinking about critiquing only a subset of critical statements and referring to them as the “critical model.”

Models are simplified representations of phenomena that are too complex to be explained exhaustively. Because models simplify what they represent, they are subject to intrinsic limitations; because what is represented is too complex to be fully explained abstractly, models are indispensable for theory. The “critical model” seeks to represent a subset “of possible statements” within the critical discourse that does not engage sufficiently with the empowering potential of English. Arguments that fall into the critical model fail to acknowledge the ambivalent nature of the power of English through the use of negative constructions that exclude or underplay the

possibility that this language could be used as an instrument for progressive socio-economic change.

As a simplified representation, the critical model is subject to limitations. My synthesis cannot capture the full complexity of the subset of statements that fail to do justice to English as a weapon of empowerment. This is because these statements are too numerous and because they are part and parcel of extended arguments whose theoretical value can be fully appreciated only if they are considered in their entirety. Despite its limitations, however, the critical model can be a useful tool of analysis. The statements that fail to engage with the empowering potential of English are the statements in which the critical discourse's resistance to internal criticism is the strongest. It is precisely these statements, therefore, that need to be opened up for scrutiny in order to come up with theories that can give us a better understanding of how to make linguistic markets more equitable.

My synthesis of the critical model is built around three central metaphors that have a lot of currency in the critical discourse as tropes for constructing the negative socio-economic effect of the spread of English. One of these metaphors presents English as a poacher that is responsible for linguistic genocide: because of its hegemonic power, English saps material and symbolic resources from other languages, which are doomed to remain confined to the lower status of vernaculars or to become extinct. A second metaphor characterizes English as a gatekeeper that ensures that societies remains highly stratified: a lack of proficiency in English is used as a mechanism to exclude from education, employment, and status. A third metaphor describes English as a "colonizer of the mind": the learning and acquisition of this language in the periphery results in the internalization of Western-centric values that instill a sense of inferiority in the colonial subject.

Before I illustrate how these metaphors operate in the literature I reviewed, I would like to point out that their use does not necessarily result in theories that are affected by the epistemological and political weaknesses of the critical model, nor that they do not have any value for understanding the power effects of the spread of English. Critical metaphors result in the critical model only if they are used as rhetorical tools to establish boundaries between what is possible and not possible to say within the critical discourse.

I would also like to stress that the critical model is not a dichotomous notion that theorists either subscribe to or reject, but a way of looking at English that oversimplifies issues of language and empowerment by failing to engage sufficiently with the benefits that can come with the appropriation of the language of power. People are not either exponents or critics of the critical model. Even though there are theorists who resort to it more than others, a person can slip in and out of the critical model while building an extended argument. My literature review, therefore, will not summarize a series of theorists' positions and label them as "critical model" or "non-critical model" based. Instead, it will provide examples of how this tendency to oversimplify can weaken theories that are critical of the power of English.

In the next section, I will give examples of how the three metaphors are used to deconstruct the equation between the spread of English and socio-economic empowerment. My examples will come from arguments that have critiqued both the growth of English as an international lingua franca and as a dominant language of intranational communication in South Africa.

1.3.3. English as a linguistic poacher

One of the main arguments of the critical model is that English is responsible for linguistic genocide: English is characterized as a sort of "linguistic poacher" that exterminates endangered languages across the globe by excluding them from prestigious discourses, relegating them to the lower status of vernaculars -- at best -- or condemning them to extinction. The work of Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (1995) in the area of linguistic rights has had a seminal influence on the way critical linguists have come to see the power of English as an intranational and international lingua franca. Their correlated notions of "linguicide" and "linguicism" have become key concepts in the debate. Linguicide refers to "the extermination of language, an analogous concept to (physical) genocide"; linguicism is

> An analogous concept to racism, classism, sexism . . . that translates into ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language. (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 83)

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson draw a parallel between bio-diversity and linguistic diversity to argue that in order to stop the dire consequences that linguicide and linguicism are having globally, it is essential to promote linguistic human rights. "The perpetuation of linguistic diversity can . . . be seen as a recognition that all individuals have basic human rights, and as a necessity for the survival of the planet, in a similar way to bio-diversity" (1995, p. 84).

Pennycook refers to the linguicidal effects of English as a process of "linguistic curtailment":

> In a number of instances . . . English poses a direct threat to the very existence of other languages. More generally, however, if not actually threatening linguistic genocide, it poses the less dramatic but far more widespread danger of what we might call linguistic curtailment. When English becomes the first choice as a second language, when it is the language in which so much is written and in which so much of the visual media occur, it is constantly pushing other languages out of the way, curtailing their use in both qualitative and quantitative terms. (1994a, p. 14)

According to Pennycook, this curtailing process is in turn responsible for the gatekeeping effect of English: the exclusion of other languages in discourses whose mastery is a *sine qua non* for the appropriation of material and symbolic resources excludes the speakers of those languages from opportunities for socio-economic mobility:

> With English taking up such an important position in many educational systems around the world, it has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion and exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions. In many countries, particularly former colonies of Britain, small English speaking elites have continued the same policies of the former colonizers, using access to English language education as a crucial distributor of social prestige and wealth. (1994a, p. 14)

1.3.4. English as a Gatekeeper

Critical linguists have written at length about the gatekeeping effect of English in countries where this language plays a significant role as a medium of intranational communication, to the detriment of indigenous languages (Tollefson, 1986; Heugh 2000; 2002). Many voices in the South African debate have been trying to counterbalance the growing power of English as a language of national unity by alerting the public to the way this language can function as a mechanism to maintain the country's enormous gap between the "haves" and the "have nots." Heugh, for instance, claims that

> It is clear that English does not serve the interests of the majority of the people in the country. Ordinary people in rural areas and areas far from the metropolitan centers are left without real access to information and mechanisms to protect their rights. In particular, an education system which since the late 1970s has increasingly been based on an English-mainly paradigm, has failed nearly two-thirds of the people who begin school. English has not provided meaningful access to education; very few people who are not native speakers of English actually have a practical proficiency in English, and so the majority continue to be left in a condition of extreme disadvantage. (2002, p. 12)

Similarly, Neville Alexander writes that:

> Unless you have a command of standard English or of standard Afrikaans in [South Africa] you are simply eliminated from competition for jobs that are well remunerated, you are simply eliminated from consideration for certain positions of status and power [. . . .] This means that 75% of the population is excluded, with individual exceptions, from competing for positions of power. (1993, p. 154)

The exclusion of marginalized languages from prestigious discourses has led to the belief that these languages are semantically inferior because they are incapable of making meaning in high status communicative contexts such as politics and education. This belief, of course, reinforces the power of language as a mechanism of exclusion. Alexander refers to this phenomenon as the "static maintenance syndrome," and points his finger at the African elite for their role in perpetuating this vicious circle:

> The African elites, who inherited the colonial kingdom from the obstensively [sic] departing colonial overlords, for reasons of convenience and in order to maintain their grip on power, have made no more than nominal gestures towards equipping the indigenous languages of the continent with the wherewithal for use in powerful and high status contexts. The result is a vicious downward spiral where the fact that these languages are not used is the cause of their stagnation and of the belief that they cannot be used in these functions . . . . Since their role models overtly and repeatedly demonstrate their lack of belief in the capacity of the indigenous languages to fulfill all the functions of a language in all domains of modern life, the people begin to accept as 'natural' the supposed inferiority of their language . . . . They fall prey to what I have dubbed 'Static Maintenance Syndrome' [sic]. (2003, pp. 14-15)

Alexander, has repeatedly made connections between his notion of "Static Maintenance Syndrome" and Ngugi's argument that using English as primary national languages in Africa amounts to "colonization of the mind" (Alexander, 2003, p.15; 2002, p. 120).

1.3.5. English as a "Colonizer of the Mind"

The idea that English functions as a mechanism for the spreading of Western-centric world views that instill a sense of inferiority in speakers of marginalized languages has a lot of currency in the debate, and it is often associated with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonsing The Mind*, a manifesto in which the Kenyan novelist and critic states his reasons for repudiating English and embracing his native African language as a means for literary and intellectual expression.

Ngugi does not use the concept of discourse, but his thesis rests on an understanding of language that extends beyond a socio-politically neutral means of communication to include social and cultural elements that play a key role in the formation of subjectivity:

> Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture . . . . Culture embodies those moral, ethical, and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation, and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next. (1981, pp. 13-15)

Ngugi posits an essential, natural, fixed core that should determine how a person sees himself or herself. After claiming that "no man or woman can choose

their biological nationality," he assumes the existence of an "African reality" that should lie at the roots of the cultural identity shared by the African nation (pp. 1-2). This essential, African core that is fixed at birth is being shattered by a Western, imperialist "cultural bomb."

> The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities, and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces which would stop their spring of life. (p. 3)

According to Ngugi, it is primarily through language that this cultural bomb detonates:

> The choice of language and the use to which language is being put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. (p. 5)

Ngugi rejects Chinua Achebe's belief in the possibility of "a new English in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings" (in Ngugi, 1981, p. 8). Ngugi concedes that there is a universal aspect of language, which he defines in terms of the "capacity to speak, the capacity to order sounds in a manner that makes for mutual comprehension," that is shared by all human beings. However, he argues that "a specific culture is not transmitted through language in its universality, but in its particularity as the language of a specific community with specific history," which finds expression in the "particularity of sounds, words, the word order into phrases and sentences, and the specific manner or laws, of their ordering" (p. 15). Hence, the use of a "foreign language" in an African context breaks the harmony

between the individual and his "natural, social environment" resulting in "colonial alienation" (p. 17) and ultimately subjugation:

> Since culture does not just reflect the world in images, but through those images conditions a child to see that world in a certain way, the colonial child was made to see the world and where he stands in it as seen and defined by or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition . . . . From the point of view of alienation, that is of seeing oneself from outside oneself as if one was another self, it does not matter that the imported literature carried the great humanist tradition of the best in Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoy, Gorky, Brecht, Sholokov, Dickens. The location of this great mirror of imagination was necessarily Europe and its history and culture and the rest of the universe was seen from this center. (p. 18)

From the point of view of subjugation, "the images of the world" that emerged in the "language of the colonizer" instill a sense of inferiority in the "colonial child," whose "own native languages were associated in his impressionable mind with low status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow-footed intelligence and ability, or downright stupidity, non-intelligibility or barbarism." (pp.17-18)

Ngugi's thesis has a lot of currency in the debate. Phillipson's rejection of the possibility of seeing English as a neutral tool for communication is based on assumptions that resonate with echoes of *Decolonising the Mind.*

> For children whose mother tongue is not English, English is not the language of their cultural heritage, not the language of intense personal feelings and the community . . . . Claiming that English is neutral (a tool, an instrument) involves a disconnection between what English is (culture) from its structural basis (from what it has and does). It disconnects the means from ends and purposes, from what English is being used for [sic]. The type of reasoning we are dealing with here . . . fits into the familiar linguicist pattern of the dominant language creating an exalted image of itself, other languages being devalued, and the relationship between the two rationalized in favor of the dominant language. (1992, pp. 285-288)

Nkambide Zandile (1997) refers to the fact that blacks in South Africa "use their mother tongue but must also learn two additional languages" as an "exercise that robs children of their heritage" (p. 103). Citing Ngugi, he claims that:

> The arguments against the use of English as a national language also point out that it is capable of holding captive black cultures, their values, and hence their minds . . . . Information defined by representatives of a different language group is likely to be inaccurate or to exclude or deauthorize the knowledge and experience of the other or to incorporate them [sic] on terms that suit the dominant language group. Defining one's identity in a language other than one's own is one of the worst nightmares. (p. 106)

1.3.6. Epistemological limitations of the critical model

The epistemological limitations of theories that rely heavily on the critical model in their construction of the power of English come from a tendency to be overly dismissive of dissenting interpretations and of empirical evidence that runs counter to the assumptions about language, power, and identity of the critical model. The tautological aspect in Phillipson's reduction of the power of English to linguistic imperialism (1992) is a case in point. Phillipson introduces the notion of "English Linguistic Imperialism" as a tool of analysis:

> A working definition of English Linguistic Imperialism is that the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structural refers broadly to material properties (for example, institutions, financial allocations) and culture to immaterial or ideological properties (for example, attitudes, pedagogic principles). (1992, p. 47)

This "working definition" presents the thesis that the spread of English amounts to linguistic imperialism as an axiom: the alleged "dominance of English" is constructed as an imperialistic socio-political phenomenon by definition. Phillipson provides convincing evidence of how allegedly politically neutral cultural institutions such as the British Council and its American counterparts have taken steps to promote English in the periphery to serve the interests of centers of power in the metropole (pp.

137-171). However, the idea that the continued dominance of English after the fall of the British Empire can be ascribed *exclusively* to a successful conspiracy orchestrated by core-Anglophone countries which "asserts and maintains the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages," rather than to a more complex series of factors, is a theory that remains to be proven, rather than a fact that can be taken as a given.

While linguicism, linguicide, and linguistic imperialism do occur, it is reductive to see the spread of English exclusively in these terms. As Kachru has pointed, we also need to take into account the "transformative" power of English, or its "alchemy":

> The alchemy of English (present and future) . . . does not only provide social status, it also gives access to attitudinally and materially desirable domains of power. It provides a powerful linguistic tool for manipulation and control. In addition, this alchemy of English has left a deep mark on the languages and literature of the non-Western world. English has thus caused transmutation of languages, equipping them in the process for new societal, scientific, and technological demands. The process of Englishization has initiated stylistic and thematic innovations and has 'modernized' registers . . . . It continues to provide unprecedented power for mobility and advancement to those native and non-native users who possess it as a linguistic tool. (1986, pp. 13-14)

In order to come to a sound understanding of the implications that the acquisition of English has on identity and power relations, the critical model needs to be held in tension with the "alchemy" of this language. A discussion of English and empowerment must take into account the linguicidal potential of dominant languages. As we have seen, most indigenous languages spoken around the Southernmost reaches of Africa (the Khoi and San languages) have become almost extinct. History might be in the process of repeating itself with African languages, which are being excluded from prestigious socio-linguistic domains, putting pressure on the native speakers of these languages to carry out more and more of their linguistic exchanges in the

dominant language. Empirical research that has been done to investigate the vitality of African languages such as isiZulu (Rudwick, 2006) provides evidence of the fact that South Africa's linguistic market might be moving toward diglossia with a "Static Maintenance Syndrome" (Alexander, 2003, pp. 14-15).

However, a discussion of the potentially linguicidal effects of English must also take into account the fact that the dominant language can equip marginalized languages to meet the "new societal scientific, and technological demands" Kachru alluded to. Lexical borrowing from English is playing a key role in modernizing African languages so that they can be used in the domains from which they have been excluded. Also, native speakers of African languages in urban areas often find hybridized varieties of their mother tongue (which rely extensively on lexical borrowing from English) more effective than their "pure" varieties, which the white missionaries took as the "standard" when they codified them to translate Christian texts. Native speakers of African languages often find these varieties "archaic" and inadequate for expressing concepts that were not part of linguistic exchanges that took place in those languages at the time that they were codified. Native speakers can also be uncomfortable with the identities that are projected through the use of these varieties, which tend to be associated with a rural, traditional way of thinking (Mesthrie 2002, p. 16) that does not reflect urban speakers' more modern and hybrid sense of themselves.

There is no doubt that English has a gate-keeping effect in South Africa. However, if taught effectively, this language can become the key to the gate for more and more people, making it a language of inclusion, rather than a language of exclusion. Dominant languages can yield "profits of distinction" for a few and marginalize the masses if and only if only the elite can claim ownership of dominant

ways of speaking. As Granville, et. al., have written in response to the excessive use of negative constructions of English among language rights activists in South Africa, "If everyone had access to English, English would no longer be an elitist language. In this way English could come to be seen as a resource, not as a problem" (1998, p. 259). Hence, a critical discourse about the power of English should never lose track of the fact that dominant languages can be appropriated by native speakers of other languages. Unfortunately, this can happen when the critical model operates.

In order to promote the African languages, Alexander has constructed the power of English as "unassailable but unattainable" (Alelxander, 2000); Heugh has claimed -- without much substantiation that -- "very few people who are not native English speakers actually have a practical proficiency in English (2002, p. 12); Nicol (2004) has referred to the English spoken by non-native speakers in South Africa – including well educated politician and business people – as "English 'with lower case e'" that is "incapable of making meaning" and is "consigning" this country to a "ghetto of mediocrity" (pp. 17-18). Many others have suggested, implicitly or explicitly, that English cannot be the "own" language of those who do not speak it as their mother tongue. In the next section (1.3.7), I will discuss more fully the problems of restricting the ownership of a dominant language to its native speakers from the point of view of power relations. For now I would like to point out the limitations, from a strictly epistemological point of view, of claims such as Alexander's, Heugh's, Nichol's. Even a cursory look at an anthology of South African literature written in English can dispel the notion that English is not "attainable" by native speakers of other languages, let alone that it is an "English with a 'lower case 'e.'" While it is true that only a few English speakers –both native and non-native – might be able to attain the level of English ownership of writers and political activists such as Sol Plaatjie

(1916) and Steven Biko (2002), my personal interactions with black South Africans from all walks of life, and the time I spent observing students from disadvantaged back-grounds at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, make me uncomfortable with the claim that "practical proficiency" is restricted to "very few" non-native speakers in South Africa, as claimed by Heugh (2002, p. 12) .

Finally, I do not believe that one can make the "colonization of the mind" argument without doing justice to the way this language can be used to challenge power imbalances by giving access to counter-hegemonic discourses such as the one created by Ngugi himself, which would not have been as influential had it not appeared in a language that is as widely understood internationally. Widdowson has exposed very effectively the paradox intrinsic to Ngugi's thesis and to theories that rely on the critical model:

> English today is as much the language of dissent as of conformity, as witness the work of Canagarajah, Kachru, Pennycook, Phillipson and others . . . You cannot use English to argue that it precludes argument. There is a fundamental contradiction in the idea that the language itself exerts hegemonic control: namely, that if this were the case, you would never be able to challenge such control. This would mean that all those currently busy in exposing the evils of linguicism are, wittingly or not, part of the conspiracy they pretend to expose. (1988, 397)

A discussion of the power of English in terms of "colonization of the mind," therefore, should be held in tension with the role this language has played in raising consciousness against racist, classist, sexist, and hetero-normative oppression. In the context of South Africa, one could look at political tracts and creative writing written in the dominant language by non-native English speaking South Africans to challenge white supremacist discourse. Steven Biko's collection of essays entitled *I write what I like* is emblematic in this regard. In terms of sexism, one could juxtapose the generic use of male personal pronouns in English with politeness norms that are prevalent in

rural varieties of Nguni languages. These norms proscribe that married women refrain from using words that start with the first letters of the names of their male in-law family members (Finlayson, 1995). An epistemologically sound construction of the power of English in terms of discourse could also highlight the tension felt by many black South African females who, on the one hand, see English as a way out of cultural norms that create gender inequality (DeKadt, 2004) but, on the other hand, resent the Western-centric aspects of some of the discourses they encounter while using the dominant language.

1.3.7. Political limitations of the critical model

The political limitations of the critical model come from its tendency to be overly dismissive of empirical evidence showing black South Africans' desire to appropriate English as an additional language. This desire, which problematizes theories based on the critical model, is often dismissed using Marxist concepts such as "hegemony," "false consciousness," or by arguing that, given the dominant position of English in South Africa's linguistic market, the pro-English tendencies among native speakers of Bantu languages do not have anything to do with desire, but everything to do with constraint.

Phillipson writes that "the ideal way to make people do what you want is to make them want it themselves" (1992, p. 286). Applying this notion to the findings of a study carried out in Namibia, he concludes that illiterate parents' high rating of English reflects their submission to hegemonic ideas. Referring to similar studies carried out in South Africa, Alexander argues that, generally speaking, these preferences are a symptom of "false consciousness": "Because of the hegemonic

effects of domination, generally speaking, surveys of the kinds on which these studies are based can, at best, indicate the extent of what we can advisedly call false consciousness" (2000, p. 21).

I don't want to deny the existence of "false consciousness," but I think that we have to exercise extreme caution whenever we resort to this concept as an explanation for a socio-political phenomenon. Epistemologically, the "false consciousness" argument can seal the borders of a discourse by dismissing dissenting views with the claim that those who hold those views do not know any better. Politically, the concept of "false consciousness" can degenerate into an instrument of social control. "False consciousness" implies that there are "people who know" and "people who don't know," and that those who don't know should be told what to do.

Of course, Phillipson and Alexander are not advocating the use of coercion, but are only recommending that native speakers of African languages be put in a position where they can make informed decisions about the medium of instruction for their children. But the suggestion that the desires of black South Africans are "false" carries eerie echoes of colonial rhetoric that are not going to fall well on the ears of those who are suffering the price of colonial legacies. In the following passage, taken from a 1982 report on education in the Cape Colony, a historian of the time reflects on the opportunity to invite "the natives" to have a say on matters concerning their education:

> Would you give the natives a voice in the matter? -- I do not think it would be much use. The native voice is after all the voice of the man who has control over them. In speaking of the native voice, you speak of something which really does not exist. (Teal, in Rose and Tumner, 1975, p. 213)

The political agendas behind these conclusions and language rights activists' use of the concept of "false consciousness" could not be more different. The

rhetorical similarities, however, are striking, and in a country like South Africa, where English is associated with the struggle for the liberation of the majority of its people (Peirce, 1989; Kamwangamalu, 2002) and Bantu languages and Afrikaans with racist exploitation, suggesting that black South Africans need to be protected from English because they are not able to make decisions in their own interests is more likely to be an impediment than an effective strategy for the promotion of African languages.

Bridging the gap between South Africa's language policies (which grants equal status to the eleven official languages) and practices (which make English a *de facto* gatekeeper) requires the will to promote Bantu languages. This will has to come from the speakers of these languages. As Neville Alexander (2003) has rightly pointed out, the African elite has no interest in seeing their native tongues play a more important role in the country's political, economic, and cultural life, since they have appropriated English sufficiently to be able to reap its "profit of distinction" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 56). And the black working class, faced with the need to make ends meet in an economy where English is a precondition for most forms of employment, is more preoccupied with ensuring their children access to the language of power than with questions of linguistic genocide or colonization of the mind.

It is unlikely that the African middle class will voluntarily follow Alexander's recommendation that they commit "class suicide" by refraining from using English as a status symbol (2003, p. 15). Nor is it likely that the black working class is going to be persuaded by the "false consciousness" argument. If anything, the eerie echoes of colonial rhetoric carried by the suggestion that black South Africans must be protected from English are likely to reinforce the equation that Alexander has referred to as one of "the most baneful legacies of apartheid"; that is, the idea that English = liberation, and that Afrikaans and Bantu Languages = apartheid. Obviously, this equation does

not make sense. There is nothing intrinsically oppressive or liberating about any language. At the same time, however, it wouldn't make sense either to replace this equation with another one that is just as fallacious: English = oppression; Bantu Languages = liberation.

Unlike the founding fathers of apartheid, most critics of English are not against giving access to the language of power; instead, they believe in giving this access while promoting marginalized languages. Alexander, for instance, explicitly rejects the "joy of English bashing" (2003, p.11) and exhorts the public not to see the language question in terms of an "either English" or "mother tongue" logic (2002). A similar stance is taken by Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas:

> We claim that it is perfectly possible to match up ethnolinguistic and socio-economic concerns -- there is no necessary contradiction. Likewise children need two or more languages in education learned additively. It is not a question of either the mother tongue or a dominant language, but two or more. No language needs to be sacrificed in additive learning. (2001, p. 143)

Indeed, the idea that the appropriation of English and the development of the mother tongue are mutually exclusive is a misconception and a major obstacle in the implementation of the 1997 Language in Education Policy (see section 1.2.4). Language rights activists should not reinforce this misconception by resorting excessively to negative constructions of English. If the case for the need to promote marginalized languages is made by characterizing English as a gatekeeper, a linguistic poacher, and a colonizer of the mind, it is easier to conclude that those who want to promote the mother tongue are "anti-English." Moreover, dangerous rhetorical moves -- such as the "false consciousness" argument -- or the use of essentialized notions of culture and identity to argue that speakers of marginalized languages need "protection" from English, evoke memories of colonial discourse that are unlikely to

win support for the planet's "linguistic bio-diversity" from the speakers of endangered languages. A more effective critical discourse should pay closer attention to the voices of the primary stakeholders in this debate (native speakers of marginalized languages) in order to arrive at a better understanding of the intricacies of the relationship between language, power, and identity. This better understanding will lead to more effective rhetorical strategies for promoting African languages while giving access to English within the framework of additive multilingualism.

1.3.8. The critical model and language ownership

In this section, I will show how the critical model is based on essentializing and deterministic assumptions about language, power, and identity that construct language ownership in terms of birth. I shall call these assumptions "the birthright paradigm." Below are some of the tenets that I will seek to question with a post-modern reconceptualization of language ownership and with my empirical research.

1. A person can only really own his or her mother tongue.
2. Language ownership is determined by birth.
3. A person's identity is rooted only in his or her mother tongue. Additional languages can be learned and used for specific purposes, but they do not play a significant role in shaping subjectivity.
4. The relationship between language and identity is determined by structural factors.
5. A person has a better command of his or her mother tongue than of his or her additional languages in any communicative situation.
6. Native speakers of a language have a better command of this language than non-native speakers in any communicative situation.
7. Having to compete for symbolic and material resources in an additional language is disempowering.
8. Additional languages, if they feature too prominently in the language practices of native speakers of other languages, cause a process of "colonization of the mind" (Ngugi, 1981).

As we have seen, the "colonization of the mind" argument starts from the assumption that identity is defined by a "biological nationality" that cannot be chosen,

and that there is a fixed, univocal "African reality" that should lie at the roots of the "communal definition" of the African nation. This communal definition can only be expressed through one language, a speakers' mother tongue. According to Ngugi, for an African subject, this mother tongue needs to be an African language. Ngugi takes into account the possibility that a subject might not be unified, but only as a result of colonialism's disruption of the symbiotic relationship between the African individual and the "African reality." If an African is exposed to the Western "cultural bomb," carried by a "foreign" language, disunity does occur; the "African" stops seeing himself as an African, which results in colonial alienation, and ultimately, subjugation (1981, pp. 1-3).

The poacher and the gatekeeper metaphors also assume that individuals can be easily cast into social groups according to fixed factors that can be defined by a one-to-one relationship between identity and a language that is ascribed to on the basis of birth. "Linguicide" equates the death of a language with the cultural death of its speakers.

Similarly, the idea that language can act as a mechanism to exclude from privilege presupposes that the access to the language of power is determined by "social inheritance" factors that are determined by birth. Constructing the power of English as "unattainable" and denying the possibility of coming to own additional languages as the result of a successful process of learning and acquisition presupposes a deterministic correlation between the notion of mother tongue, identity, command of a language, and the ability (or inability) to compete for symbolic and material resources using that language.

Going back to the epistemological recommendations of my post-structural apparatus, I will argue that in order to theorize about language, power, and identity, it

is important to see the borders between social groups as being more permeable and to see individuals as fluid, polycentric subjects who cannot be defined simply in terms of a limited series of factors that are established by birth.

Ngugi's attempt to reverse colonial dichotomies by defining a peripheral "self" in terms of a fixed, essentialized African "biological nationality" set up in antithesis to a "removed," "decadent," and "reactionary" metropolitan "other" (Ngugi, 1981, p. 3) is not as "theoretically innovative" and "politically crucial" (Bhabha 1994, p.1) as breaking these dichotomies by looking at "fluid," "decentered," and contested subjectivities rooted in hybrid cultural spaces as sites of resistance. Instead of assuming that descriptors such as race, gender, class, and mother tongue define subjectivity unproblematically, we should constantly be asking ourselves the following questions, while seeking to unravel the complexity of the relationship between language, power, and identity in multilingual, post-colonial settings such as South Africa:

> How are subjects formed "in between," or in excess of the parts of difference (usually intoned as race/gender/class, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings, and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual, and even incommensurable? (Bhabha, 1994, p. 3)

Opening up for scrutiny these "in between" spaces entails moving beyond "the notion that "languages are objectively speaking whole bounded systems" that can be associated with "whole bounded communities," as Heller (2007) recommends. She points out that "the constant emergence of traces of different languages in the speech of individual bilinguals [. . .] illustrate the permeability of boundaries between

languages and socio-linguistic domains" (p.11) and "the impossibility of direct association between language and identity" (p.13).

This is particularly true in the case of South Africa, where multilingualism is so pervasive that speakers, especially in urban areas, can find it very difficult to express language ownership in terms of the concept of the mother tongue, intended as one language inherited by birth. A point in case is the following statement made by a young black South African from greater Johannesburg.

> My father's home language was Swazi, and my mother's home language was Tswana. But as I grew up in a Zulu-speaking area we used mainly Zulu and Swazi at home. But from my mother's side I also learnt Tswana well. In my high school I came into contact with lots of Sotho and Tswana students, so I can speak these two languages well. And of course, I know English and Afrikaans. With my friends I also use Tsotsitaal. (in Mesthrie, 2002, p. 13).

In terms of power relations, it is important to problematize the notion that making meaning using an additional language is intrinsically disempowering for native speakers of marginalized languages. Too many native speakers of other languages have taken ownership of English as a means of self-expression in order for anyone to claim that the power of this language is "unattainable" by those who do not inherit it by birth. It is true that many people from disadvantaged backgrounds still haven't, and in countries like South Africa, they are *de facto* excluded from opportunities. A fundamental goal for language rights activism, therefore, ought to be making dominant languages more "attainable." Constructing language ownership in terms of birthright runs counter to this goal.

Peirce (1995, 1997) has argued that speakers invest in the process of appropriating an additional language in order to have a return in terms of symbolic and material resources. Seeing language ownership as determined exclusively or primarily by birthright limits the material and symbolic return on investment: no

matter how well a person might come to master an additional language, he or she will still be placed in an inferior position with respect to a native speaker. Hence, reifying the birthright paradigm by implying that English cannot be the "own" language of those who do not inherit it as their mother tongue reinforces the linguicist effects of the use of English as a lingua franca.

Rather than supporting this paradigm, language rights activists should reconceptualize language ownership in order to make linguistic markets more equitable. A more inclusive understanding of language ownership, based on the premise that additional languages can be fully appropriated by people who have learned them effectively, can strip dominant languages of their "profits of distinction." Also, as we shall see (4.2), promoting a more inclusive understanding of language ownership can be a way to build consensus around policies aimed at increasing the market value of marginalized languages.

1.3.9. Reconceptualizing language ownership: From birthright to appropriation

In Rampton's (1990) "Displacing the native speaker," I have found a most useful starting point for applying my post-structural and post-colonial theoretical apparatus to a reconceptualization of language ownership that can challenge the birthright paradigm. The notion of language ownership means different things to different people, but generally, when a person says that a language is his or her own language, he or she is making a statement about the role this language plays in his or her identity construction and about his or her perceived level of command of this language. Rampton has captured these two aspects of ownership with the concepts of "expertise" and "loyalty." Expertise is indicative of the level of command a speaker is

able to exercise of a language (the extent to which a person "owns" a language); loyalty expresses the level of affiliation between a language and a speaker (the extent to which a speaker sees a language as his or her own).

Rampton points out that expertise has a series of advantages over "nativeness" as an indicator of language command:

> 1. Although they often do, experts do not have to feel close to what they know about: expertise is different from identification.
> 2. Expertise is learned, not fixed or innate.
> 3. Expertise is relative; one person's expert is another person's fool.
> 4. Expertise is partial: people can be experts in several fields, but they are never omniscient.
> 5. To achieve expertise, one goes through processes of certification in which one is judged by other people. Their standards of assessment can be reviewed and disputed. There is also a healthy tradition of challenging experts. (p. 99)

The notion of loyalty complements the notion of expertise with the aspect of language ownership that has to do with identity. According to Rampton, loyalty is determined by the interplay of both inheritance and affiliation. Inheritance refers to whether or not a speaker is born into the social group traditionally associated with a language; affiliation refers to a speaker's desire to be associated with a language. Again, unlike the notion of mother tongue, these terms do not construe identification with language in "fixed," monolithic, uncontested terms, but rather as the result of the tension between structural (inheritance) and agentive (affilliation) forces that create a fluid relationship between language, power, and identity that is constantly being negotiated and redefined.

To build on Rampton's contribution, I have found it useful to further explore his notion of expertise by considering the factors according to which expertise is established. The ability to exercise command over the morphological, syntactic, and phonetic features of a language (structural ownership) is indispensable, because without this type of command, there would be no mutual intelligibility among

speakers of the same tongue. Where the onus of mutual intelligibility should fall, however, is a question that needs to be explored. Borrowing once again Weedon's and Heller's post-structuralist vocabulary, I argue that in order to make language ownership more inclusive, it is important to look at these linguistic features as fluid, contested, and decentered entities, rather than as "whole bounded systems" defined by the ways of speaking of the socio-linguistic communities that dominate the linguistic market. As we will see, valorizing hybrid codes and "indigenized" (Widdowson, 1998; Higgins, 2003) varieties of dominant languages can be a way to make linguistic standards more inclusive and to facilitate the appropriation process of native speakers of marginalized languages.

I also argue that it is not enough to look at expertise only in terms of accent, grammar, and vocabulary, but that we should also consider Discourse (Gee, 1996) to avoid the trappings of both apolitical conceptions of language and of deterministic and essentializing critical perspectives that deny agency by assuming that whenever the use of a dominant language features prominently in the lives of native speakers of marginalized languages, a process of "colonization of the mind" (Ngugi, 1981) is inevitable. We have already seen that English has been used by the black intelligentsia in South Africa to fight colonialism and apartheid with speeches, debates, political tracts, and literature. But even at the grassroots level, empirical research carried out among black students in township schools and in remedial programs at the university level (Thesen, 1997; Kapp, 2000) shows evidence of the fact that rather than being owned by English, learners' minds take ownership of this language by engaging in critical thinking and voicing opinions that display a strong sense of agency.

Finally, to complement Rampton's notions of loyalty and expertise, it is important to look at ownership not only from a micro-perspective (the extent to which a speaker sees a language as his or her own), but also from a macro-perspective, by looking at which socio-linguistic groups are seen as the legitimate owners of a language in a linguistic market. We have already seen that dominant groups tend to be seen as legitimate speakers of a language and that their ways of speaking tend to dictate the standards through which expertise is assessed. These standards should be questioned.

Kachru (1986), Canagarajah (1999), Mazrui (2004) and Brutt-Griffler (2002) have done so by showing that the macro-ownership of English is becoming increasingly decentered and contested. In Africa, South Asia, and other parts of the world, there are now Anglophone communities that have appropriated English creating national standards that are increasingly seen as legitimate – and in some cases more appropriate – than the standards used in the metropole.

1.3.10. Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of language, power, identity, and discourse, four concepts that are fundamental for understanding the relevance of language ownership in multilingual settings such as South Africa. Drawing on Marxism, post-colonialism, post-modernism, and the work of Bourdieu, I adopted a theoretical framework that sees language as a social phenomenon that shapes subjectivity and power relations and I rejected essentializing and deterministic interpretations of the relationship between language, power, and identity. I argued

that, while language and discourse tend to delimit possibilities for the construction of the self and for establishing power relations, power and identity are fluid, contested, and de-centered and that agency also plays a role in shaping subjectivity and power relations.

I presented a historical overview of South Africa, highlighting how language policy and practice have been a site of political struggle throughout centuries, and how they have been used in conjunction with race to place individuals into fixed identity categories within an inequitable social order. I discussed the discrepancy between language policy and practice in post-apartheid South Africa and how the inequalities that characterize South Africa's linguistic market create mechanisms that re(produce) socio-economic inequality in the absence of institutionalized racism.

I reviewed the critical discourse about the power of English, focusing on the way South African language rights activists have made the case for the need to bridge the gap between policy and practice as part of the post-apartheid transition to democracy. I critiqued some aspects of this discourse, focusing on three metaphoric images that are often used to construct English in negative terms. I argued that these metaphoric images assume that language ownership is a native speaker's prerogative. I have argued that this assumption does not reflect the socio-linguistic complexity of multilingual speakers in countries such as South Africa. Also, this assumption is likely to reinforce the linguicist power of English and to contribute to further marginalization of African languages. Returning to the post-modern and post-colonial recommendations of my theoretical apparatus, I suggested moving from a "birthright" to an "appropriation model" for understanding language ownership. This model looks at language ownership from different aspects, both from the point of view of

individual speakers (micro-ownership) and from the point of view of socio-linguistic community (macro-ownership).

The next chapter will be a discussion of the methodology involved in my empirical exploration of language ownership among a group of black South African students who had just entered the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a tertiary learning institution that used to be reserved “for whites only” during apartheid.

Chapter II

Methodology

2.1. Introduction

In the first chapter, I carried out a theoretical analysis of the critical discourse about the power of English. I argued that constructing language ownership as a native speaker's prerogative is problematic, and that this concept ought to be reconceptualized in order to make language rights activism more effective. To do this, I suggested moving from a "birthright paradigm," which constructs language ownership as a native speaker's prerogative, to an "appropriation model," which is built on the assumption that rather than owning just one language, speakers in multi-lingual settings own extensive and intricate repertoires of languages, dialects, and registers. The ownership of this repertoire is a result of an appropriation process that goes beyond inheriting a language that is traditionally associated with the socio-linguistic community into which a speaker is born. The rest of this dissertation will look at language ownership from the "insider's perspective" (Canagarajah, 2005) that is most relevant for this dissertation: that is, the perspective of black South Africans who are native speakers of Bantu languages.

There are several reasons why I felt it is important to highlight the insider's perspective in this dissertation, as recommended by Canagarajah. In the first chapter, I have argued repeatedly that the assumptions of the birthright paradigm oversimplify the relationship between power, language, and identity. This claim would be much more convincing if supported with valid and reliable empirical evidence collected by examining the language practices and attitudes of those people whose socio-economic empowerment relies so heavily on the appropriation of English as an additional

language. Also, given that I have critiqued some language rights activists for being too dismissive of the voices of the stakeholders in the debate (section 1.3.6-1.3.7), it would be hypocritical of me to make this critique without inviting the stakeholders to take part in the debate.

Paying close attention to the "insider's perspective" is particularly important when trying to bridge the gap between language policy and practice. As Kamwangamalu (2000) has argued, the successful implementation of language polices requires the support of the people most directly affected by these policies. At present, this support is lacking in South Africa, and it is unlikely to be created by arguing that black South Africans' greater concern with the appropriation of English than with the promotion of African languages is a case of "false consciousness," of "hegemony," or the result of a lack of choice. As we have seen, white supremacy in Southern Africa had been justified with the argument that black people were not capable of making decisions in their own interests (section 1.3.7). We have also seen that the legacy of Bantu education makes many black South Africans associate the promotion of African languages with oppression and access to English with liberation (section 1.3.7). Justifying the need to promote African languages by suggesting that black South Africans don't know what is best for them is not likely to be an effective strategy for changing language attitudes rooted in centuries of racist social engineering.

2.2. Research setting and research questions

The opportunity to explore language ownership from the insider's perspective came as the result of my participation in the 2006 Southern African Applied Linguistics Association Conference, where I discussed the need to move towards an appropriation model for understanding language ownership. Following this

presentation, I was invited to spend a semester as a visiting lecturer at Howard College of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), in Durban, South Africa. During this appointment, I taught a graduate seminar on language and identity in South Africa, and with the approval of the ethical clearance committee, I carried out the empirical research for this dissertation.

UKZN was founded in January 2004 by means of a merger between the University of Durban-Westville, which was established in the 1960s as a learning institution for Indian students, and the University of Natal, established in 1910 as a "whites only" university. Howard College was part of the former University of Natal. Table 2 shows the current racial demographics of the UKZN student body.

Table 2: Racial demographics of the UKZN student body

Black	54%
Coloured	3%
Indian	31%
White	12%

UKZN division of management information. Data as of 2008/07/04[5]

UKZN's mission statement highlights the need to be "democratically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities, and imbalances of the past" by promoting "access to learning that will expand educational and employment opportunities for the historically disadvantaged, and support social transformation and redress" (UKZN Senate).[6] As part of its mission as an agent of "redress" and "social transformation," UKZN has established the "Access Program," a bridge program aimed at increasing the presence of students coming from previously disadvantaged racial groups. Students entering UKZN through the Access Program spend their first two semesters

[5] https://dmi.ukzn.ac.za/ukznstats/vmlpiechart.asp?rept+StudentRace
[6] Policy on undergraduate access and admission to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, approved at senate on 21 April, 2004.

taking developmental courses in English Language Development, Academic Literacy, Numeracy, Keyboarding, and Social Studies. Upon the successful completion of this program, students join the mainstream, taking credit-bearing courses.

The Access Program was an ideal site for exploring language ownership and its implications for identity and power relations. Access students do not have the necessary requirements to enter UKZN through the regular admission procedures; however, they have shown the potential for academic success by receiving matriculation scores[7] that are above average for their schools. The vast majority of these students are not traditional native English speakers, as they come from socio-linguistic communities that are associated with Bantu languages. For these students, appropriating the dominant language has been a precondition for being able to show their potential as learners and to enter the gates of tertiary education. Also, in order to be eligible for this program, Access students need to have attended schools that have been deemed "disadvantaged" by the South African Department of Education. These are generally schools that used to be reserved for "non-white" racial groups during apartheid.

My overarching research questions were the following: How do students construct language ownership with respect to their linguistic repertoires (micro-ownership) and with respect to the socio-linguistic communities that form South Africa's linguistic market (macro-ownership)? What is the nature of students' investment in the appropriation of English? What are students' attitudes towards language policies within the context of post-apartheid black economic empowerment?

[7] Matriculation scores are the scores students receive on their high school exit examination.

2.3. Triangulation, Validity, and Generalizability

My study comprised a quantitative component based on a survey and a qualitative component based on ethnographic observations and interviews. It began in January 2007 with ethnographic observations and it ended the following May with the survey and with the interviews.

I chose a triangulated approach to my research methodology in order to improve the validity of my study. As Johnstone writes, "each source of data requires a different caution" but also "provides a different kind of insight" (see also Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 30; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004, p. 26). The qualitative and quantitative aspects of my study are hence intended to be complementary by compensating for each other's limitations.

Questionnaires allow the gathering of data from a large pool of respondents in a relatively brief time frame, but they do not allow researchers to probe deeply into their questions (Dornyei, 2003, p. 14-15). In addition, given that my research questions are inextricably related to issues of language, power, and identity, the exclusive use of a multiple choice questionnaire would have presented additional limitations because these concepts cannot be easily reduced to an exhaustive set of categories. This is especially true if one approaches empirical research from a post-structuralist theoretical framework (Foucault, 1980; Weedon, 1987; Bhabha, 1994; Heller, 2007).

These shortcomings have been addressed in the ethnographic part of my field work, during which students engaged quite spontaneously in the production of discourses about their own language(s), the role these languages play in their identity construction, and their prospects for socio-economic empowerment. These discourses provide much more depth to the insider's perspective I was seeking to elicit,

but less statistical significance, as the number of students I was able to observe and interview was much smaller than the number of students who took the questionnaire.

Operationalizing abstract theoretical constructs in a way that could be easily understood by respondents with a limited command of academic discourse in English -- and in many cases, a limited familiarity with questionnaires -- presented additional challenges (Dornyei, 2003, p. 11). Interacting with the students as a participant observer allowed me to refine my questionnaire design. As I gained familiarity with the way students use English in the classroom and informally, I was able to rephrase my questions in ways that could be more easily understood by the respondents.

Given its limited scope, "its diversity of method" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 30), and my research questions, my empirical investigation should be seen as a case study, rather than an ethnography, in the anthropological sense:

> The case study is more limited in scope than an ethnography. Another possible difference is in the focus of the research. Deriving as it does from anthropology, ethnography is essentially concerned with the cultural context and cultural interpretation of the phenomena under investigation (Wolcott 1988). This is not necessarily true of case studies. Finally, while the case study, like ethnography, can utilize qualitative field methods, it can also employ quantitative data and statistical methods. (Nuan, 1992, p. 75)

Even though it employs statistical methods, my quantitative study differs from a census because it is a based on a convenience sample that cannot be considered representative of the whole population whose attitudes I seek to investigate. Hence, my findings have limited generalizability. Nevertheless, the students in the sample present key characteristics that makes their insider's perspective most relevant for my investigation: they are native speakers of African languages and they come from disadvantaged communities where it is much harder to appropriate English as an additional language. Yet, they succeeded at making English their "own" to the point

where they were able to enter one of South Africa's most prestigious tertiary learning institutions, but not to the point to be considered able to take credit-bearing courses. Hence, they are particularly vulnerable to the power of English because whether or not they succeed at increasing their command of the dominant language will determine whether or not they will be able to join the mainstream and have the possibility to earn a university degree. Given that the goal of my qualitative research is to problematize assumptions about language ownership, rather than to prove that a certain set of language attitudes about this concept are universally shared, the use of a purposive sample (Dornyei, p. 73, 2003, p. 73) is appropriate.

2. 4. Methods of Qualitative Data Collection

2.4.1. Participant observation

The qualitative component of my research began with ethnographic observations that I collected by interacting with twenty-five students who were enrolled in a section of the Access Program. This empirical investigation was informed by the following fundamental principles of ethnographic research:

- An ethnographer starts out as a learner in a "one down" position *vis-à-vis* other people in the group.
- An ethnographer's research questions arise in the process of participant observation, as do hypotheses about the answers.
- The relationship an ethnographer has to develop with other people in the group under study are 'long term and diffuse,' so the process takes time.
- An ethnographer goes to the researcher's home turf.
- An ethnographer's descriptive assumption is holistic: all phenomena are assumed to be interconnected. (Agar, 1966, as quoted by Johnstone, p. 83; see also Nuan, p. 56)

My role in the field was the one of a participant observer. As Johnstone explains, participant observation differs from "casual looking around" because of the care and the systematic nature with which the ethnographer collects the data:

> Participant observers spend time developing roles for themselves in the group in which they are interested, and then more time as group members, filling one or more roles as insiders and simultaneously making systematic efforts to come to understand what is going on in the group from the perspective of other group members. (p. 82)

According to Stocking, becoming a participant observer entails the following:

> Entering as a stranger into a small and culturally alien community, the investigator becomes for a time and in a way part of its system of face-to-face relationships, so that the data collected in some sense reflects the native's own point of view." (1983, p. 7)

I agree that entering the field as a participant observer to some extent requires moving from the position of outsider to the position of insider, but I do not believe in discrete, clear-cut categorization of subjects as "outsiders" and "insiders" with respect to a given community. As I argued in section 1.1.3, human beings' identities are too complex to be constructed in terms of dichotomies. Hence, a participant observer might be an "alien" with respect to a certain community in some ways, but not in others. For example, I might have been considered an "alien" by Access Program students because I was white, because I was from a different continent, because I was twenty years older than they are, and because I was not a student in the program, but an instructor on sabbatical. At the same time, I was not an "outsider" in that I had shared their struggle to appropriate English, even if under different circumstances. More importantly, I could not have possibly been a complete outsider because, as a fellow human being, I share with them a set of core values and sensitivities that are a

part of a common denominator of humanity. In Southern Africa, this common denominator is referred to as the philosophical principle of Ubuntu, which is often clinched by the following Zulu proverb: "*Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*." This means: "a person is a person because of other people." South African Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes Ubuntu in the following way. "It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion" (2000, p. 31). Ubuntu was strongly felt by the students I observed, who sometimes referred to it, when they commented on the relationship that we had established during the research process.

During my four months in the field, I observed two courses that are closely related to my area of study: English Language Development, which focuses on grammar and vocabulary building, and Academic Literacy, which focuses on the composition principles that shape academic writing genres. Each of these courses met four days a week for two periods.

At the beginning of my observation process, the elements of my social identity that placed me as an outsider overshadowed the ones that placed me as an insider. I spent the first week as a silent observer scribbling in a corner and my presence was hardly acknowledged by the students. By the end of the second week, however, the ice had begun to break, and very quickly, I was able to become an active participant in the learning process. Several aspects of my social identity worked to my advantage.

As a man who is originally from Italy but who is based in the United States, I generated a lot of interest among students who had never left South Africa and who had a strong desire to travel and see the world. Many of them had not even had much contact with people from overseas and they seemed very eager to travel vicariously by

getting to know me. Like Rudwick (2006, 2008), I found that being white, but not being from South Africa, made it easier to engage in conversations about language, power, and identity, which in a country like South Africa, cannot be divorced from the issue of race. I have also found that not being a native English speaker might have helped create more common ground between me and the students. The fact that speaking English as an additional language did not stop me from becoming an English lecturer in the United States probably also helped students identify with me. This is because, when they met me, they were in the process of investing one year of their lives in increasing their command of English and academic literacy in order to succeed academically and professionally. "Being from the Bronx," in that I came to UKZN as a visiting lecturer from Bronx Community College, endowed me with a certain kind of symbolic capital that exerted fascination on the minds of some of the students, who looked to US hip-hop culture with a strong interest. But most importantly, I believe that it was my love for South Africa and my genuine desire to explore students' ways of thinking that made it possible for me to be granted access to their discursive universe in a relatively brief period of time.

While exploring students' ways of thinking, I played an active role in the learning process in many ways. I was often invited, first by the teacher, then by the students themselves, to give my perspective in class discussions. With their teachers' consent, some students consulted with me while working on their essays. Towards the end of the semester, I ran informal workshops on the writing process in my office. I was also given the opportunity to act as a substitute teacher several times when one of the instructors could not come to class. Being a substitute teacher allowed me to delve into relevant discourses that had emerged during previous class discussions and in the frequent informal exchanges of opinion that took place during breaks.

While sitting in class, I would take notes on a pad. The same day, I would type these notes into a double-entry field journal, adding details that I was not able to record while immersed in the classroom dynamics. At the beginning of my process of observation, I took to heart Agar's claim that, for an ethnographer, all phenomena are interconnected (in Johnstone, p. 83) and I recorded as much information as I could. With time, I focused on those aspects that were most relevant for my research questions, which crystallized while I was keeping my reflective field journal. I identified the focus of my observations as the "meta-discourses" produced by the students. As we have seen, within my theoretical framework, discourses are ways of using language that construct identities and power relations. Meta-discourses are conversations where the relationship between language, power, and identity is explicitly discussed, often by using the concept of language ownership.

Meta-discourses flowed abundantly among the twenty-five students I observed during the four months of my investigation. In part, this was because the course readers for the classes I observed included several texts that looked at the power of English critically, such as extracts from Ngugi's *Decolonising the mind* (1981) and Achebe's "The African writer and the English language" (1975). Students were expected to respond to these texts as part of the process of appropriating English and academic literacy. However, students engaged in meta-discourses spontaneously too among each other and with me, as they shared their experiences and expectations as learners in a bridge program at UKZN, as they reflected on their previous educational history, and as they tried to find out more about who I was and why I had chosen to spend four months of my life with them. Often, these conversations involved a discussion of the role that our linguistic repertories had played in shaping who we were and our life trajectories.

2.4.2. The Interview process

The interviews (Fontana 2002; Ryen 2002; Dunbar Rodriguez & Parker 2002) were conducted shortly before the end of the term because I wanted to spend as much time as possible getting to know the students in order to "lay the groundwork for the mutual respect necessary to the interview process" (Seidman, 2005, p. 38). The interviews took place a couple of weeks after the questionnaire was administered, which gave me the opportunity to carry out a preliminary analysis of my quantitative data before the interview process began. This preliminary analysis helped me refine my interview schedule, which was also informed by my ethnographic observations.

Selecting seven students for the focus group was one of the most difficult steps in my research process because many students were eager to be interviewed, and I felt that they all had interesting things to say. Unfortunately, a choice had to be made because of time constraints. Spending a whole semester interacting closely with the students, and having a large pool of data from the questionnaire and my ethnographic observations helped me find a group of respondents that would meet the following criteria.

First of all, I selected those students who seemed most eager to engage in discourses about language ownership. As Seidman writes, when looking for respondents, "the major criterion for appropriateness is whether the subject of the researcher's study is central to the participant's experience" (p.39). Hence, I pre-selected those students who showed the strongest interest in my data collection process. These were the students who would glance at my notepad while I scribbled away frantically in class and who would ask me questions about what I was writing. They would want to know why I was so interested in what they had to say and

comment on what I had observed. Within this group of students, I looked for respondents who would represent the broadest possible spectrum of discursive positions with respect to my research questions: students who seemed to subscribe to the birthright paradigm, students who seemed more open to the ownership model, and students who fell somewhere in the continuum. I also sought to maximize diversity in terms of socio-linguistic background, paying particular attention to factors such as the racial and linguistic characteristics of the schools students attended and the types of community where students grew up. Hence I made sure I included students who had attended black schools in townships, black schools in rural areas, and the more exclusive Indian schools. Finally, I wanted to have a roughly equal gender breakdown among the interviewees; therefore, four of the interviewees were male, and three of them were female. I will provide a brief description of the interviewees in the following section.

During the interviews, I sought to engage students in conversations about language, identity, and power relations in the context of their lives and the realities of South Africa's linguistic market. My goal was to add a deeper layer of meaning to the figures of the questionnaire by exploring some of the meta-discourses that lie behind them. I was particularly interested in delving into the following questions: What are the meta-discourses students use to claim and/or reject the micro-ownership of the languages in their repertories? Where do these meta-discourses place students in the continuum that goes from the birthright to the appropriation model? What role do the fundamental dimensions of language ownership such as affiliation and expertise play in these meta-discourses?

In the first round of interviews, I drew on life history and in-depth techniques in order to allow meta-discourses to emerge from students' life narratives. The life history method seeks to elicit:

> the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what the person remembers of it, and what he or she wants other to know of it, usually as the result of a guided interview by another. (Atkinson, 2000, p. 125)

In-depth interviews

> tend to be of relatively long duration. They commonly involve one-on-one face interactions between an interviewer and an informant, and seek to build the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual self-disclosure. They tend to involve a greater expression of the interviewer's self as well as a personal commitment on the part of the participants that spans several or many interviews. (Johnson, 2000, p. 103)

These interviews were conducted individually in a quiet room on campus. They lasted approximately 45 minutes; they were tape-recorded, and transcribed by the researcher. In order to make students more comfortable in front of the tape recorder, my interview schedule began with general questions about their family, their early life and the places where they grew up. The answers to these questions allowed me to investigate the evolution of students' language practices and attitudes across the different socio-economic and linguistic spaces that shape the lives of most black South Africans, especially townships and rural areas. I then enquired about students' educational history, focusing on their encounter with English and on the process of appropriating this language. Invariably, this process involved a struggle characterized by complex and conflicting feelings towards the languages in the students' repertoires and a questioning of identities. Finally, I asked them to reflect on language and empowerment in the context of their life trajectories.

My questions were intentionally very broad, and my schedule was flexible in order to create a comfort zone where students could feel free to produce meta-discourses that were authentic and rich in personal details. This required

> a highly personalized approach to the gathering of quantitative information about the human experience. It demand[ed] many spontaneous, individual judgments on the part of the interviewer while the interview is in progress. Its direction [was] determined on the spur of the moment by unexpected responses to questions, or by the way a life is given a particular narrative structure. (Atkinson, 2000, p. 133)

In the second round of interviews, I drew on stimulated recall techniques (Nunan 1992) by asking students to delve into some of the statements they had made in the previous round and in the questionnaire. These second interviews took place the week after I had finished the first round. They were also carried out individually, tape-recorded, and transcribed by the researcher, but they only lasted approximately twenty-minutes. Following Blackledge and Pavlenko's recommendations (2004, p. 26), I asked students to comment on statements that seemed contradictory or that touched on issues that generated a strong emotional response during my classroom observations or during my personal exchanges with them in between classes.

Finally, throughout the interview process, I did my best to arrive at a "compelling evocation" (Seidman, p. 42) of the personal experiences of the students who were willing to share their insider's perspective. These personal experiences do not cover the whole range of experiences that shape the attitudes towards language ownership of every black South African. Nevertheless, their depth and detail allow those who hear them to connect to and arrive at a better understanding of the issues that they represent:

> By presenting the stories of participants' experience, interviewers open up the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study. In

> connecting, readers may not learn how to control or predict the experience being studied or their own, but they will understand better their complexities. They will appreciate more the intricate ways in which individual lives interact with social and structural forces and perhaps, be more understanding, and even humble in the face of those intricacies. Understanding and humility are not bad stances from which to try to effect improvement in education. (Seidman, p. 42)

After I began analyzing the interview transcripts, it became clear to me that in order to arrive at a more "compelling evocation" of the insider's perspective I was seeking to elicit, I was better off limiting my analysis to five of the seven students I had interviewed. This is because the richness and the sensitive nature of the details that emerged from the life histories, combined with the complexity and the contradictions intrinsic to students' meta-discourses, required a deep level of analysis that I couldn't have carried out as effectively with two additional students. While the life histories and meta-discourses of the two students I removed from the sample were characterized by unique details, complexities, and contradictions, they did not present positions with respect to my research questions that were radically different from the ways of thinking that were expressed by the five students I kept in the sample.

2.4.3. A brief profile of the interviewees

Prosperity is a young woman who comes "from a family of four" made up of her parents and her older brother. Both of her parents are Zulu speaking. Her father works in a metal factory and her mother works occasionally as a domestic worker. Prosperity has lived all her life in a township and attended schools there. This is how she describes the racial demographics of her school: "Everyone in my school is mainly African Zulu. No whites and Indians. It's a black only school." While she is

aware that as a "black only school," her school is disadvantaged, she believes that the learning institution she attended is an exception in that it sets very high standards:

> I went to a very good high school. Even though they are disadvantaged they try their best to produce good students. It's so much better than other townships schools because of the structure that the principal uses. They are very disciplined. They cooperate, they work together into producing a good school. They have these rules you have to obey. And they do use corporal punishment. It's not something we are afraid of because we are kind of used to it anyway [. . . .] Even on week-ends, especially Saturdays, we sacrifice our week-ends. We go to gain more practice on what we get from the syllabus. Even the teachers commit themselves.

Prosperity's school was also unusual because English was widely used both formally and informally, despite the fact that most of the teachers and student body at her school were Zulu speaking:

> We did use English, even if we communicated with each other. Even the principal used English with us when he was delivering speeches in the assembly. We had an English academic club where we did creative writings and debates [. . .] Our teachers used English. They would use Zulu sometimes if some of the kids had difficulties with some of the words, so they would use Zulu to elaborate those words. But they mainly used English so that we would gain more practice in it.

Bongani was born in a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal and raised by his grandmother, while his mother, a single mother, worked in a suburb as a domestic worker. His mother would visit them "during the holidays, and during week-ends if she could." At the age of seven, he moved to a township where his grandmother set up a "shebeen," or an informal liquor store. Because her grandmother was too busy running this business, Bongani was sent back to a rural area where he lived with one of his aunts and where he attended high school. He believes that the school he attended in this rural area was not as good as the black schools his cousins attended in a township.

> My cousins attended better schools. They were also black schools, but they were township schools, next to town. We didn't have computers. We didn't have running water. We had tanks with salty water, and I hate that stuff.

He did not have a lot of exposure to English while at the high school he attended in a rural area.

> At school, we studied English, but not that much. Our teachers were only concerned about Zulu language. The only language they promote is Zulu [. . . .] My books were in English, but they never gave details about English. They didn't even explain why we are studying this language. We didn't know the importance of English. Our tests were in English, but they didn't give us details about English compared to the details of isiZulu.

Ingenious grew up with both of his parents and his siblings. He was born in a rural area, but after he turned seven, he moved to a "semi-urban" area, which he described to me the following way:

> A semi-urban area is like a township which is a little more developed because there are police stations to look after crime, there are big supermarkets where you can get groceries and stuff. In a real township there are no supermarkets [. . . .] There are many different races that live there: there are Xhosa, there are Zulus, a few Sesothos, and there are even coloureds. So you have to speak English a lot there. You have to speak other African languages that I don't really know. But fortunately everybody understands Zulu because it is the widest spoken language.

Ingenious's description of the black school he attended in a semi-urban area focused on the resentment against English of his teachers, which they saw as the language of the oppressor, an issue I will explore in Chapter III.

A.W. grew up with his mother and grandmother and lived in rural areas, townships, semi-urban areas, and in a multiracial suburb "with some whites, lots of Indians and blacks, and a little Chinese too because they own stores." For a brief period, he attended a former white school, but he asked his mother to be moved back to a township school where he could "fit in." (I will delve into his motivation and its

implications for my research questions in section 3.6.2.) This is how he described the language practices at the township school he attended:

> I was taught in Zulu. The books were in English. The teacher would read the sentences in English and then try to explain it in Zulu, but basically, everything that we learned was in Zulu. We were forced to write our biology and Physics exams in English, but basically, if you can't put in a sentence in English, you can just add Zulu to make them understand what you were trying to say [. . . .]
>
> They didn't care about how much English you used from grade 8 until grade 11. Only in grade 11 and 12, when they are preparing your for tertiary or life, you have to speak English on a daily basis. There were class prefects. If you spoke Zulu, they would give you this English card. The following morning, everyone who had received this card would get ten strokes.

Shortly before I met April, her parents separated as a consequence of domestic problems. At the time of the interview, she was living with her mother and grandmother in a township. April was born in a rural area where she lived until she was six, when she moved to a township. She began her education at a black school in a township, but after her mother found employment as a domestic worker, she began to attend a more expensive Indian school where English is the only medium of instruction. Initially, the move to a learning environment where she was expected to communicate in a language that was not her mother tongue had a silencing effect on her:

> My first day at the Indian school, the teacher introduced herself to the class and then told us to stand up and tell a little bit about ourselves. I couldn't understand what she was telling me, so I just stood up. I was so nervous looking at the class. Then the teacher realized that I couldn't speak English, so she told me to sit down. I felt so inferior from the rest of the kids. I didn't want to go back to the Zulu school, but in that instant, I felt that it would have been better because all the kids started laughing at me.

With time, however, thanks to her determination and hunger for literacy, she overcame her difficulties and came to master the language of instruction at her school:

> I empowered myself to learn English because I loved reading and we had this library. We had to take an Indian language too at this school, but whenever I had this period we bunked. My friends and I would go to the toilet and chat. We went to the toilet for two weeks, and then I told my friends: 'no, we can't go to the toilet for the whole year. Let's go to the library instead.' I had this library card made for me. I would borrow books, put them in my bag, and try to read, and read, and everything I read was in English.

2.5. Method of Quantitative Data Collection

The survey was based on a questionnaire that comprised approximately 40 multiple-choice questions aimed at investigating students' language practices and attitudes towards language ownership and empowerment. Its design did not emerge "fully fledged," but "it was created or adapted, fashioned, and developed to maturity after many abortive test flights" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 47) while I was immersed in my ethnographic study.

The final version of the questionnaire (see appendix) comprised 37 questions that I sought to arrange in an order of increasing levels of complexity. Questions 1-5 investigated relevant demographic variables. Questions 6-25, 26, 27, and 36 investigated micro-ownership by looking at students' language practices, repertoires, loyalties, and expertise. Questions 22-25 looked at students' attitudes towards the macro-ownership of English. Questions 28-29, and 37 focused on students' investment in the appropriation of the dominant language. Questions 31-35 examined students' attitudes towards language policies.

I carried out a two-phase piloting process before administering the questionnaire. As Dornyei recommends, the initial piloting involved

> three or four people who are motivated to spend time to help you and whose opinions you value [. . . .] The best way to conduct this phase is to be present while they are working: this way, you can observe their reactions (e.g. hesitations or uncertainties) and can note and respond to any spontaneous questions and comments. (2003, p. 67)

In this case, the group of people motivated to help me revise my questionnaire included Rosemary Wildsmith, the head of the school of linguistics, language and literature of UKZN, Elisabeth de Kadt, former director of the Access Program, Claudia Martinez, a colleague from the Sociology Department who had taught research methods, and Murray Edelman, distinguished survey research scholar at Rutgers University. The final piloting stage involved "administering the questionnaire to a group of respondents who are in every way similar to the target population the instrument was designed for" (Dornyie, 2003, p. 67). I tested the questionnaire with a group of fifteen UKZN students who were taking a developmental English course that was not part of the Access Program. I was present during each stage of the piloting process.

The questionnaire was administered towards the end of the semester to approximately 130 students who had convened for a plenary session of the Access Program's social science course, which focuses on Africa in the world. Because this course is required and attendance at the weekly plenary sessions was mandatory, I had a captive audience comprising most of the students enrolled. I had been invited as a guest lecturer to the plenary session. This gave me the opportunity to introduce my research topic and the relevance for South Africa using accessible language and concrete examples, for which I drew on what I had learned about the students during my ethnographic observations. Being able to explain the relevance of my research played a crucial role in increasing the quality and the quantity of participants' response: "people in general like to express their opinions, and do not mind answering questions as long as they think that the survey is for a worthy cause and that their opinion matters" (Dornyei, 2003, p. 85). I was also able to go over questionnaire instructions and make sure students understood that participation in the questionnaire

was voluntary. Of the students who were present, 124 chose to fill out the questionnaire.

Because I was most interested in exploring attitudes towards the ownership of English among students who would not be considered legitimate owners of this language according to the birthright paradigm, I opened the questionnaire with a filter question asking students whether or not English was their primary home language. To make sure I would exclude from the sample only students who are likely to be seen as native English speakers, I looked at responses to this filter question in conjunction with responses to a question about race. This is because, as we will we see, in South Africa's linguistic market, there is a high level of perceived correlation between race and ascribed native language.

In the question about race, I relied on the categories that were used during apartheid to classify people, and that are still being used today as criteria for affirmative action policies and as fundamental identity markers. The term "black" can be used to refer to any racial group that is not white, or, in a narrower sense, to refer to the indigenous population of South Africa that is associated with Bantu languages and that used to be at the bottom of the racial pyramid during apartheid. In my questionnaire, I used the word "black" in its narrower notion. The term "coloured" refers to people of mixed race. "Indian" is used to refer to people of South Asian origin who settled in South Africa in the 19th century. "White" refers to South Africans of European descent (sections 1.2.1-1.2.3).

None of the respondents identified as white; two identified as coloured; one identified as Indian; and one identified as belonging to an unspecified "other" racial group. While it would be extremely unusual for underprivileged black South Africans living in rural areas or townships to use English as a primary home language, the

Indian community in South Africa is predominantly monolingual English speaking (Prabhakaran, 1998). Coloured communities generally use English and/or Afrikaans.

Of the six students that declared English as their home language in the filter question, two identified as coloured, one identified as Indian, and one identified as belonging to an unspecified "other" racial group. I took these students out of the sample, given the likelihood that English would be their primary home language. I decided to keep in my sample the two African students who had declared English as their home language in the filter question because, elsewhere in the questionnaire, both of them first mentioned an African language in response to the questions "what languages do you speak with your mother?" and "what languages do you speak with your father?" The sample I was left with consisted of 120 black South African students who are not likely to be seen as legitimate owners of English according to the birthright criterion.

In terms of gender, the majority of the respondents are female (65%). Most of the respondents (85%) come from KwaZulu-Natal: 37% come from eThekwini, the Durban metropolitan area, which comprises both suburbs and townships; 48% come from the rest of the province, which consists of much smaller towns and rural areas.

The township and rural schools attended by most of the students in the sample were reserved for black students during apartheid and now serve only the poorest section of the black South African population, those who cannot afford the higher fees required to attend private schools or schools that used to be reserved for other racial groups (section 1.2.3). English is the official language of instruction in most former black schools; however, African languages, often used in varying degrees of code-switching with English, are *de facto* languages of learning and teaching in these schools (Chick, 1998, p. 95). Most of the students in the sample attended either

township schools (40%) or schools located in rural areas (29%). This is hardly surprising given that the sample comprises only black South African students, and given that in order to be eligible for the Access Program, students have to come from "disadvantaged" schools.

Former Indian, coloured, white schools and private schools have become multi-racial, with more and more black South African students attending them in search of a better quality of education (Broeder, Extra, and Maartens, 1998 p. 121). Students attending these schools are likely to have a much higher level of English exposure that often translates into a higher level of command. Both former Indian schools and former white schools were attended by 9% of the respondents; 8% of the respondents attended private schools, and 5% former coloured schools.

As I have discussed (section 1.2.3), it can be very difficult to describe a sample of black South Africans in terms of a monolithic notion of mother tongue. Therefore, I gave students the opportunity to mention more than one language in response to a question about their mother tongue. The vast majority of the respondents (88%) mentioned Zulu as one of their mother tongues, 12% mentioned Xhosa, 9% English, 5% Sesotho, 5% and Seswati. The remaining official languages were mentioned by less than 5% of the sample.

Table 3: Description of the sample used for the collection of the quantitative data

Race	Black African	100%
Gender	Female	65%
	Male	35%
Province of Origin	KwaZulu Natal External	48%
	eThekwini	37%
	Eastern Cape	6%
	Gauteng	2%
	Free State	3%
	Mpumalanga	2%
Type of High School attended		
	Township School	40%
	Rural School	29%
	Former Indian School	9%
	Former White School	9%
	Private School	8%
	Former Coloured School	5%
Mother tongue		
	Zulu	88%
	Xhosa	12%
	English	9%
	Sotho	5%
	Seswati	5%
	Tsonga	3%
	Venda	3%
	Afrikaans	1%
	Sepedi	1%
	Setswana	0%

Chapter III

Data Analysis

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data I collected while doing quantitative and qualitative research at UKZN. The data will be organized according to the following categories: micro-ownership, macro-ownership, investment in English, attitudes towards language policies, and discursive ownership. As we have seen, micro-ownership looks at the extent to which an individual speaker sees a language as his or her own. Section 3.2 will explore this notion by looking at three different concepts that students and academics commonly use in meta-discourses about micro-ownership: the notion of "home language," the notion of "mother tongue," and the notion of "own language." Both expertise (the ability to exercise command of a language) and loyalty (identification with a language) will be explored as possible important determinants of micro-ownership.

Section 3.3 will look at macro-ownership by exploring which socio-linguistic groups students see as legitimate owners of English in South Africa. Again, my exploration will take into account both expertise and affiliation. Given the important role language has played in South Africa as a mechanism for ascribing essentialized identities and subject positions within an inequitable social order, I will look at whether students see race as a relevant factor in determining whether or not a socio-linguistic group can be seen as a legitimate owner of the dominant language.

Students' investment (Peirce, 1995) in their processes of appropriating English will be the focus of section 3.4. I will show that while aspirations of upward socio-economic mobility are an essential reason why students seek to appropriate English,

their investments are much more complex, encompassing a desire to be more open to the discursive universe that becomes available as a speaker takes ownership of a language of wider communication (Kachru, 1986, p. 116). Venturing into this world is sometimes seen as a way to reach out to other linguistic communities in order to undo the ethnic and racial divisions that characterized the apartheid state.

Section 3.5 will look at students' attitudes towards language policies regarding the promotion of marginalized mother tongues and access to English as an additional language. I will explore students' conflicting feelings towards these policies to look for ways in which the debate about language and empowerment in South Africa can move beyond the "either or logic" (Alexander, 2002) that constructs the promotion of African language and access to English as mutually exclusive goals.

Finally, section 3.6 will discuss how students display discursive ownership by using their English to question both Western-centric discourses and ways of thinking rooted in the Southern African cultural tradition.

Sections 3.2-3.5 are each divided into two sub-sections: the first presents the quantitative data that emerged from the questionnaire; the second presents qualitative data. I chose to present quantitative and qualitative data together and to group it under similar themes because of the complementary nature of quantitative and qualitative methods in my research design. The discourses I present from my qualitative data set are meant to provide more depth to the spectrum of positions that emerged from the questionnaire (section 2.5). In looking for discourses that would illustrate possible reasons why students would take certain positions, I drew exclusively on the data I collected during the interviews. In order to do justice to the richness and complexity of the discourses that emerged during the interview process, I felt it was important to limit myself to the "insiders' perspectives" of the five students whose opinions I have

been able to explore most thoroughly and rigorously. Because my interview schedule grew out of my classroom observations, and because I chose to interview students who would represent the broadest possible spectrum of opinions, I felt that the interviews would give the best account of students' positions without leaving out anything of significance.

Section 3.6, which deals with discursive ownership, is based entirely on qualitative data, as this concept cannot be explored with a multiple choice questionnaire.

3.2. Micro-Ownership

3.2.1. Quantitative Data

Language practices at home play a crucial role in shaping linguistic repertoires and attitudes towards language ownership. Statistics South Africa used the notion of "home language" to study the language demographics of this country. It is interesting to read the data that emerged from my questionnaire against a figure from Census 2000, according to which, only 9% of South Africa's population speaks English as their home language. This figure was based on a question that allowed respondents to mention only one language as their home language. My data is based on questions that broke down the monolithic notion of home language by posing a series of questions about language practices with different family members and that allowed students to mention up to four languages in response to each question. As Bruder, Extra, and Maartens have argued (1998, p. 120), making "no allowance for the possible influences of different interlocutors in the home" creates an oversimplified picture of language practices in South African households. What emerged is that

multilingualism is very common, even in a sample drawn from one of the most linguistically homogeneous areas of South Africa.[8] Multilingualism is well known and often acknowledged by language rights activists; what is less acknowledged is the extent to which English is used as a home language among black South Africans from underprivileged backgrounds, even though they are much less likely to have a high degree of exposure to English than black South Africans from the middle class, who are able to attend multi-racial schools and live in areas that used to be reserved for whites only.

Table 4 shows that approximately one third (32%) of the students in the sample mention English as one of the languages spoken with their father; almost half of them (48%) do the same with their mother, and 70% with their siblings. Almost all of the respondents (94%) use English with one or more members of their extended family. We can also see that students are more likely to use English as an additional language with their mother than with their father, and much more likely to use English with their siblings than with their parents.

Table 4: Percentage of students who speak English with one of their family members

Students who speak English with their father	32%
Students who speak English with their mother	48%
Students who speak English with their siblings	70%
Students who speak English with a member of their extended family	94%

Table 5 compares the percentage of students who mentioned English as one of their mother tongues to the percentage of students who mentioned English as one of

[8] KwaZulu-Natal is one of the most linguistically homogenous provinces in the country, where nearly 80% of the black South African population speaks isiZulu as a home language (Census 2001: http//statsa.gov.za. See also Rudwick, 2006, p. 66).

their own languages.[9] Of all the terms I used to investigate attitudes towards ownership, the notion of mother tongue is the one that is most closely related to "inheritance," as generally, we see our mother tongue as being the language that is ascribed to us from birth on the basis of our parents. Even this notion, however, should not be used monolithically, especially in a country that is as multilingual as South Africa. It is very common for South Africans to have parents who have different mother tongues, just as it is possible for speakers to have very limited command of their parents' mother tongue(s), or no command at all, if, for example, these speakers grew up in linguistic communities where the language of the parents is not used outside the home (Mesthrie, 2002). Hence, in the questionnaire, I gave respondents the possibility to mention more than one language as their mother tongue. About 9% of the respondents mention English as one of their mother tongues, in addition to one or more African languages. These students' inclusion of English in their repertoire of "mother tongues" suggests that they see inheritance in a more inclusive way, since traditionally, as black South Africans, these students would not be seen as legitimate heirs of English in South Africa's linguistic market.

Not surprisingly, a much higher percentage of students (28%) mention English as one of their own languages. This suggests that the notion of "own language" is more inclusive than the notion of mother tongue, and that factors such as loyalty and expertise could play a bigger role in defining a person's language allegiance in terms of ownership, than in terms of mother tongue. Hence, the notion of language ownership seems to be more adequate for reflecting the complexity of multilingual speakers' linguistic repertories, as it is more likely to take into account multiple

[9] As I explained in chapter II, even though these students mentioned English as one of their mother tongues, I did not remove them from the sample because all of them mentioned English in conjunction with one or more African languages, which would make it very unlikely for them to be considered traditional native English speakers in South Africa's linguistic market.

language skills and the intricate interplay between these skills and speakers' hybrid identities, in line with Heller's (2007) and Pavlenko and Blakledge's (2004) theoretical recommendations.

Table 5: English as an additional mother tongue and as an "own language"

Mention English as one of their mother tongues	9%
Mention English as one of their own languages	28%

Table 6 shows factors that are seen as determinants of language ownership. I investigated these factors by asking students why they had chosen the language(s) they had mentioned as their "own" language(s). I operationalized the notion of inheritance by providing the following choices: "my parents spoke this language to me," "this is the language of my culture," and "this is the language spoken in the area where I grew up." According to the students in the sample, nativity factors are the most important determinants of language ownership: 64% of the respondents defined their own language on the basis of the language of their parents; 60% according to their culture, and 49% according to the area where they grew up. Expertise is an important factor for 46% of the respondents, and loyalty for 38%.[10]

[10] In this question, I used the word "culture" as a more accessible synonym of the word "ethnicity," which might have been not understood by many of the students in the pool. Equating culture with ethnic identity runs counter to my post-structuralist framework, which eschews deterministic and monolithic conceptions of culture. Students in the Access Program, however, often make this equation when talking about language and identity, as I noticed in my ethnographic observations and in the interviews I carried out with a focus group. Given that my goal for this question was to understand students' attitudes towards language ownership, and given that students often resorted to an essentialized notion of culture determined by the ethnic group to which they belonged in order to claim or reject ownership, I felt that I was justified in moving away from my theoretical framework in order to explore a potentially crucial aspect of language ownership in my questionnaire.

Table 6: What determines language ownership

Language spoken by your parents	64%
Language spoken in the area where you grew up	49%
Language of your culture	60%
Language you know best	46%
Language you like the most	38%

Table 7 describes language ownership from the point of view of expertise. Students were asked to choose the language that would make it easiest for them to fulfill a series of communicative tasks. My goal was to problematize the notion that the language that is assumed to be a person's mother tongue yields the highest level of expertise in every communicative situation. For the students in my sample, this language would not be English, but an African language. Like Rampton (1990), I was inclined to think that speakers with intricate linguistic repertoires can express themselves more effectively using different languages in different communicative situations; like Canagarajah (1999), I was under the impression that hybrid codes, rather than an unadulterated use of their mother tongues as "whole, bounded systems" (Heller, 2007, p.1), are likely to provide the highest level of expertise in many situations.[11] The data confirmed my impressions.

When writing an essay, 60% of the respondents feel that English is the language that would give them the highest level of expertise; 16% feel that the language of choice depends on other factors; 12% would feel most comfortable code-switching, and only 11% prefer to use only their mother tongue. When writing a letter to a friend, English is again the preferred language of most of the students (45%),

[11] Given my interest in the pedagogical implications of assumptions about language ownership, I focused on communicative situations that are of relevance for academic literacy. Also, very few people would question the ability of speakers such as Access students to carry out tasks such as asking for directions or ordering food using English. What language rights activists question is the ability of these students to develop solid literacy, numeracy, and other cognitive skills using a language that is not their mother tongue.

followed by code-switching (39%). Only 9% of the students would find it easier to carry out this task using only their mother tongue. English is also the language in which most students find it easier to read (67%) followed by code switching (17%). Code switching is the preferred practice by the largest number of students for discussing politics (37%) and for discussing what they have learned in school (45%), followed by the exclusive use of English in both situations (respectively 31% and 33%). The only situations where the largest group of students feels that the exclusive use of the mother tongue would give them the highest level of expertise are emotionally loaded situations, such as having an argument (58%) or discussing feelings (37%).

Table 7: Language(s) that give students the highest level of expertise in different situations

Situation	English	Combination English/Mother tongue	Mother tongue	It depends on the situation
Writing an essay	60%	13%	11%	16%
Writing a letter to a friend	45%	39%	9%	7%
Reading a book	67%	17%	9%	7%
Having an argument	8%	25%	58%	9%
Talking about feelings	22%	33%	37%	8%
Discussing politics	31	37%	17%	15%
Discussing what you learned in school	33%	45%	8%	14%

3.2.2. Qualitative Data

Students' meta-discourses confirm that English can play a role as a home language even among less privileged black South Africans who live in communities that are characterized by high levels of linguistic homogeneity. Prosperity, for example, started learning English with her family in her pre-school years, using English with her siblings and a cousin who was living in her household. Her mother, who had learned English while interacting with a white family as a domestic worker, played an active role in Prosperity's appropriation of English by engaging her in literacy practices using the dominant language. Prosperity recalls that her mother "would draw cats, dogs, teaching me the basics, how to construct a sentence, how to express yourself, how to say where I am and where I come from."

Prosperity had a cousin who came from a more affluent branch of the family and who therefore was able to attend a more expensive former white school. As a result, this cousin had a higher degree of fluency in English than the other children in the household. This triggered some "jealousy" in Prosperity because her cousin would get much more attention than the other children due to her English:

> Me and my other cousins sort of felt left out and people were not paying attention to us. They would ask [her cousin] have you passed? What grade are you going to? And whatever. And they would also pay compliments.

April describes similar dynamics in her account of her home language practices before she started school. One of her aunts had found employment as a domestic worker and was therefore able to pay the higher school fees to send her children to an Indian school:

> My cousins they started to go to an Indian school. They started to learn English and we [April and her sister] wanted to learn English because whenever they said something that would interest us, we would have to ask my mom to translate [. . . .] And my cousins were getting a lot of attention, so they adapted to English very well. They would speak, and speak, and recite this poetry, and whatever, and we were like 'why is she getting all that attention now?' And I'm like 'mommy, we also need to go to that school.' And then my mom got this job. She was also a domestic worker. So, the following year we went to that school.

In the meta-discourses of the students that I interviewed, there was no clear distinction between the notion of "own language" and "mother tongue," as it emerged from the quantitative data. Actually, three of the five students I interviewed took their mother tongue as the starting point of their discussion of the notion of micro-ownership. These students illustrated the way a speaker's mother tongue defines his/her "own language" by using biological metaphors that are very evocative of Ngugi's work (1981). For A.W., his own language is "the language that my mother breastfeeded me"; for April, it is a language that is "in your genes"; for Bongani, "it is a language that I have in me since I was born."

Both Bongani and A.W. exclude the possibility of coming to own any other language later in life. Their conception of micro-ownership is firmly rooted within the birthright paradigm, as they both reject the possibility that speakers might come to claim ownership of a language that is not inherited. What lies at the heart of their rejection is a rigid correlation between language and a fixed, monolithic notion of ethnic identity. This is how A.W. explains what he sees as the impossibility of seeing an additional language as his own:

> I am a Zulu; I am a Zulu speaker. That Zulu language is mine because I learned it from the day I started speaking. That was the language I was open to. It will be impossible to say I own another language, like English, for example.

When I pointed out to him that in the questionnaire, he wrote that he finds it easier to carry out several tasks in English, such as reading a book, his response was that expertise did not matter because

> your language defines where you come from and your culture. So if I can say English is my own language, it means I am living my life according to the English culture. Your language separates you from other cultures and other races. It defines who you are.

For A.W., constructing identities outside the parameters of the ethno-linguistic community into which a speaker is born results in an identity loss. He believes that if you don't want to separate yourself from other cultures or races, or if you don't want to be defined by just one language, "then you lost your identity: you don't know who you are anymore." According to his vision, it is a person's accent that polices the borders of this relationship between language and identity:

> You can learn a language and be fluent in it, but you can't gain an accent. The accent it links with the mother tongue. I can't gain an English accent because I am not an English.

When I asked A.W. to consider the possibility that he could have spoken English without a black Southern African accent, if, for example, his parents had sent him to a white school from an early age, his response was:

> I would hate myself. Seriously, I would hate myself. And I will probably question my parents for it once I'm grown up [… .] If your parents are Zulu, you have to be Zulu. There is no way out.

Bongani constructs a relationship between his Zulu identity and his ownership of isiZulu that is very similar to A.W.'s. Bongani sees claiming ownership of an additional language as:

> a mistake, because if you give up your language, you give up your identity [. . . .] You can't give away your heritage, no matter how educated you are. You can have your doctorate in English, but your mother tongue is more than your doctorate.

Like A.W. and Bongani, April takes her mother tongue, isiZulu, as the starting point of her construction of micro-ownership, but, unlike them, she is just as vocal in staking her claim to English as she is in staking her claim to isiZulu:

> No one can come to me and say something in English that I wouldn't understand. I know most of the things in English, and I am able to understand people whenever they speak, in the news and everywhere. I can write it. I can speak it. It's part of me now. Even though I know my Zulu, but I know my English as well. So it's like, my English and my Zulu.

It is through her expertise that April claims ownership of her additional language. This means that the causal relationship between expertise and loyalty in April's construction is antithetical to A.W.'s. For April, having being able to appropriate expertise in English has had an impact on her language affiliations. Because she owns English in terms of command, she has come to own it in terms of identity too. For A.W., language affiliation, which is determined by birth once and for all, precludes the possibility of fully owning an additional language in terms of expertise. While he admires Thabo Mbeki's command of English, which he describes as perfect, he sees the former president's English as being inferior to the English of a hypothetical native speaker, because for a native speaker, "English is his own language," while for the president, it is not.

Ingenious and Prosperity do not take the inheritance of their mother tongue as the starting point for their meta-discourses about micro-ownership. Ingenious believes that a speaker's own language is "the language you use the most, the language you like, the language that you see as very very useful." His construction

foregrounds language practices, Rampton's (1990, p. 99) notion of "loyalty" ("the language you like") and Peirce's (1995) notion of investment ("the language you see as very, very useful"). To stake his claim to the ownership of English, he juxtaposes his language practices, his investment and his loyalty to the notion of inheritance:

> As I said to you, I use both languages, and English is very, very useful to me. It's the language that I communicate with most of the people. The language I am able to make friends with many people. That's why I use it as my own language [. . . .] It's not because my mother spoke to me in both languages. I believe that your own language is a language that you like the most and that dominates many things for you. It makes things possible for you, so English is one of those languages.

Prosperity goes even further in questioning the birthright paradigm by pointing out that "people sound very possessive" when they refer to a language as their own. While acknowledging that people do inherit languages from their parents, she stresses that ownership can be the result of a successful process of appropriation that happens later in life.

> A language has its own indigenous speakers, but what about the other people that are learning that language and wanting to use that language? I think you can say a language is yours when you are an indigenous speaker, but you can also say that a language is yours when you have mastered the language, when you are able to speak the language.

As an additional language speaker, she foregrounds the expertise she gained as the result of her struggle to appropriate English in her claim to ownership: "English has become a part of me because I strived hard in mastering it, with the help of teachers, who were teaching it from primary until varsity. And my family have contributed a lot."

It is interesting to see how students whose discourses tend to fall within the birthright paradigm tend to construct language ownership as mutually exclusive,

whereas students whose discourses are closer to the appropriation model tend to see language ownership as additive. Both Bongani and A.W. do not think it is possible to own more than one language because that would create confusion in a person's sense of identity. We have already seen that April refers to the two main languages in her repertoire as "my English and my Zulu." Neither Prosperity nor Ingenious have any intention of supplanting Zulu with English. In fact, these students also see their mother tongue as an important marker of identity. For Prosperity your mother tongue "determines where you come from, it determines who you are," but she also believes that "any language is a valuable part of you." The way she describes her language practices reflects her identity construction as a bilingual speaker who has appropriated an additional language without disowning her mother tongue:

> I have a huge background of Zulu. I speak Zulu at home with my parents. I speak Zulu with people who don't understand English. I use Zulu on a daily basis *and* I use English on a daily basis. I don't think I can lose my Zulu. I use both equally.

Ingenious is even more passionate in defending his ownership of isiZulu. As an aspiring multilingual, he sees a contradiction in losing one language to acquire another:

> I would love to use my Zulu wherever I go because I would like to know many languages, so if I lose my Zulu that will mean I am losing another language. In fact I am trying to learn other languages as well [. . .] You have to know as many languages as possible. You don't have to lose some languages.

He thinks it is "stupid" that some speakers do not to take pride in their mother tongues, and he gets "very, very angry" when Zulu speakers refuse to speak isiZulu with each other. He doesn't see his love for English as being detrimental to the love

for his mother tongue, and he sees the need to maintain the vitality of isiZulu as his personal responsibility:

> I love English, but I also have to do my best to preserve my own language. I don't love English only. It's not like loving a person. There are many people who speak even more than ten languages. There are many people who speak all eleven South African languages. So how can you fail to speak two or three?

The interviews confirmed what Table 7 shows about language expertise among the students in the sample. That is, students' mother tongue does not equip them with the highest level of expertise in every communicative situation. There are certain kinds of speech acts that students are more comfortable carrying out using English. Also, it is often the use of a hybrid code that relies both on English and the mother tongue that allows students to express themselves most effectively in many communicative situations.

Like 60% of the students who took the questionnaire, April finds it easier to use English when writing an academic essay. This is her explanation:

> I know that I can speak Zulu. I use it in my family, but I never speak Zulu in an academic context [. . . .] It takes me a while to write Zulu and to read Zulu. I wouldn't read a Zulu novel as well as I would read a novel in English.

The fact that April did not use Zulu in an academic context is not surprising, given that she attended an Indian school where English was the only medium of instruction. She speculates that "maybe if half of the things were done in Zulu and half of the things were done in English" in the schools she attended "it would have been better" because she might have been able to "read Zulu better and write Zulu better." However, she is quite clear that she would not want to pursue a university degree using Zulu as a medium of instruction, not because isiZulu is not highly valued

in South Africa's linguistic market, but because doing work in her mother tongue entails additional difficulties:

> No, no doubt about it. Zulu is a very complicated language. The language that you speak is different from the language you use in school. I had cousins who went to black schools, and they also had difficulties with Zulu.

The difficulties April is referring to have to do not only with the fact that she didn't have the opportunity to develop academic literacy skills in her mother tongue, but also with the fact that the varieties of African languages that students are expected to use in academic contexts are rooted in the rural varieties that were codified by white missionaries in the nineteenth century (section 1.2.1). During the interviews and my ethnographic observations, several students commented that these varieties are often removed from their communicative needs and their sense of self. To illustrate this concept, they would often mention that rather than using the "proper" Zulu word for cell phone, which lexicographers coined with a phrase that translates as "the thing that rings in your pocket," students would simply use the English word. Both Bongani and A.W., who attended black schools and hence are likely to have a better command of academic Zulu than students like April, claim that there are times when they prefer to use English with other Zulu speakers, because English can be "short and sweet."

In some cases, English makes it easier for Zulu speakers to discuss subjects that would be considered taboo in their mother tongue. A.W. finds it easier to talk about sex in the dominant language:

> If you are going to say I am going to sleep with my partner, nobody would mind if you say that in English. But if you said that in Zulu everybody would like sit back and say 'what are you saying?'

Ingenious explains that Zulu girls prefer to receive love letters in English because "it doesn't sound very good or simple if things are written in Zulu" and because the use of standard Zulu projects identities that are looked upon with suspicion by urbanized female Zulu speakers:

> If you are speaking proper Zulu girls kind of think of you like you are going to take them to a very old fashioned life, and make them do all those old fashioned things, such as going to the forest fetching wood, fetching water from the river.

This doesn't mean that students are ready to discard their mother tongue: all the students I interviewed, including those who claim the ownership of English, have a high level of investment in isiZulu as a marker of identity, and they often express regret for not being able to have the same level of expertise in the standard variety as their elders, or their peers who have grown up in rural areas. Nevertheless, it is the hybrid variety that is most widely used in the townships that students are most comfortable using, and English is part and parcel of this variety. Bongani explained to me that

> we, the Zulu, mix Zulu with English. Because I am talking to you, I don't mix it, but if I am talking English with another Zulu we mix. We use this dialect of languages. It's our tsotsi-taal.[12] I can't speak pure Zulu. I will speak it to whom?"

Similarly, Ingenious pointed out that:

> in a rural area you have to speak a very formal language. In townships you have to speak a little bit diverted Zulu. It's like our tsotsi-taal, a Zulu which is mixed with other languages. It's normally mixed with English.

[12] "Tsotsi-taal" is a term that is used to refer to the contact languages that are widely used in South African township. The term itself is linguistically hybrid, as it comes from the Sesotho word "Tsotsi," which means gangster, and the Afrikaans word for language, "taal."

3.3. Macro-Ownership

3.3.1. Quantitative Data

Table 8 describes attitudes towards language ownership from a macro-perspective by showing what socio-linguistic groups students see as being entitled to claim English ownership in South Africa. I have defined socio-linguistic groups in terms or race, nativity, expertise and affiliation. Once again, in accordance with my post-structuralist framework, I gave students the opportunity to choose more than one group to allow for the possibility of seeing macro-ownership as a de-centered and contested concept that can be shaped by different factors. For a significant percentage of the respondents, both race and nativity are essential for claiming the ownership of English: 21% of them believe that only white people who grew up speaking English at home can be seen as legitimate owners of this language; 33% include coloured and/or Indian native speakers, but not black South Africans; 44% include black South African native speakers. Thirty-three percent of the respondents extend macro-ownership of English to anyone who has learned this language well (expertise) and 33% to anyone who wishes to claim ownership of this language (loyalty).

Table 8: What socio-linguistic groups can say English is my own language in South Africa?

Only white people who speak it as a home language	21%
People of any race who speak it as a home language excluding blacks	33%
People who have learned it as a home language including blacks	44%
Anyone who has learned it well	33%
Anyone who wishes to say English is my own language	33%

Table 9 examines expertise at the macro-level, which I investigated by asking students to identify the socio-linguistic group that can be seen as the best speakers of English in South Africa. Most respondents (56%) believe that anyone who has learned English well can be seen as being among the "best speakers," which suggests that the majority of the sample is open to the idea that English can be appropriated from the point of view of command. However, the perception that English belongs only to white people is widespread, even when we look at ownership from the point of view of expertise, since 23% of the students see whiteness, in addition to nativity, as a necessary condition for being considered to be among the best speakers of English in South Africa.

Table 9: Who are the best speakers of English in South Africa?

People who have learned the language well	56%
White people who grew up speaking English at home	23%
People who grew up speaking English at home regardless of their race	21%

3.3.2. Qualitative Data

Not surprisingly, the students I interviewed who place themselves closer to the appropriation model in constructing the micro-ownership of the languages in their repertories are more likely to see the macro-ownership of English in South Africa as open, fluid and contested than students who rely more heavily on the birthright paradigm. Ingenious believes that having a language as a mother tongue does not guarantee expertise and that it is possible for additional language speakers to surpass native speakers in terms of command of the language in question:

> It is possible, Andrea, because even with Zulu speakers, there are people who don't speak Zulu that fluently, even though it's their mother tongue. There are also people who have English as their mother tongue but don't speak it that fluently, and if you compete with them, you can maybe speak it better.

To support his claim, he mentions a native English speaking student from the US whose expertise in Zulu as an additional language in some ways exceeds the command of some native speakers:

> There is one girl who is from the USA, actually. She is staying in the same student residence as me. She speaks Zulu fluently. She can say words that I can't even understand myself, very old words, words that are used by very old people. She can say that Zulu is her own language too because she can use it more fluently than I use it.

Prosperity does see native speakers as being endowed with a certain level of expertise that they have by default; however, she sees a native speaker's expertise as coming from his or her exposure to the language, not because of biological inheritance but because they have a high-level exposure to their mother tongue:

> They [native speakers] are used to expressing themselves in this language. English is like mathematics: you have to practice, in order to know it well. For example, I am a first language speaker of Zulu. I have a huge background because I speak it daily. I have a huge vocabulary of isiZulu. The same applies to people who speak English at home.

Like Ingenious, however, she doesn't see native speakers as the only people legitimately entitled to claim ownership of a language on the basis of expertise. Non-native speakers such as herself have to go out of their way to appropriate an additional language, but they can do it, and they can even get to the point where they can compete with native speakers.

> I can compete with people who speak English at home, because everyday, I try to learn new words and to make something out of English.

Unlike Prosperity, April establishes a racial pecking order in her discourse about the macro-ownership of English. I found this surprising, given that she, a black South African woman, does claim the ownership of English for herself on the basis of her expertise. This is her explanation for excluding non-white native English speakers, such as the Indian community, from the group of the best English speakers in South Africa:

> Oh, the Indians! They don't know how to speak good vocabulary English. I wouldn't say it's the right English. Their English is very different from a white person's English.

I was much less surprised to hear A.W. and Bongani racialize expertise in their discourses about macro-ownership, given the rigid equation they had drawn between mother tongue, ethnic identity, and expertise when discussing micro-ownership with respect to their language repertoires.

For Bongani,

> English as a native language of Indians it is questionable. According to my knowledge, they have their own language and they gave up their language many years ago. Their language has died. I will not consider them native English speakers because even if you listen to their accent of English you can understand that they are visitors in this language. Even if it's the only language they know, because the way they speak it is different to the way white people speak the language.

Similarly, A.W. excludes South African native English speakers of Indian descent from the macro-ownership of English because he perceives their language variety to be deviant from his conception of "white English" standards:

> With Indians, what I have seen from high school and even here, they speak English, but they are not best speakers. Their accent is not English. There is an Indian language influence, so they use words incorrectly, like 'come quickly quickly.' White people don't do this.

What I found most worrying, but also eye opening, in A.W.'s meta-discourse, was to see how restricting the ownership of the dominant language on the basis of race can degenerate into racial discrimination in the workplace:

> Even the lecturers, Indian lecturers, they speak faster than English speakers, so they confuse us, and we choose to have white English speaking lecturers rather than Indian, because we don't understand Indian lecturers.

Interestingly enough, every one of the three students who racialize the macro-ownership of English in their discourses about expertise (A.W., Bongani, and April) claim that English is "everyone's language in South Africa" when they look at macro-ownership from different perspectives. I asked Bongani to consider whether he would be willing to use English less, or not use it at all, in a hypothetical, unattainable linguistic market where he could do everything in his mother tongue. He rejected this possibility by claiming the macro-ownership of English on behalf of all South Africans.

> No, we should keep English. English is our official language. This is an African language because we have English speakers in Africa. It is Indian. Nowadays English is their mother tongue. English is an African language. It's everybody's language.

A.W. made a similar claim when reflecting on the language practices of fellow South Africans. After he spent a period of time living in a racially integrated suburb, he stopped seeing English as a white man's language: "I took English as everybody's language because most of the time, most people, even me, are using it."

I did not ask Bongani and A.W. to explain these contradictions during the interviews as they became apparent only after I typed up the transcripts. It seems to me, however, that both of these students are much more open to claiming the macro-ownership of English if their identity is not at stake. In the statements we have just examined, English is constructed as a language of national unity that does not function as a marker of identity, but simply as a tool that allows communication among different ethnolinguistic communites that remain clearly defined in terms of their mother tongue. A.W. deploys a dichotomy between English as a "corporate language" to be used in public society and isiZulu as a community language to be used in the private sphere in order to protect his identity construction as a Zulu who is defined by isiZulu.

> My understanding is that mostly English is just a corporate language. You have to use it to communicate in business, but when you go back to your community or at home, leave your English behind and speak your Zulu.

Nevertheless, he quoted Achebe to claim the macro-ownership of English for black South Africans, when I asked him to account for the fact that in the questionnaire and in other parts of the interview, he stated that he does use English with isiZulu speakers even when he doesn't have to.

> There was this thing we read in class about this African writer. What he said is that we must mix languages, we make our own English, and try to interpret it in the way that best represents ourselves. I like that. We have our own South African English.

It is interesting to see how identity, or affiliation, plays a big role in A.W.'s claim to macro-ownership: the "own South African English" of people like himself is no longer constructed as a "corporate language" that is imposed by the realities of the

job market, but it becomes a new language, reinvented by its speakers in order to provide the best representation of themselves.

April's claim to macro-ownership on behalf of South Africans of all races has to do with the way additional language speakers such as herself have appropriated this language discursively to challenge disempowering subject positions that are imposed by Western-centric ways of thinking and cultural norms emanating from the Southern African cultural tradition. I will discuss ways in which students exercise discursive ownership in section 3.6.2. For now, it is important to point out that April's claim to appropriation goes beyond the lexical-semantic features of African languages that most black South Africans infuse into their English, but it includes "the possibility to use English in a different way" from the way it was used to "colonize" the minds of people like her mother and her grandmother, who, according to April, have a tendency to act subservient whenever they use English to talk to their white employers.

> I get so frustrated whenever my grandmother picks up the phone and her employer is calling her. She's like 'Ja Baas,[13] how are you? Yes mam!' My mom does it too. And I'm like, 'Mom, don't do that! Don't sell yourself so low like that. I know they are your employers and you are supposed to respect them, but not like that. You are speaking with him in your own house.' But then, my mother and grandmother are not getting as much experience as I am with my English. For them it is work, work, work. And with me, I am learning, I am getting educated, wherever I go, I learn something new. So I use English very differently [. . . .]
>
> It is very much possible to use English in a different way, because at the end of the day, English is English. It's not even the white man's language. He may be the one using it better; it is his mother tongue and everything, but it's not his language. It's every one's language today. Anyone who is willing to learn English, it is their language as well.

[13] "Baas" is the Afrikaans word for master. Black South Africans were often expected to use this term to address white males, especially their employers. Understandably, the use of this word is resented by many people in the New South Africa.

3.4. Investment

3.4.1. Quantitative Data

Table 10 shows that, regardless of their attitudes towards macro-ownership in terms of expertise, students have a high level of investment in increasing their own level of English expertise. Investment refers to the socio-economic goods learners hope to be able to claim by appropriating an additional language (Peirce, 1995). Eighty-one percent of the sample believes that improving their English is very important for their self-empowerment; 16% believe that it is somewhat important, and only 3% claim that it is not important. As for the nature of students' investment, Table 11 confirms that pragmatic reasons related to upward socio-economic mobility rank very high: 82% of the students in the sample want to improve their English to do better academically and 74% to find a better job. However, reaching out to other linguistic groups is another important aspect of students' investment, as 77% want to improve their English to be able to communicate more effectively with people who don't know their mother tongue. This reason could also be related to socio-economic aspirations, as students are well aware that being able to communicate effectively with people of other linguistic groups in English is essential for employment; however, for 57% of the respondents, making friends across linguistic boundaries is an important reason for improving their English, which provides more evidence of the fact that for many students the appropriation of English is also related to the desire to undo the social divisions created by apartheid.

Table 10: How important is English for your self-empowerment?

Very important	81%
Somewhat important	16%
Not important	3%

Table 11: Why is improving your English important for your self-empowerment?

I could do better in school	82%
I could communicate better with people who don't know my home language	77%
I could get a better job	74%
I could read more books and articles	36%
I could be exposed to more ideas	52%
I could follow politics more easily	27%
I could make friends more easily with people who don't know my home language	57%
I could have more freedom in deciding how to live my life	27%

3.4.2. Qualitative Data

All the students I interviewed showed a very high level of investment in English as the passport to upward socio-economic mobility. This confirms the findings of other studies that have highlighted how students' desire to increase their command of English is related to pragmatic reasons dictated by the socio-linguistic reality of the job market (Rudwick, 2008; De Kadt, 2004). For Prosperity, English is the "key to the gate," a language "you have to learn if you want to succeed," and "a language that can develop you." A.W. maintains that "English equals money." For Ingenious, it is a precondition for "going to places." Bongani is hoping to be able to send his children to a former white school where they will be taught exclusively in English to ensure that they will have a better life. This is despite his high investment in his mother tongue as a marker of identity, his concern about its vitality, and the fact that he expressed satisfaction with the quality of education that he received at a black school in a township:

> The school I went to was O.K. for me, but not for my kids. I understand my circumstances. I had financial problems and I didn't have a family that was that close. But I want my children to have better things than me.

Given the realities of South Africa's linguistic market, it is hardly surprising that upwardly mobile students from a disadvantaged background are very well aware that the appropriation of English is a *sine qua non* for socio-economic empowerment. Prosperity's and April's recollections of the envy they experienced when their cousins were getting more attention from the adults because of their English point to the fact that the association between the dominant language and symbolic and material resources is developed from a very early age. It would be a mistake, however, to reduce students' desire to appropriate English to pragmatic reasons related to their socio-economic aspirations. Ingenious's investment is also related to his desire to connect with people who do not speak his mother tongue. This desire started in his early childhood when he came in contact with the white family that employed his aunt as a domestic worker:

> When I was visiting my aunt at her work, I had to use English with her employers and their children, but I couldn't because I didn't know much of it. So that's another reason why I had to learn it.

Like all the students I interviewed, Ingenious is well aware of the inequitable power relations that put the onus of learning an additional language on him, rather than on people such as his aunts' white employers, and as part of his appropriation process, he had to deal with feelings of resentment against the dominant language. Once he overcame these feelings, however, he realized that English was a language he "wasn't going to be able to live without [. . .] mainly because there are many people you need it to communicate with." He is not thinking only of his professors and potential employers, but also of those peers who do not speak his mother tongue:

> Many people that I spend a lot of time with are other language speaking. Most of my neighbors at the student residence are Sotho[14] speaking, so we have to use English to communicate.

Similarly, part of Bongani's investment in the appropriation of English lies in its value as a lingua franca for communicating with native speakers of other African languages who are part of his circle of friends:

> English is a language that is easily understood. Right now my friends are usually Sotho speaking. I have been with them maybe past two years now, but I can't finish five sentences in Sesotho. I only know the basics. English is easier than other African languages.

Clearly, these students' investment in the appropriation of English goes beyond pragmatic reasons and encompasses the desire to reach out to native speakers of other languages. In the context of South Africa's history of ethno-linguistic balkanization (section 1.2.2), this type of investment in English as a national lingua franca can be seen as running counter to the social divisions that were engineered by the apartheid government. Perhaps it is their investment in English as a language of national unity in the new South Africa that made Bongani and A.W. see English as "everybody's language" despite their strong rejection of the micro and macro-ownership of English when they engage in meta-discourses that could have implications for their identity constructions as Zulu speakers (sections 3.2.2; 3.3.2).

While discussing her investment in English as a language of unity, April puts an emphasis on the new discursive universes that can open up in a language of wider communication:

[14] Sotho is an official South African language that is not mutually intelligible with Zulu.

> Let's say you are an African woman and you know Zulu only. You wouldn't be able to communicate with other people, and then getting perspectives from other different race groups. You have got to bear in mind that we are all living here, and we are all humans, despite our races. It actually helps sometimes to get to know how the other people are living, get to explore and learn to respect all the other different cultures. It really helps people a lot.

She states explicitly that for people like herself, appropriating English is "not just about finding work, it's about understanding how things are" by learning through the "different perspectives" a speaker encounters by using a language that is so widely spoken. To make her point, she explains how English helped her question taboos revolving around Southern African sexual mores:

> I think it's the way Zulus are. My mother didn't sit me down to tell me that I am going to be having my period and that my life is going to be different. They just tell you "don't have a boyfriend." They wouldn't go into details and explain to you why. And then you wouldn't understand why. So, of course, you are tempted to have boyfriends because you have boys asking you out. And you don't understand, so you end up having sex and getting pregnant. And I'm like 'you know that we are going to have boyfriends, so why can't you just educate us and tell us?'

Clearly, the difference in perspectives between April and her mother are also generational and related to the fact that, unlike her mother, April was not raised according to the much more conservative rural African tradition. Nevertheless, it is evident that part of April's investment in English is the fact that it provides her with a way out of cultural norms that clash with her sense of self as a young woman (see also de Kadt, 2004).

3.5. Attitudes towards Language Policies

3.5.1. Quantitative Data

Table 12 shows that despite their high investment in the appropriation of English, most students believe that it is important to implement language policies aimed at increasing the market value of marginalized languages: 59% believe that increasing access to English and promoting African languages are equally important tools for black economic empowerment, and 19% believe that promoting African languages is the most important objective. Yet, as shown in Table 13, most students (59%) do not think it is important to promote a greater use of African languages in education. This suggests that students are in favor of language policies in principle, but when these policies affect them more directly, as young black South Africans who are using education for socio-economic mobility, their main concern is the appropriation of English.

Table 12: Which language policy is more important to promote empowerment?

Increasing access to English and promoting African languages are equally important	59%
Making English more accessible is more important	22%
Promoting a greater use of African languages is more important	19%

Table 13: Do you think it is important for African students to be able to do more of their school work in their mother tongue?

No	59%
I am not sure	29%
Yes	22%

3.5.2. Qualitative Data

The interviews confirmed the trend that emerged from tables 12 and 13. Whether or not they claim the ownership of English, students show a very strong level of affiliation with their mother tongue and would like to see African languages play a more important role in South Africa's linguistic market. Yet, they are generally not in favor of language policies aimed at promoting a greater use of their mother tongue in prestigious domains, especially when they reflect on their educational history and their empowerment trajectories.

Bongani expressed concern about the vitality of his mother tongue because of black South Africans' tendency to send their children to monolingual English-medium schools and he fears that the next generation will not "conserve their language." He is very saddened by this prospect:

> I am very sad because losing language is like losing your identity, where you come from, your culture. It is not OK to speak just English. I saw this show on T.V. the other day. This black woman came with her girl who only speaks English. I feel very sorry for that family because I just imagine if all the families started to follow that practice because they want their children to have better opportunities, they will all send their children to English medium schools where there is no Zulu. That will be the lost [sic] of African languages. I don't want that to happen. I want South Africa to promote eleven languages, not just English.

Yet, Bongani is a lot less willing to support the promotion of African languages when considering the medium of instruction for the children he is planning to have one day. Ironically, he might be contributing to the "lost of African languages" himself, by sending his children to a former white school "where there is no Zulu." When I asked him to explain this contradiction he confirmed the assertion that given the realities of the linguistic market, native speakers of African languages

have no choice but to learn English as well as they can. Bongani referred to this concept with the phrase "going with the flow":

> The circumstances under which our country is right now force us to go with the flow. The flow is English . . . You can't stop the flow. Even Zulu teachers send their children to Model C[15] schools.

He believes that the government has a certain responsibility in redirecting the flow with language policies aimed at redressing power imbalances among languages. He mentions Germany as an ideal linguistic market, where people can use their mother tongue in any given situation. However, he would still not choose to do a degree in his mother tongue if he had the opportunity. This is not just because of pragmatic reasons related to employment opportunities, but also because he is well aware that while the vast majority of Germans share the same mother tongue, most South Africans do not.

> Where would I be employed with my Zulu degree in this world? Maybe in the government, but I don't know of any department where I can only speak isiZulu. The perfect example. In Germany they only speak German, even in big corporations and the media. They will even get a translator, because these people are proud of their language. But that would be a problem here in South Africa because we have so many languages. Sometimes we are forced to choose English because sometimes we don't understand the other African languages.

It is precisely the multilingual character of South Africa that makes him reject my suggestion that English should be used less or not used at all, when I asked him to consider a hypothetical, unattainable scenario in which people like Bongani could do everything in their mother tongue, as Germans do.

[15] Model C schools are schools that used to be reserved for whites under apartheid. While the department of education no longer refers to them as such, people often do.

> No, we should keep English. English is our official language. This is an African language because we have English speakers in Africa. It is Indian. Nowadays English is their mother tongue. English is an African language. It's everybody's language.

Interestingly enough, for Bongani, using English as an intra-national lingua franca in South Africa is necessary as part of the "Africanization" process" that many see as an inevitable step in the post-apartheid process of democratic transformation:

> The National African Congress is stressing that we are all African, no matter where you come from, and no matter where you are descending from. But if all people want to be African we should Africanize our land. We are going to promote Ubuntu, that is the Africanization. There is a saying in Sesotho, and we also say it in Zulu. A person is a person because of other people.

It is in this context that for Bongani, English ceases to be a language that belongs exclusively to white native speakers and becomes a language of national unity that can promote Ubuntu by bringing together people who have been kept apart by centuries of divisive social engineering.

A.W.'s stance is very similar to Bongani's. He strongly disapproves of people who use English instead of their mother tongue in situations where they don't have to.

> I get very annoyed when you see someone you knew in high school who is living here on campus. She'd be like speaking all English, when you're like 'but I know you are Zulu. How come you don't speak Zulu?'

Yet, he would not choose to earn a university degree using Zulu as a medium of instruction, and he doesn't believe black South African students should be able to be able to use their mother tongue more extensively in schools. In part, this is because he finds standard Zulu cumbersome as a language of teaching and learning:

> Zulu has longer words than English, and it is time consuming. And some words from the book, if you can translate them to Zulu, the whole meaning will be lost. English makes things easier.

But like all the students I interviewed, AW is very well aware of the limited value of his mother tongue in the national and international linguistic market:

> Even if you can get a degree in Zulu, the opportunities for you are limited. But with an English degree, you can do many things, you can knock on many doors. With a Zulu degree you can't go overseas.

I asked if he would support language policies that would change this situation by making it possible for people like him to move up the socio-economic ladder by using their mother tongue. His answer was:

> I generally don't like the idea: what about the other languages? What about Xhosa, what about Sotho? No, South Africa is a very diverse country. If every language could be represented equally in every institution, we would be far behind.

As in Bongani's case, part of A.W.'s skepticism toward policies aimed at increasing the market value of African languages comes from his awareness of the complications related to the fact that there are nine official languages that need to be promoted in South Africa. Raising the status of isiZulu, his mother tongue, would not be fair to the speakers of those languages. Raising the status of every single marginalized language would be too costly to be considered an attainable political goal.

Prosperity shares A.W.'s and Bongani's concern about the vitality of her mother tongue, given that black South Africans are under such strong pressure to appropriate the dominant language. She sees the possibility of a collective language shift towards English as a sad scenario that could be in the process of unfolding:

> It could happen because we would be so modern, using English, sending children to Model C schools, so that they get a good education [. . . .] I think some of our Nguni languages will disappear because people will only be concentrating on English because it is the key to the gate.

I asked her what she thought of trying to reverse this situation by using African languages to create a class of black South African professionals who would feel comfortable using their mother tongue in prestigious domains and who could function as role models. She expressed her skepticism with a series of questions that are of crucial importance for language rights activism:

> Can I ask you something? When you are going to build those varsities, how many people will come there? How people will get a recognized degree? How many people will get a better job? It cannot happen. It is O.K. if Zulu is used in schools because it is our first language, but when you are going to open varsities and make Zulu the lingua franca, most people don't understand Zulu. Let's say you get a job in Europe. Where are you going to go with your Zulu? Who is going to understand you there?

For Prosperity, the vitality of marginalized languages lies in the hands of the speakers, rather than in the successful implementation of language policies:

> In order to conserve our African languages it's up to us Africans. We should teach the younger generation. They should know about the Nguni languages, where they come from. They should also be speaking them, even though they go to Model C schools, so that they don't disappear.

A.W. would probably agree, since he believes that learning Zulu would be a speaker's "biggest responsibility" for a person of that ethnicity, if he or she grew up without knowing the language because of his or her life's vicissitudes. Similarly, Bongani feels that no speaker should give up his or her language of heritage, "no matter how educated you are," because "your mother tongue is more than a doctorate."

These students' investment in their mother tongues as markers of identities combined with their skepticism towards language policies aimed at raising the status of African languages points to a scenario where African languages continue to be extensively used in informal domains, while English continues to be the undisputed intra-national lingua franca in formal domains. April is aware of the diglossic relationship between her mother tongue and English:

> You know that you know your Zulu, that you won't stop knowing Zulu, because you are always communicating in Zulu with your family and your friends, but you are not using it in an academic way. Even if you go to the library you don't think about going to the Zulu section and taking a book to read because everything is like English, English! [. . . .] We kind of take Zulu for granted. We know that we can communicate in that language, but then we don't pay much attention to it in an academic point of view.

She regrets having a limited command of academic literacy in Zulu and wishes she had been able to develop these skills by using her mother tongue as a medium of teaching and learning:

> I think it would be nice for me to be taught in Zulu. I still have my pride in my language because I know that I can speak Zulu. I use it with my family, but never in an academic context.

Yet, when she reflects on her mother's choice to send her to a monolingual English medium Indian school, she clearly agrees with that choice: "Zulu is as important as all other languages, but then, with English being the language that you need to succeed as a person, it's better to learn in English."

3.6. Discursive Ownership

3.6.1. Epistemological and political premises

In section 1.3.9, I defined discursive ownership as the ability to exercise agency *vis-à-vis* the discourses a speaker encounters when using a language. As we have seen, discourses have a tendency to prescribe what is acceptable and what is not acceptable to say in a given communicative situation. Discourses construct power/knowledge systems by presenting certain ways of thinking as natural, commonsensical, and undisputable truths rather than as belief systems that justify inequitable power relations among subjects. Discursive ownership is a crucial aspect of language appropriation, since the use of any language, in any social setting, entails the negotiation of different ways of thinking that project different identity constructions. This is particularly true when a native speaker of a marginalized language seeks to appropriate a dominant language, as, during this process, he or she is very likely to encounter ways of thinking that promote the interests of the native speakers of that dominant language.

In this section, I will discuss some of the ways in which the students I interviewed exercised discursive ownership while using English to discuss issues of language, power, and identity in the context of their life trajectories. As I looked for evidence of discursive ownership in my interview transcripts, I broadened the epistemological and political scope suggested by Pennycook's notion of "teaching back" (1994a, p. 307). He developed this concept drawing on the post-colonial concept of "writing back," which explores how literature produced in the Periphery has been used to challenge the hegemonic cultural production of the Metropole, and on the work of critical pedagogues such as Giroux (1991). "Teaching back" entails

embracing “a politically committed pedagogy” that does not teach the lexical and morpho-syntactic features of English as if language were a neutral means of communication, but that instead takes a stance that is “oppositional to central language norms and to central discursive constructs” (p. 296). Pennycook’s recommendations call for a process of discursive intervention, which requires

> an understanding of how English is implicated in a range of social, cultural, economic, and political relations, how it might be linked, for example, to colonial history, to the invasion of North American popular culture, to struggles for economic and political ascendancy, to a split between public and private sectors of an economy, or to a schooling system which as a result promotes inappropriate forms of culture and knowledge. (p. 312)

I agree that English is implicated in a “range of social, cultural, economic, and political relations” and that these ought to be discussed, as part of a learning process aimed at facilitating students’ appropriation of language as a tool for critical thinking. However, I argue that *any language -- not just English* – is somehow implicated in this range of relations; therefore, this critical discussion should not be limited to English, but should extend to the other languages and dialects that are part of students’ linguistic repertoires. As Canagarajah (1999) warns, theorists and educators should resist “the somewhat misleading tendency in critical pedagogical circles to romanticize student opposition and minority discourses as always being liberatory and progressive” (p. 97). He points out that discourses located in students’ cultural backgrounds also “include questionable assumptions and beliefs about social life.” As examples coming from the context of Sri Lanka, Canagarajah mentions the tendency of local discourses to “avoid confrontation with the harsher socio-political realities,” to dehumanize women, and promote “gender based biases.” In the context of Southern Africa, one could mention prevalent politeness forms in the rural varieties of Nguni languages which proscribe that married women refrain from using words that

start with the first letters of the names of their male in-law family members (Finlayson 1995), and how essentialized notions of African "ways of thinking" are frequently invoked to justify virulent homophobic hate speech (Reddy, 2002) and to silence political criticism (Mangcu, 2008). Hence, in the following section, when looking at how Access students use English to question "central discursive constructs" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 296), I will not limit myself to their opposition to Western-centric "ways of thinking," but I will also highlight how they use discourses they encounter while using the dominant language to question the subject positions prescribed by traditional Southern African discourses.

3.6.2. Access students and discursive ownership

We have already seen plenty of evidence of the fact that all the students I interviewed, including those who claim the micro-ownership of English for themselves, take great pride in their mother tongue as a marker of identity and as a carrier of their cultural tradition. I will begin this section by providing further evidence of the fact that the extensive use of English as an additional language does not necessarily result into the passive assimilation of Western-centric discourses on the part of black South Africans.

In their narratives, students showed great faith in their heritage of struggle as black South Africans, both on a personal level and on a collective level. Access students such as Prosperity, Bongani, April, A.W., and Ingenious were too young to participate in the struggle against apartheid, but they are very well aware of this legacy and of how white supremacy still needs to be challenged. Ingenious learned about the evils of apartheid from his school teachers; Bongani from an old man who

used to visit the "shebeen" (speakeasy) his grandmother used to run to make ends meet:

> There was this man who used to come to our house to have drinks because my grandmother was running a shebeeen. The old man used to tell me stories about white people, about the apartheid era. He told me about these pass laws, that black people were not allowed in town after six o'clock. He told me about white people, how they treated black people.

April recalls how she came to internalize white supremacist ways of thinking as a young girl and how she was able to challenge these thanks to her education, which she received through the medium of English in an Indian school.

> We used to think that they [white people] were superior, because hey, if you talked to them! My grandmother even does it up to this day. She says 'oh, no baas' when she is talking to them on the phone. And we used to get all this stuff my grandmother would get from her employers. She was always saying nice things about them. If we got money to buy food, it must be from the white person. So we always had this superior stereotype about them [. . . .] I didn't understand anything about apartheid until I was in that Indian school. We got to learn about apartheid. We got to learn, learn, and learn!

As we have seen, she confronts her mother when she sees her showing symptoms of "colonization of the mind" in the way she uses English with her employers. I mentioned to April that a few weeks before the interview, I had been addressed as "master" by a young black South African I had greeted while he was working in my neighbor's garden. Once again, April reiterated the idea that the colonization of the mind has a lot more to do with the sort of education a person receives than with the language he or she is using.

> Maybe the young man was not educated, because education can help. It can help move away from the past. Maybe that young man was working for a white man in the garden and he just believed the stereotype that white people are superior and that's why he always refers to them as 'baas' or master. I think it's the effect of apartheid on the people, and it's so unfair.

In his narrative, A.W. challenged the Western-centric assumption that former white schools are the best schools a black South African can hope to attend. After he completed 8th grade, his parents had the opportunity to enroll him in an ex-model C school, but six months later, he convinced his mother to move him back to a black school.

> For six months I went to a model C school. But I guess it's just my identity. I dropped out of that school. I wanted to go to a township school. It was not only me who dropped out: me, my friends, and other people. There was this drama on TV called *Yzo-Yzo*. It was situated in a township. We took that drama and thought that township schools are cool. And we asked ourselves: what are we doing here? Everything is in English, and you have to have money on a daily basis to succeed here [. . . .] There are trips, picnics every two weeks, sporting events. Even if you don't play, you have to go at some point. On your lunch breaks, you sit in the cafeteria and the food is very expensive. People like us, who come from single parents family couldn't afford to live that kind of life. So that's why we thought, 'let's move to where we fit in correctly.'

Evidently, the fact that, A.W. was using English in his personal narrative did not prevent him from affirming his African identity. In fact, he takes great pride in the fact that after he moved back to a township school, he joined a debate team that won a competition against teams from ex-Model C schools:

> When I was doing grade 12, we started a debating team at school, me and my friends. We went to this competition and we were the only black school. There were all suburban Model C schools there. When you come in, you have the name of your school written on you. It was the only school with a Zulu name, so everyone looked down on us, and they were like, 'Ah, they don't even know why they are here.' Even the judges were expecting us to fail, not to make it to the finals. [. . . .] We were given many topics to argue, AIDS, abortion, punishment in school. Eventually we won the competition.

Obviously, the debate took place in English. I asked A.W. if he thought it was unfair that he had to use a language that was not his mother tongue to compete in the debate, but he didn't think so:

> No, I thought it was fair because I had this intention of showing the Model C schools that they are not better than us. We can prepare ourselves and beat them on something.

Clearly, the use of English did not instill in A.W. a sense of inferiority with respect to the students who attended a more prestigious former white school, nor did it undermine his belief in the abilities of the team he had set up with his African peers.

It would also be hard to argue that English had a negative impact on Prosperity's self-esteem as an African, despite the fact that she sees this language as part of who she is. One of the projects she is planning to carry out with her English in the future as part of her process of empowerment is to write a book about the "glorious experience of being African" in order to dispel misconceptions about her land and her cultural background.

> People have myths about South Africa. Some they think South Africa is just a jungle. Some people think people from here are uneducated. They think that we are suffering. They have these stereotypes about Africa. I want to write a book so that everybody will know how South Africa is. I will write it in English so that everyone could read it and understand it. The reason behind is to show people and let people know what is actually South Africa. And Africa is a glorious place to be [. . . .]

> Here in South Africa we have minerals, like gold, coal, etc. The land is so nice. We have forests. We have the big five animals.[16] I don't know if other continents have them. And people here are indigenous, original, natural. Most of them are hard workers: they commit themselves to doing something. Yes, we do have problems, like poverty, crime, but when I am reading something, I think that they are being exaggerated sometimes. We can still have these problems because South Africa, as a whole, is a slightly

[16] "The big five animals" Prosperity is referring to are lions, rhinos, elephants, hippopotamus, and leopards.

> developing country from apartheid. South Africa has celebrated thirteen years of its democracy, and a lot is still going to happen here in South Africa. A lot of good things. Most people are getting educated. They want change. They want to abolish crime, even though it looks impossible. People have plans to make South Africa a better country.

We have already seen the determination with which Bongani uses English to affirm his exclusive affiliation with his African mother tongue as his fundamental identity marker. In the passage below, he comments on the importance of being African in the context of the process of collective socio-economic empowerment that South Africa embarked on as a developing country caught between Western notions of modernity and traditional African ways of thinking.

> It is really important to be African because Africa it is our place. I believe that God gave us Africa. Then in Africa we should perceive our traditions, but I don't think we should allow our traditions to limit us from opportunities. You know, maybe you can't marry because the tradition is saying this and that. We should perceive the traditions in a way that is relevant to the modern life. You can't stay with your cultures that your great-grandfathers followed. They are not relevant today. If you don't believe in something that your tradition tells you to do, I think it's a matter of choice, or freedom of the individual in a way that he or she likes.

Bongani's pride in his cultural heritage is evident. This pride, however, does not make him subscribe to an essentialized notion of African tradition uncritically. In fact, he believes that Africans ought to exercise agency in adapting their cultural background to their needs as subjects living in a multicultural space caught in the pull between Africa and the West. Ingenious also believes that it's important for today's black South Africans to exercise critical thinking when looking at their African traditions:

> My father is very traditional. He likes making many functions, like slaughtering a goat and making them feel like he is feeding the ancestors by

> that. Maybe one day in a rondovel,[17] he will put a rope in the neck of a dead goat and hang them in the roof and leave it there for a night before we eat it. It's very scary, especially if you are coming at night alone and you see the blood flow. It's crazy stuff. The years of today need another understanding of the old tradition. Those people are dead. How can they get hungry?

A.W. questions the Southern African practice of "lobola," according to which a groom must pay a price to the bride's family in order to marry her. He is uncomfortable with the implications of this practice for gender relations:

> There are certain things in my culture that I don't like. I don't like beliefs like initiation school and lobola. Why do men pay lobola? I find that it is degrading us men. And if I pay for a woman to marry me it means that a woman is my property. She has to abide to everything I say, which the constitution doesn't allow. We are all equal.

Like the other two young men I interviewed, he highlights the importance of agency in mediating between the demands of African and modern ways of thinking:

> It is O.K to question culture [. . .] I think nowadays it's a matter of deciding what will benefit you. We are living in a modern society. You can't slaughter an ox in a suburb. They would arrest you. So you have to work out what you need and what you have to use in order to succeed in life [. . .]. You have to put together both worlds, link them, and take what you want.

He also believes that drawing on Western ways of thinking in "deciding what will benefit you" does not necessarily entail removing oneself from one's cultural background:

> It happens everyday. You find that even the people in the parliament, they are modern people. When they go they will practice tradition. So you see, they are having the two of both worlds.

[17] Rondovels are round, mud huts with straw roofs. These are the homes of most black South Africans living in rural areas.

As a young black South African woman, April is particularly aware of being caught in the middle of a pull between discourses rooted in the Southern African cultural tradition and discourses of modernity that tend to be associated with whiteness and the West. For her, being African "is important, but then, it is not important in a way" because when she was very young, she moved to a township that was "becoming modern, with all these white, modern things." Consequently, she sees her way of being African as "African, but not as African as it's supposed to be." To make sure I understand, she asked me if I had ever been to the rural areas of the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

> Have you been to Zululand? Do you see the way they live? The way they dress? The way they cook their food? Everything is so African you wouldn't find anything related to white. There's no forks there. You don't use spoons for eating. It is very much different. And the women there don't dress in anything. They wear those skirts, and they go topless, with no shoes on.

April feels like she's "stuck in the middle" of these two worlds. On the one hand, she takes great pride in her cultural heritage, and she regrets that she is unable to live according to it to the same extent that she would have, had she spent all her life in the village where she was born. However, she is also appreciative of things that she associates with the West that are now part of her life:

> When I'm there [in the village] I don't feel as African as I would like to because I love my culture, but I also know that technology makes things a lot better for us.

I tried to find out from April whether being "stuck in the middle" as a young black South African woman, gave her a perspective on gender roles that made her question power relations between men and women. She began by pointing out that

cultural norms regarding gender roles are very different in rural areas from the way they are in townships.

> The women in the rural areas don't have any closeness with the husband because the woman has to kneel down when she's giving the food, and they don't look at each other straight in the eye. They don't talk, they don't spend much time together because the women are always busy, maybe working in the farms. The men just sit and drink tea. It's not a lot of work for men. They just sit there and the women have to do everything. The man is only giving the money, or maybe it's the man's land. He has all the cattle. He is the head of the house.

> And then, if you look at men and women in the township it's not the same thing. They can speak to each other, maybe they share the same bed, because they have beds and everything. And they communicate much more. They work together in supporting the family. It's not that the men are so much superior like it is in the rural areas, because in the rural areas, hey! I wouldn't even go to a rural area and talk to a man, because that's a sign of disrespect.

I asked her what she thought of these expectations towards women in rural areas, as someone who is "stuck in the middle." Her answer showed great intercultural sensitivity and confidence in herself as a woman who does not conform to rural gender roles:

> I could understand where they come from, but then, I am so used to this township life. I'm like 'I have to adapt to their way because I was there for three days only.' But I wouldn't be able to go back there. I am so comfortable with the way I am living right now. It would be very much awkward for me to live in that way. I like to go there. I like to visit the place and get the feeling of the place, but I don't see myself living that way.

April's adoption of a culturally relativist stance towards social norms that many women would probably condemn as promoting gender inequality did not prevent her from questioning those norms, when they clashed with her sense of right and wrong. In one of the most compelling moments of her narrative, she explained to

me how the discourses she encountered as she took ownership of English allowed her to resist the notion that her father's abusive behavior towards her mother was acceptable because, according to Southern African customs, he had paid the required bride-price for marrying his mother.

> My mother had been in this abusive relationship for so long, until my father disappeared. And every time, it used to be so bad. My father was an alcoholic, and he would drink and abuse us. In the end, it got so bad that he even hit us. He broke everything he could get his hands on in the house. Whenever my mom wanted to walk away from the relationship, my grandmother would be like 'No, he is the man you married. He paid lobola and everything. You should respect him.' I could understand where my grandmother was coming from, but I was like 'no, mom, you can't stand for this. This is not right. You can't carry on living like this.' This is because I was getting an education. We would learn stuff about rape and abuse at school. I had two perspectives. I knew that what was happening was not right, but I knew the way my grandmother was raised.

For April, English played an essential role in gaining a new perspective on her family situation, as it is language that allowed her to talk to the councilors who helped her see beyond those traditional cultural norms that promote gender inequality:

> We were always having these councilors, people from different organizations coming in my school to talk with us. So I understood and tried to keep in contact with them, and asked them. I used to go to these workshops, whenever we had workshops. I would go and try to empower myself, even though it wasn't something that I communicated with people. Whatever situation I was in, I knew that there were things I could do. I would try to talk to my mom and to my aunts, and then I would start healing, and it would help me very much.

I asked April if she thought that the self-empowerment process she went through as a woman resisting gender inequality and domestic abuse could have happened using isiZulu, instead of English. She didn't seem to think so because according to her, Zulus are reluctant to discuss delicate issues that are considered taboo:

> I think it's the way Zulus are. My mother didn't sit me down to tell me that I am going to have my period. They just tell you: 'don't have a boyfriend.' They wouldn't go into details and tell you why, because you are having your periods. It doesn't help to just tell a person 'don't have babies,' because then, you don't understand why. So you end up doing the wrong things when you do have a boyfriend, because you have boys asking you out.

3.7. Conclusion

The quantitative and qualitative data collected with this empirical study show some limitations of the birthright paradigm. In terms of language practices, English plays such an important role in the lives of many South Africans who are not native speakers that it would be inaccurate to refer to this language as "foreign" and to argue that it is completely disconnected from additional language speakers' immediate environment. A particularly interesting finding is the extent to which English is used as an "additional home language" among a sample of respondents who are from one of the most linguistically homogeneous areas of the country and who are not likely to have had as much exposure to English as middle class black South Africans. My quantitative data has shown the limitations of the figure from Census 2000 that is often used to deny the ownership of English – with the best intentions – while pushing for a greater role for African languages in South Africa's linguistic market. The census figure might underestimate significantly the extent to which English is being used as a home language in South Africa, in conjunction with African languages. It is true that my survey was not a census, and that it was based on a very small purposive sample that included only university students in their late teens who might be more likely to use English at home than older or less educated black South Africans. However, it is not unlikely that the Census figure might have been significantly different, had it not been based on the assumptions that South Africans speak only one

language at home. The assumption that speakers have only one mother tongue or home language is one of the pillars of the birthright paradigm.

The interviews confirmed this finding by showing that several students started learning English at home at a pre-school age by interacting with older siblings, cousins, and older family members who encourage the appropriation of English without necessarily discouraging the use of isiZulu.

This questionnaire has also shown that equating expertise with "nativeness" is problematic. In particular, the assumption that a mother tongue gives a speaker the highest level of expertise in any given communicative situation does not reflect the socio-linguistic reality of the students in the sample, who sometimes find it easier to use English to communicate most effectively. For these students, English is an essential tool of expression that complements their mother tongue. While carrying out literacy tasks, many students find that they have higher levels of expertise in English. In many cases, rather than an unadulterated use of the mother tongue as a "whole, bounded system" (Heller, 2007, p. 1), it is the use of a hybrid code produced by using both the dominant language and the mother tongue that allows students to exercise the maximum command of language. The interviews revealed that one of the reasons why many students are more comfortable using English or a hybrid code in many communicative situations is because "pure Zulu" is a rural, archaic, language variety that is removed from their communicative needs and their sense of self as modern, urbanized Africans "stuck in the middle" between ways of thinking rooted in the Southern African traditions and discourses of modernity that are perceived as emanating from the West. The use of the dominant language also allows students to express themselves more effectively when they have to discuss issues that are considered taboo in the cultural tradition carried by their mother tongue.

Students' attitudes towards language ownership in terms of affiliation are still shaped to a large extent by inheritance, as many questionnaire respondents see their own language(s) as being determined by factors that can be ascribed to birth, such as the language used by their parents or the language that is associated with their ethnic identity. Nevertheless, a significant part of the sample is open to a more inclusive notion of ownership that allows for multiple language allegiances that go beyond exclusive identification with traditional mother tongues. Approximately one third of the respondents mention English as one of their own languages. None of the students I interviewed who claimed the ownership of English disowned their mother tongue; these students were just as vocal in expressing loyalty towards their mother tongue as the students who rejected the ownership of the dominant language. Students who declared English as one of their own language(s) did so on the basis of their expertise, which came as the result of a successful process of appropriation; in some cases, they did so on the basis of loyalty, which they don't see as something that needs to be expressed exclusively towards one language. Students who reject the ownership of English do so on the basis of a rigid correlation between language, ethnicity and identity that does not leave any room for claiming the ownership of any language other than a speaker's mother tongue.

The tendency to construct the legitimate ownership of English as something that can be claimed by birthright can be found also at the macro-level, where we can see that, for many students, being a native speaker – and in some cases, being white – are necessary conditions for a socio-linguistic group to be able to claim English as its own language. The students I interviewed who racialize the ownership of English do so because of the way they construct the relationship between language and identity; they believe that white native speakers are by default the best speakers of English, and

as evidence, they mention examples of differences in usage between white and non-white native varieties of South African English. They present the native variety as intrinsically superior. Students who extend the macro-ownership of English to non-native speakers see expertise as something that can be appropriated. Interestingly enough, even the students who restrict the ownership of English to white native speakers construct English as "everybody's language" and an African language when thinking about the role English is playing as a language of national unity in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

Not surprisingly, regardless of their attitudes towards micro and macro-ownership, students have a very high level of investment in the appropriation of English as an additional language. This investment is determined to a large extent by the realities of the linguistic market, which make English a pre-condition for socio-economic empowerment. For many students, however, the investment in English goes beyond aspirations of upward socio-economic mobility and extends to the desire to reach out to other linguistic communities in order to undo the racial and social divisions that were imposed during apartheid with essentialized racial and ethnolinguistic identities.

Most students who took the questionnaire claim to be in favor of language policies aimed at increasing the market value of African languages; yet, only a minority claim with certainty that they would like to see a greater use of African languages in education. The interviews confirmed this trend: even the students who reject the ownership of English, despite their investment in isiZulu as a marker of identity and their concern for the vitality of their mother tongue, do not believe in promoting a greater use of African languages in education. This is not because they lack faith in their mother tongues, but because of the realities of the global and local

linguistic market, and the complications related to the fact that there are nine official African languages that need to be promoted. Students seem to reconcile their loyalties towards their mother tongue and their choice of English as a medium of instruction by placing the onus of maintaining the vitality of African languages on their native speakers, who should continue to use these languages in their ethnolinguistic communities, so that they can be passed on to the next generation as markers of identities and carriers of cultural traditions.

During the interviews, students displayed discursive ownership with their critical discussions of language, power and identity in the contexts of their life trajectories and South Africa's evolution from the last bastion of institutionalized racism to a democratic "rainbow nation" founded on one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. While expressing themselves using English, students challenged Western-centric ways of thinking that have not been eradicated, despite the formal demise of apartheid. At the same, students did not stop short of thinking critically about the Southern African tradition that shapes much of their cultural background, whenever this tradition was used to produce discourses that clashed with their sense of right and wrong as subjects that are shaped in hybrid cultural spaces. Several students – both male and female – were particularly critical of cultural practices that they see as promoting gender inequality.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

4.1. Theoretical Implications

The data that I collected through my empirical study of language ownership among students who have entered UKZN through the Access Program confirms the theoretical limitations of the birthright paradigm that I discussed in my literature review. First of all, the data shows that it is not epistemologically sound to theorize about the power of English in countries that were under the influence of the British empire by assuming that this language is invariably "foreign," "alien," and intrinsically removed from a speaker's sense of self (Ngugi, 1981), unless the speakers in question is of British stock. From the point of view of language practices, we have seen that even in one of the most linguistically homogeneous provinces of South Africa, and even among speakers who are not from a privileged background, English is widely used as an additional home language. It is true that the sample of students who took part in my study was limited in size and not stratified; however, it would be safe to assume that, at least within South Africa, black Africans living in metropolitan areas characterized by extremely high levels of multilingualism are likely to use English even more as part of their daily linguistic exchanges. Similarly, black South Africans from more privileged backgrounds who can afford to live in racially integrated neighborhoods, buy books, and send their children to former white schools are likely to use English even more in their home environment and in their communities than Access students.

It is wrong to assume that multilingual speakers invariably find it easier to express themselves in their mother tongue in any communicative situation. The data has shown that there are many communicative tasks where students feel that they have a higher level of expertise using English or a hybrid code that uses both English and their mother tongue. Hence, for many black South Africans, English is not a "foreign language," but an essential tool of self-expression. Nor can it be said that for black South Africans, English is necessarily "that which is furthest removed from themselves" (Ngugi, p. 3). The meta-discourses of the students I interviewed confirmed that they are much more comfortable negotiating identities and power relations using both English and hybrid codes, than by using "pure" varieties of their mother tongue.

Language rights activism should avoid a rhetoric suggesting that for black South Africans, English is "unattainable," "foreign," alien, or that, at best, black South Africans can appropriate an English "with a 'lower case e'" (Nicol, 2004), given that it is not "their language." From an epistemological point of view, these assumptions overlook the fact that there are many black South Africans who have successfully appropriated the dominant language. While it would be easy to dismiss the successful appropriation of English on the part of the black intelligentsia as "an exception," it is less easy to make the same claim in the case of Access students, who attended schools that are plagued by the legacy of Bantu education, and who often grew up with single parents whose employment opportunities were restricted to domestic work. Dismissing the appropriation of English by speakers such as April, Bongani, AW, Prosperity, and Ingenious by claiming *a priori* that English is not their language is condescending and potentially linguicist. If native varieties are considered intrinsically superior, regardless of the actual command speakers are able to exercise

in different communicative settings, it would not be difficult to discriminate on the basis of language. And given the fact that many South Africans see whiteness as an essential criterion for being able to claim English as a mother tongue, it would not be difficult to use language as a proxy for race to perpetuate white supremacy in a job market where most forms of employment require "very good English skills."

Theories of language and empowerment should problematize more vigorously assumptions about what constitutes "very good English skills" in multilingual countries such as South Africa, where the vast majority of the people use non-native English as an essential tool of self-expression. Trying to promote marginalized languages by referring to indigenized English varieties as "English with 'a lower case e'" (Nicol, 2004) is certainly not going to curb the power of English to exclude from opportunities of socio-economic empowerment. Celebrating "the power of the mother tongue" by claiming that black South Africans use English as "a language stripped of ambiguity, cultural and literary references, figures of speech, idiom, rhythm, tone; it is a language of limited vocabulary that is incapable of conveying ideas" (Nicol, 2004) runs counter to the goal of making South Africa's linguistic market more equitable. Arguing that "surely we have a problem," "when mother tongue English speakers cannot understand the English of politicians, or business people, or radio newsreaders" (Nicol, 2004) begs the following question: why should the onus of mutual intelligibility fall entirely on additional language speakers in a country where most English speakers use indigenized varieties? Given that part of the power of English comes from the fact that it is a language of wider communication used in different ways by people from extremely diverse backgrounds, having very "good English skills" should entail the ability to communicate across different varieties of this language, rather than simply the ability to adhere to a monolithic, metropolitan

standard. De-centering and contesting standards will do a lot more to fight the linguicist power of English than theories based on the claim that African languages ought to be promoted because the ownership of the dominant language is beyond the reach of non-native speakers.

South African's public broadcasting corporations (SABC)'s brave decision to recruit non-native English speakers as anchors, newscasters, and talk show hosts in English language programs was an important step towards de-centering and contesting monolithic notions of what constitutes "good English." Not surprisingly, this decision created controversy. For example, Titlestad, the former president of the English Academy of South Africa, made the following comments in a letter to the editor after Africanized varieties of English began to be heard on SABC:

> The announcers could not relate punctuation to meaning. They gabbled and wavered, did not appear to understand what they were reading, stumbled over difficult words, misplaced stress, had no sense of intonation patterns, and no style in their delivery. (*The Argus*, May 11, 1995)

As part of their efforts to make South Africa's linguistic market more equitable, language rights activists should argue forcefully that the English spoken by national icons such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, or by radio talk show hosts such as Vuyo Mbuli and Thebiso Sekwane reverberates with a verbal adroitness that is carried, at least in part, by phonetic features rooted in Bantu languages. Whenever it is suggested that non-native English is so impoverished that it is "incapable of making meaning" (Nicol, 2004) activists should mention the plethora of masterpieces of South African literature that have been produced in English by authors who, according to the birth criterion, could not claim English ownership. The critical discourse should highlight how the Nguni, Sotho, and Afrikaans echoes that resonate in the poetry of Dhlomo (1986) and Serote (1986), or the lyric prose of Antjie Krog (2002, 2003) do

not detract but *add* "ambiguity, cultural and literary references, figures of speech, idiom, rhythm and tone" to the English of these authors.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative data that I collected with my study suggest that Access students' investment in the appropriation of English as an additional language is driven to a large extent by their socio-economic aspirations and the realization that, in South Africa's linguistic market, English is a pre-condition for professional success. It would be a mistake, however, to reduce the nature of students' investment in the appropriation of the dominant language to pragmatic considerations related to the realities of the linguistic market. Nor would it be accurate to argue that investment in the appropriation of English is driven exclusively by the hegemonic power of this language, which leaves native speakers of other languages with no choice. Even those students who reject the ownership of English use this language as an essential tool of self-expression, a tool that, among other things, provides them with a way out of cultural taboos that make it more difficult to share important aspects of themselves using their mother tongue.

Investment in the ownership of English can also be attributed to the desire to explore a wider discursive universe that can offer alternative ways of thinking to the ones that are rooted in the students' cultural tradition. April's investment in English as a discursive arsenal for resisting traditional ways of thinking that condone domestic abuse is a case in point. Students' investment in English as a national lingua franca can also be attributed to their desire to take part in the process of democratic transformation by reaching out to groups of other racial and ethnolinguistic backgrounds. In the context of meta-discourses about English as a language of national unity, even those students who forcefully reject the ownership of English

both at the micro and the macro level, see English as "everybody's language" in the New South Africa.

My data confirms what many language rights activists see as the main obstacle in making South Africa's linguistic market more equitable: that is, the fact that native speakers of African languages generally do not support language policies aimed at promoting the use of their mother tongues in prestigious domains. Undoubtedly, pragmatic reasons related to the realities of the linguistic market are the main cause for this lack of support; however, there are other important reasons too. Despite their high level of investment in their mother tongues as markers of identity, some students are very well aware of the complications related to raising the status of nine official African languages, especially given the way these languages are related to ethnic identities and power relations among ethnic groups. As upwardly mobile young adults living in a global economy, students are also very well aware that the power of English can act as a propelling force for their socio-economic empowerment not just in South Africa, but in the whole world. Hence, even if the successful implementation of language policies could create the conditions for "linguistic communism" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 73) by allowing students to compete for symbolic and material resources in their mother tongue, students would still be left out of the international competition for these. Last but not least, students don't see English as "unattainable." Even those students who strongly reject the ownership of English and who racialize expertise have a lot of faith in their ability to appropriate the dominant language as a tool for self-empowerment and don't feel like they have been disadvantaged by the fact that they have to use an additional language to master the syllabus and pass their exams. In fact, there were students who found that having to carry out academic

literacy tasks using a "pure" variety of their mother tongue would have brought additional complications to their learning process.

These attitudes should not stop theorists involved in the critical discourse about English in South Africa in their efforts to promote a greater use of African languages in prestigious domains, especially education. Even though Access students' educational achievements prove that English is not unattainable, too many young South Africans are falling through the cracks of a school system that was originally designed to ensure that black people would remain uneducated and docile. The use of English as a medium of instruction in former black schools cannot be blamed entirely for the high failure rate. One cannot look at educational achievement in these schools without taking into account, for instance, the fact that a lot of the students attending these schools live in tin shacks or mud huts without running water and electricity. Many learners in these schools do not receive proper nutrition and are often coping with the devastating effects of the AIDS pandemic, which in disadvantaged communities in Southern Africa has reached apocalyptic proportions. Nevertheless, it would be hard to dispute that in rural areas, where students live in communities where English is never used and learn in schools where under-qualified teachers often struggle to carry on a conversation in basic English, the use of the dominant language as an official medium of instruction creates additional difficulties in the learning process.

Critical language theory should continue pushing for the promotion of marginalized languages, but in doing so it should avoid resorting to a rhetoric that denies or underplays the possibility of owning English as additional language. Not only does this rhetoric reify the gate-keeping effect of the dominant language, but it is also an impediment for the promotion of African languages. If the legitimate

ownership of English is conceived of as a native speaker's prerogative, we should not be surprised to see native speakers of African languages resisting mother tongue instruction and going out of their way to send their children to monolingual English medium schools in order to make them as "native" as possible, despite their pride in their mother tongue. If activists argue that English ownership can be claimed by anyone as the result of a successful learning process, and if they can convince the general public that the best way to learn an additional language is by building on the mother tongue, it will be easier to convince the primary stakeholders that promoting access to English and promoting a greater use of African languages are two sides of the same coin.

4.2. Political Implications

My empirical exploration of language ownership among Access students was driven by what I saw as a political imperative to pay close attention to the voices of the stakeholders in the debate about language, power, and identity. Hence, it would be hypocritical of me to dismiss the voices of A.W., Bongani, and 72% of the students in the questionnaire sample who do not see English as one of their own languages by suggesting that they should. I believe that subjects should have maximum freedom in constructing their identities, as they look for ways to empower themselves in social structures that are not equitable. However, I argue that, while it is important to respect speakers who choose to see only their mother tongue as their own language, it is just as important to respect those who choose to claim ownership of English as an additional language, who constitute a significant part of the sample. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. As Rudwick (2008) has pointed out, for many black

South Africans, taking ownership of English as an additional language entails dealing with "coconut dynamics" or the subjection to racial slurs, such as "coconut" and "oreo" which are used to point fingers at people of colour who, for whatever reason, are perceived as "acting white." Several students I spoke with mentioned incidents where they were subjected to these epithets as they appropriated English and empowered themselves to succeed academically.

Critical language theories should examine more carefully the political implications of "coconut dynamics" that essentialize blackness and whiteness. In the context of Southern Africa, a discussion of language, power, and identity should not overlook the way some local discourses use essentialized notions of African identities to resist demands for political change by people who are oppressed by ways of thinking rooted in the local cultural tradition. For example, reacting to demands for the recognition of gay rights by the Gay and Lesbian association of Zimbabwe, President Mugabe declared:

> Let the Americans keep their sodomy, bestiality, and foolish ways to themselves. Let there be gays in the US and Europe. But in Zimbabwe, gays shall remain a very sad people forever. (in Reddy, 2002, p. 164)

Similarly, the President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, reacted to similar demands by stating that:

> It should be noted that most of the ardent supporters of these perverts are Europeans who imagine themselves to be the bulwark of civilization and enlightenment. (in Reddy, 2002. p. 165)

These discourses reverse the value judgments attached to the West/Orient dichotomy that are intrinsic to "Orientalism": an essentialized notion of Africanness (the self) is constructed as pure, natural, and virtuous in antithesis to an essentialized

notion of the West (the other) which is constructed as foreign, colonial, and decadent. Yet, Occidentalizing discourses can hardly be considered progressive or liberatory.

It is extremely important for theorists and activists committed to using language as a weapon of empowerment not to succumb to "Occidentalizing" discourses when fighting against the hegemonic power of dominant languages. Ngugi's assertion that English makes Africans identify "with that which is decadent" (p. 3) was probably made with political intentions that have nothing to do with the intentions of those leaders who use "Occidentalism" as a rhetorical weapon to resist democratic transformation. Nevertheless, these sorts of statements should not be part of a critical language discourse aimed at fighting oppression. Just as they have been used against gay rights activists, they can be used against young women such as April when they challenge local patriarchal discourses that are used to condone violence against women. In fact, during a rape trial in which he was implicated, Jacob Zuma, a traditionalist member of the National African Congress who is likely to become South Africa's next president, defended himself by claiming that his "Zulu culture" left him no choice but to have sex with the woman who pressed charges, given that she was wearing a mini-skirt (Berak, 2008).

Politically, it is also important for theorists, activists and educators involved in the critical discourse about English to be more aware of the linguicist potential of the assumptions of the birthright paradigm. A.W.'s, Bongani's, and April's white supremacist sweeping generalizations about the way white and Indian native English speaking South Africans use English illustrate the possible consequences of constructing language ownership on the basis of a rigid equation between language of inheritance and identity. If we put race and ethnicity into this equation, as these

students did and many other South Africans would, the links between racism and linguicism become clearer.

Last but not least, it should be noted how the political nature of Bongani's and April's attitudes towards macro-ownership shifted as their meta-discourses moved from the assumptions of the birthright paradigm to the appropriation model. When they think of English as a language of inheritance, these students construct the ownership of the dominant language as something that can only belong to the racial group that has dominated South African throughout centuries of white supremacy. When they think of English as "everybody's language" they construct the collective appropriation of the dominant language as a resource that is helping South Africa overcome the legacy of segregation that has come from apartheid.

4.3. Pedagogical Implications

My empirical study shows that Access students are very well aware that language is not a politically neutral means of communication, but a social force that has implications for identity construction and power relations. As they have taken ownership of English, these students have had to grapple with their conflicting feelings about the ambivalent power of the dominant language and with tensions in their identity construction. It is not surprising, therefore, that they responded particularly well to the elements of critical pedagogy that were incorporated in the English Language Development and Academic Literacy modules of the Access Program. While reviewing the mechanics of standard English and the supersentential conventions of academic writing (such as thesis statements, topic sentences, and paragraph unity) students engaged in critical reflections about why they are being

asked to master these conventions in the dominant language. These critical reflections were prompted by the reading of canonical texts in the literature about language, power, and identity, such as extracts from Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind*, Achebe's "The African writer and the English language" (1975), and Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory* (1982). While increasing their expertise of the dominant language and academic literacy, students were encouraged to make connections between these readings and their own struggles to appropriate English. These connections were made as students engaged in class discussions, small group discussions, reflective autobiographical writing, and empirical research. As part of the requirements for the course, students had to write short personal essays discussing their language life history and interview other students on campus to find out about their language life histories.

This hybrid teaching approach which blends the explicit teaching conventions of language and literacy, as recommended by rhetorical and genre approaches (Covino, 1997; The New London Group, 2000), with discussions of why students have to appropriate certain languages and literacies in order to succeed academically, as recommended by critical approaches (George, 2001; Pennycook, 1994a; Smitherman, 1997), was received very well by the students I interviewed. A.W. was very appreciative of the fact that his Access instructors take the time to point out standard English usage when responding to students' essays:

> After you finish Access, your lecturers when they give you an essay, they mark your essay, and they tell you that your essay is bad. They don't tell you why your grammar is bad, they don't tell you where you messed up, like they are doing in access. It's different in the Access Program. With our Access Program they are training us on how to write everything, and they are giving us good feedback. But if you look at first year and second year students' essays you find that they only give you low marks.

At the same time, he found it very useful to be exposed to the debate between Ngugi and Achebe, which allowed him to resolve the tension between his need to be true to his Zulu identity and his desire to increase his ownership of English as a tool for self empowerment. As we have seen, he related very well to Achebe, whom he quoted to argue that English is being appropriated by Africans:

> What he said is that we must mix languages. We make our own English and try to interpret in the way that best represents ourselves. I like that. We have our own South African English.

Similarly, April expressed satisfaction with the way she was taught the conventions of standard usage and academic literacy, but also with the way the Access Program got her thinking about language. This thinking led her to a greater appreciation of both English and her mother tongue.

> I have come to understand English from a different perspective. Besides knowing how to speak and read English, I am now learning to write good English. I have learnt about the history of English and the reasons behind it becoming a world-renowned language. Furthermore, along the process of learning English, I have learnt to value and appreciate my own native language, as well as other indigenous languages of South Africa.

Achebe helped Prosperity "dispel myths" she had about English:

> I always thought that English is an apartheid language. I knew that white people were oppressing blacks so I only thought that white people were responsible. I read the other article about English that I have in my course pack and learned that English doesn't belong to anyone. Anyone who wants to learn it, they must learn it.

Prosperity was not alone in having to overcome resentment as part of her appropriation of the dominant language. Ingenious recalls how he developed hard feelings towards English when his teachers presented this language as an instrument

of white supremacy. He overcame these feelings by listening to the words of a song by Celine Dion while sitting in a mini-bus.

> I remember one day I was in grade six. I was riding a taxi coming from town. By then, there was nothing inspiring me to learn English, though we were studying it at school. The way we were taught wasn't really inspiring because even my teachers who were teaching us at that time did not like English or using English that much because the times of apartheid had only just passed and even black teachers still had bitterness against English language owners, who were regarded to be as whites, of course. So these teachers were not inspired to teach the language of the people who had abused them for so long. They wanted to do away with anything that belonged to whites.
>
> The inspiration came to me when I was in that taxi from town to home. There was this emotionally touching song which played in the taxi repeatedly. I still remember; the song was in English. It was a song by Celine Dion, titled "My heart will go on."
>
> After hearing that song that day, I was very inspired to learn English. I decided to join the debating committee, which was held at school, in English, every Wednesday and Thursday. But the debate society was not enough because the teachers were not inspiring and not very good in conducting the debate (. . .) At home there were books that my brother who was working in the white people's houses brought at home from work. I started reading those books which really improved my English. And at home, I was also watching American soaps, which also played a part in me learning English. At school my teachers noticed my great performance.

The evolution of April's feelings towards the dominant language is very similar to Ingenious's. Making a connection between English, South Africa's racial past and the trouble that was part of her family life, she also argues that in order for people to empower themselves, their hearts have to "move on."

> I also have those feelings, but at the end of the day, I realize, that is the past. You need to move away from the past. Even though you are never going to forget that apartheid actually happened. You just got to move away. Some things you have just got to leave behind. Apartheid is gone now. Even though there are apartheid consequences, the really bad stuff is gone. You can't be always living in the past. Even though it's not that easy, eventually if you want to move on with your life, you have just got to put it away. Think about it, and put it somewhere safe, know that it's there, but then move forward with your life [. . . .] That's the thing I've been finding with myself. I

> know my days are never coming back. And my mother will never heal from all the pain she's had. My dad might have abandoned us, but then we have just got to move forward. If you live in the past, you are never going to go anywhere.

Prosperity made the same point:

> Some of the black people they stay angry. They will tell you these stories that white people are bad, white people did this and that, and you don't know nothing because at that time I was very, very little. I was trying to balance, because English didn't do anything. It was the people not the language. When you grow up you start seeing things from a different perspective [. . . .] I think people should be educated that English is not just the language of apartheid and whatever. It's a language that can develop you, that can give you a key into a good job.

These students' reflections on the power of English in the context of their lives and of South Africa's recent history confirm my belief that reconciliation, rather than resentment, is a much more desirable goal for a critical pedagogy committed to teaching dominant languages and literacies in a way that fosters equality and democratic transformation. Pennycook is right in arguing that English is implicated in a "range of social, cultural, economic, and political relations" and that these ought to be discussed, as part of the learning process (1994a). However, to facilitate the appropriation of dominant languages and literacies, these discussions should not be marred by the epistemological tendentiousness that I exposed in my critique of the critical model (section 1.3.6). Searle's discussion of English as an "oppressive language" cited by Pennycook in his argument for teaching back is not only marred by such tendentiousness, but also presents an approach to a classroom discussion of the power of English that is not pedagogically sound:

> Let us be clear that the English language has been a monumental force and institution of oppression and rabid exploitation throughout 400 years of imperialist history. It attacked the black person who spoke it with its racist images and imperialist message, it battered the worker who toiled as its words expressed the parameters of his misery and the subjection of entire peoples in all the continents of the world. It was made to scorn the languages it sought

> to replace, and told the colonized peoples that mimicry of its primacy among languages was a necessary badge of their social mobility as well as their continued humiliation and subjection. Thus, when we talk of 'mastery' of the Standard language, we must be conscious of the terrible irony of the word, that the English language itself was the language of the master, the carrier of its arrogance and brutality.
>
> Yet, as teachers, we seek to grasp the same language and give it a new content, to de-colonize its words, to de-mystify its meaning, and as workers taking over our own factory and giving our machines new lives, making it a vehicle for liberation, consciousness and love, to rip out its class assumption, its racism and appalling degradation of women, to make it truly common, to recreate it as a weapon for the freedom and understanding of our people. (in Pennycook, 1994a, p. 308)

An epistemologically valid understanding of the "social, cultural, economic, and political relations" in which English is implicated cannot construe the power of this language exclusively in terms of "a monumental force and institution of oppression and rabid exploitation." The "racist imagery" with which it attacked the black person must be discussed together with the way this language allowed the formation of the Black Consciousness / Black Power movements which fed on the counter-hegemonic discourse produced in English by black intellectuals such as Malcom X in the United States, and Steven Biko in South Africa. If English "battered the worker," it also allowed intellectual and grassroots labor movements to fight this exploitation and to make the working class a political force to be reckoned with in England starting from the late Victorian Period. Similarly, a discussion of the alleged "appalling degradation" that English inflicts on women must take into account the feminist literature that has appeared in this language at least since the time of Mary Wollstonecraft (1792).

More importantly, from a pedagogical point of view, I do not think it would be productive to expose the alleged "guilt of English," which Ndebele (1997, p. 11) recommends as a necessary premise for teaching this language. Presenting English as

a "guilty" language or implying this by relying too heavily on negative constructions is likely to hamper its appropriation. In order for a student to engage in the process of learning an additional language, there has to be a desire to do so. It is harder to find this desire if the language in question is characterized as a "monumental force and institution of oppression and rabid exploitation" and if the need for its mastery is presented primarily in terms of power imbalances which put students in the position of underdogs. The move from resentment to reconciliation that characterized the process of appropriation for Ingenious, Prosperity, and April is a case in point.

If we see discursive ownership as an essential outcome of the teaching of dominant languages and literacies, it is extremely important for educators to be more open to "ways of thinking" that run counter to the assumptions that at times dominate critical discourses. Widdowson has alerted us to the danger of critical pedagogy turning into indoctrination:

> Critical people, like missionaries, seem to be fairly confident that they have identified what is good for other people on the basis of their own beliefs. But by making a virtue of the necessity of partiality, we in effect deny plurality and impose our own version of reality, thereby exercising the power of authority which we claim to deplore. (2001, p. 15)

Indeed, Pennycook's "teaching back" approach is very prescriptive about students taking on adversarial positions with respect to dominant discourses:

> The voices that we are seeking to help students to find and to create are insurgent voices, voices that speak in opposition to the local and global discourses that limit and produce the possibilities that frame our students' lives. (p. 311)

Certainly, as students appropriate English and academic literacy, they ought to be given the possibility to speak "in opposition to the local and global discourses" Pennycook deconstructs. However, in order to create a classroom climate where

students can exercise and increase their discursive ownership, it is essential not to pressure learners into internalizing "insurgent voices," lest critical pedagogy itself degenerate into a form of discourse policing that limits students' "right to speak" (Bourdieau 1997, p. 648) and "the possibilities that frame" their lives (Pennycook, p. 311). This risk is very high, given the power imbalances that characterize linguistic exchanges in most classroom settings. Teachers of English and academic literacy are generally more rhetorically equipped to have a discussion in an academic context than their students. More importantly, teachers evaluate students, which means that they act as gatekeepers. We must not give our students the impression that they have to adopt a particular kind of discourse in order for them to meet the requirements for passing a course. Instead, we should expose students to a wide range of ways of thinking about issues that are relevant for their lives, and encourage them to draw on these discourses critically and idiosyncratically, as they use dominant language and literacy to negotiate their social positions in the world.

4.4. Teaching recommendations

4.4.1. Premises

Translating the pedagogical implications of my argument into concrete teaching practices that can help native speakers of marginalized languages and dialects increase their ownership of dominant languages and literacies depends on the context in which the appropriation process takes place. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to teach in the Access Program after I completed my fieldwork; therefore, I was not able to turn the pedagogical insights I have gained as a participant

observer into a well-defined curriculum tailored to the learning needs of the students who shared their "insiders' perspectives" with me so generously.

My data collection was followed by a series of conference presentations in South Africa, in which I discussed my work in progress, and by my return to the United States, where I spent a year away from teaching in order to devote myself entirely to my data analysis and the process of writing this dissertation. I returned to teaching, not in Durban, but in the Bronx, a few days after completing the first draft of this work. It is in the Bronx that the pedagogical insights that have emerged during my research process are being constantly shaped and re-shaped into teaching practices aimed at increasing students' ownership of English and academic literacy in developmental writing courses.

Of course, students enrolled at Bronx Community College (BCC) are very different from Access students in terms of ethnic and cultural background, linguistic repertoires and language attitudes. For example, 49% of the student population identifies as Hispanic and, generally, speak either Spanish, English, or both as a home language, depending on how long their families have lived in the U.S. Thirty-seven percent identify as black; many of these students are native English speakers, but they often use non-standard English varieties in their communities, such as African American Vernacular English, and/or Caribbean Creolized varieties. Only 51% of the students enrolled declared that they have English as their first language.[18]

Despite these fundamental differences that I am planning to explore as part of my next research project, BCC students share a fundamental learning need with Access students. Like the students I observed and interviewed in South Africa, BCC students need to appropriate a dominant language (English, in the case of native

[18] Nancy Ritze, Dean of Institutional Research at BCC, personal Communication, spring 1993.

speakers of other languages), a dominant dialect (standard English, in the case of native speakers of African-American vernaculars, Caribbean vernaculars, and hybrid languages such as Spanglish) and academic literacy, in the case of the vast majority of the student body.[19] Without the successful appropriation of these dominant ways of using language, many BCC students would also be excluded from opportunities of socio-economic empowerment, even though probably not to the same extent as South Africans who are not proficient in English.

Keeping in mind this fundamental common denominator between BCC and Access students, I will conclude this dissertation with a brief discussion of some teaching practices that, with a little fine-tuning, could be implemented in other learning contexts. These teaching practices are rooted in my belief that both the explicit teaching of the conventions of dominant languages and literacies and a critical discussion of how these conventions are implicated in power relations and identity constructions are a necessary part of the learning process (section 4.3).

4.4.2. Teaching the conventions of Standard English and academic literacy

The teaching of standard usage and of the supersentential features of academic discourse should be accompanied by a discussion of the fact that there are other ways of using language that are as legitimate -- and in some communicative situations more appropriate – than the ways in which language is used in the academic community. At BCC, I often use the Ebonics debate[20] as a starting point for this sort of discussion

[19] Eighty-five percent of the students entering Bronx Community College are required to take developmental courses in either reading, writing, and numeracy. (Nancy Ritze, personal communication, September 2008).

[20] The controversial Ebonics debate exploded in 1997 after the Oakland school district near San Francisco passed a resolution declaring African American Vernacular English, or "Ebonics," a

and make sure students are aware of the Linguistics Society of America's unanimously approved resolution on African-American Vernacular English:

> The variety known as "Ebonics," "African American Vernacular English" (AAVE), and "Vernacular Black English" and by other names is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties. In fact, all human linguistic systems -- spoken, signed, and written -- are fundamentally regular. The systematic and expressive nature of the grammar and pronunciation patterns of the African American vernacular has been established by numerous scientific studies over the past thirty years. Characterizations of Ebonics as "slang," "mutant," "lazy," "defective," "ungrammatical," or "broken English" are incorrect and demeaning.
>
> The distinction between "languages" and "dialects" is usually made more on social and political grounds than on purely linguistic ones. For example, different varieties of Chinese are popularly regarded as "dialects," though their speakers cannot understand each other, but speakers of Swedish and Norwegian, which are regarded as separate "languages," generally understand each other. What is important from a linguistic and educational point of view is not whether AAVE is called a "language" or a "dialect" but rather that its systematicity be recognized.
>
> As affirmed in the LSA Statement of Language Rights (June l996), there are individual and group benefits to maintaining vernacular speech varieties and there are scientific and human advantages to linguistic diversity. For those living in the United States there are also benefits in acquiring Standard English and resources should be made available to all who aspire to mastery of Standard English. The Oakland School Board's commitment to helping students master Standard English is commendable.
>
> There is evidence from Sweden, the US, and other countries that speakers of other varieties can be aided in their learning of the standard variety by pedagogical approaches which recognize the legitimacy of the other varieties of a language. From this perspective, the Oakland School Board's decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound. (in Perry and Delpit, 1998, p. 161)

Built on these premises, the teaching of dominant languages, dialects, and literacies is much less likely to become a linguicist enterprise than a pedagogy built on the assumption that the ways of using language that deviate from the conventions of Standard English and Academic Discourse are intrinsically defective and that

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legitimate language and recommended its use in schools in order to help inner city African-American students succeed academically.

therefore they should be eradicated. Students whose sense of self is rooted, at least in part, in marginalized languages and dialects are much more likely to engage in the process of reconciliation I discussed in the previous section if the ways of speaking that have shaped a significant part of who they are are not constructed as obstacles in their appropriation of standard English and academic literacy.

Once these premises have been established, whenever possible, it is best to use a contrastive approach in order to teach the features of Standard English and academic discourse. For example, in order to illustrate the principle that double negatives should not be used in Standard English, it is more effective to juxtapose the construction of a negative sentence in Standard English to the construction of a negative sentence in African American Vernacular English or Spanish, both of which do require double negatives. This approach not only reaffirms the systemic and legitimate nature of languages and dialects that are excluded from academic discourse in most US learning institutions, but it also helps clarify how usage varies according to different socio-linguistic situations.

In order to illustrate the conventions that shape meaning making in an academic essay (such as the explicit articulation of a thesis statement in an introduction and the use of unified paragraphs), these conventions can be juxtaposed to the way meaning is constructed in texts that are not considered legitimate in academic settings. For example, students can be asked to engage in a close reading of rap lyrics which also contain a "main point" and "elaboration" (despite the absence of a thesis statement and a paragraph structure) and subsequently, be asked to recreate this meaning in essay form. This process would not only clarify how conventions and usage vary across discursive communities, but it would also put many students in the position of language and literacy experts, as they build bridges between familiar and

less familiar ways of using language. Putting students in the position of language and literacy experts is a most desirable outcome if we see the ability to claim the "right to speak" as a fundamental goal of a pedagogy committed to using language and literacy as instruments of progressive social transformation.

4.4.3. Discussing language, power, and identity

Students might find the relationship between language, power, and identity and its implications for appropriating academic literacy hard to grasp if these concepts are presented in terms of abstract theoretical constructs. This is especially true in the case of developmental writing students who are not as used to grappling with abstract theories as their teachers, who have been part of the academic discursive community for much longer. It is very important, therefore, that a discussion of the power of a dominant language, dialects, and literacies be rooted in students' life trajectories and sense of self. For this reason, I believe that students' life histories constitute the ideal starting point for an academic literacy course.

Students turn to higher education as a tool for satisfying their aspirations for socio-economic mobility. For students who end up in programs such as Access or BCC's developmental writing courses, the need to appropriate a dominant language and literacy stands in the way of these aspirations. While concepts such as "linguistic market," "gate-keeping," or "profits of distinction" might elude students if they are presented abstractedly, they often resonate if they are used to illustrate crucial points in students' life histories.

Very simple questions can be used to begin critical conversations about language and literacy in the context of students' processes of empowerment. For

example, students can be asked to reflect on where they come from, on how they made their decision to go to college, on what they hope to achieve by getting a degree, and on the challenges they expect to face while working towards their degree. Once a sufficient level of trust has been established in class, students can be asked to reflect on more personal issues, such as how they see themselves as writers, how they feel about having to take remedial writing courses, and if they see a discrepancy between the way they have to use language in school and the way it is used in their community.

If done in the form of free-writing assignments, these personal reflections are very effective ways to help students overcome the sense of insecurity that many writers – both experienced and inexperienced – feel as they try to put their thoughts on paper (Elbow, 1981). Ideally, these written reflections will be the beginning of a recursive (Perl, 1980), long-term writing process that will incorporate various stages of discussion, peer-review, individual conferences, and revision that will culminate in a portfolio of essays that meet the academic literacy expectations for the grade level.

Published literacy narratives written by non-traditional students who have appropriated high levels of academic literacy against all odds are extremely valuable tools for moving discussions of language, power, and identity beyond students' personal experience and into the realm of theory. Texts such as Mike Rose's *Life on the Boundary* (1989), which present the appropriation of academic literacy as a struggle that can be won, resonate with students as they make connections between their sense of self as learners and the texts they are asked to engage with critically.

These easily accessible texts can also provide segues into more complex and emotionally charged discussions of how certain social structures make the acquisition of academic literacy more difficult for students who come from underprivileged backgrounds. The appropriation struggles of Rose and of the students enrolled in

developmental writing programs become even more compelling in the light of Jonathan Kozol's (2005) analysis of how U.S. public schools (re)produce social-stratification by tracking learners very early in life, minimizing opportunities of socio-economic empowerment for working class and minority students.

Given that, even in the U.S., students of color are much more likely to face additional challenges in the appropriation of academic literacy, and given that it has been argued that some of these challenges are related to different ways in which different racial groups use language (Smitherman, 1997; Perry and Delpit, 1998; Brice Heath, 1983), a critical discussion of how language is implicated in power relations and identity construction cannot overlook the thorny issue of race. In the context of a U.S. urban community college, I have found the Ebonics debate particularly helpful in dealing with these issues.

Students express a wide range of opinions in reaction to texts written by reputable academics who construct Ebonics as a separate language from English (Kifano and Smith, 2006) or as a black variety that is just as legitimate as the standard, which is constructed as a white variety (Smitherman 1997; Jordan, 2002). It is not uncommon for African- American students to strongly reject the claim that, because of their heritage, they are not native English speakers, or that because of the color of their skin, they should identify with a language variety that they often equate with "slang," "bad English," or "street language" (Parmegiani, 2006). Language and literacy teachers committed to fighting linguicism should try to change these misconceptions about marginalized languages and dialects, for example, by making sure that their syllabi include award winning pieces of literature written in non-standard English, such as *The Color Purple* (Walker, 2003). At the same time, however, as we seek to help students exercise discursive ownership, we should make

sure we allow students to challenge *any* discourse, including those discourses that have a lot of currency among language rights activists. This is why it would not be pedagogically sound to have a discussion of the Ebonics debate without including texts by other reputable linguists and educators, such as Baugh (1999) and McWhorter (2001), who have put forth cogent critiques of the theories embraced by the exponents of the Oakland resolution.

As educators committed to using language and literacy as weapons of empowerment, the last thing we want to do is to restrict students' "right to speak" by pressuring them to internalize a particular discourse, even if the discourse in question is very close to hearts. Instead, we should help students' "ability to impose reception" (Bourdieau, 1997, p. 648) with their *own* discourses, as they use their linguistic repertoires to negotiate identities and power relations.

Appendix

Language and Empowerment Questionnaire

I would like to ask you to help me with my research by answering the following questions. This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong questions. I am interested in your personal opinion. Please give your answers sincerely, because only this will guarantee the success of my research. Thank you very much for your help.

Preliminary questions

Please circle the number next to the answer that applies to you

1. Is English your home language?

Yes 1
No 2

2. Did you go to a school were subjects were taught in Afrikaans?

Yes 1
No 2

3. What is the name of your lecturer for academic literacy?

_____

Please circle the number next to the answer that applies to you

1. What is your gender?

Male 1
Female 2

2. Where are you from?

eThekwini (Durban Metropolitan Area) 1
Another part of KwaZulu Natal 2
Eastern Cape 3
Western Cape 4
Northern Cape 5
Free State 6
Guateng 7
Mpumalanga 9
Limpopo 10
North West Province 11
Outside South Africa 12

3. Do you see yourself as:

Black African 1
Indian 2
White 3
Coloured 4
Other _____

4. How would you describe your family's economic situation?

Disadvantaged 1
In the middle 2
Advantaged 3

5. The high school you attended can best be described as a:

A township school with mostly black students 1
A school in a rural area with mostly black students 2
A former Coloured school 3
A former Indian school 4
A former white school (Model C) 5
A private school 6

6. Which language(s) were actually used in your high school in the following situations? Please circle the number under the language that applies.

Situation	Only English	Only an African Language	Both English and an African Language
1. Teachers taught	1	2	3
2. Students worked in groups	1	2	3
3. Students asked questions to the teacher	1	2	3
4. Teachers went over difficult things	1	2	3
5. Students helped each other with their school work	1	2	3
6. Students talked to each other freely	1	2	3

7. List all the languages you know well enough to communicate and circle the number in the box that best describes how well you know them. You may add more languages under the box if you need more space.

Language	How well do you know the language?		
	Mother tongue or almost as well as your mother tongue	Fluent	Basic
1.	1	2	3
2.	1	2	3
3.	1	2	3
4.	1	2	3
5.	1	2	3

8. Which of these language(s) did you speak at home:

1.With your mother_____,_____,_____
2. With your father_____ ,_____,_____
3. With your brothers and sisters_____,_____,_____
4. With your extended family_____,_____,_____

9. Which language do you see as your "mother tongue"? You can choose more than one

_____

10. Which language do you see as your "own language" ? You can choose more than one.

_____

11. Why did you choose this language (or these languages) as your "own language"? You can choose more than one answer and add more reasons if necessary

My parents spoke this language to me 1
This language is spoken in the area where I grew up 2
It is the language of my culture 3
This language is the language I know best 4
This is the language I like the most 5
Other reasons:_____
_____
_____

12. Which language would make it easier for you to do the following: (circle the number in the appropriate box)

	My mother tongue	**English**	**A combination of English and my mother tongue**	**It depends on the situation**
1. Write an essay	1	2	3	4
2. Write a letter to a friend	1	2	3	4
3. Read a book	1	2	3	4
4. Speak effectively when you have an argument	1	2	3	4
5. Speak about your feelings	1	2	3	4
6. Discuss politics	1	2	3	4
7. Discuss what you learned in school	1	2	3	4

13. Did you know any English <u>before</u> you started elementary school?

Yes 1 [CONTINUE TO QUESTION 14]
No 2 [SKIP TO QUESTION 16]

14. If you knew some English before you started elementary school, where did your knowledge come from? You can choose more than one answer and add more if necessary

My parents spoke to me in English sometimes 1
My parents or other adults read to me in English 2
My brothers and sisters talked to me in English sometimes 3
My parents or my brothers and sisters used English with visitors 4
I heard English by watching TV 5
Other
_____

15. How well did you know English <u>before</u> you started elementary school?

I knew a little English, but not enough to communicate 1
I knew just enough English to get by 2
I knew enough English to communicate well 3

16. Which language(s) did you usually use with your friends?

1. In elementary school _____,_____,_____
2. In high school_____,_____,_____
3. At university_____,_____,_____

17. Do you ever choose to use English to communicate with people who have the same mother tongue as you?

Yes 1 [SKIP TO QUESTION 19]
No 2 [CONTINUE TO QUESTION 18]

18. If you don't choose to use English with someone who has the same mother tongue as you, why is this? You can choose more than one answer and add more if necessary. Then SKIP TO QUESTION 22.

I would feel awkward 1
I can express myself better in my home language 2
People would think I'm pretentious if I used English 3
Other:_____
_____
_____

19. If you sometimes choose to use English with someone who has the same mother tongue as you, why do you do this? You can choose more than one answer and add more if necessary

It feels natural 1
Sometimes I can express myself better in English 2
I could be taken more seriously if I used English 3
Other:_____
_____
_____

20. When you use English with people who have the same mother tongue as you, do you prefer to:

Have conversations only in English 1
Use both English and your mother tongue 2
It depends on the conversation 3

21. With what kind of people who have the same mother tongue as you are you more likely to use English? You can choose more than one answer and add more if necessary

People you have met at school 1
People you have met at work 2
Young people 3
Older people 4
Highly Educated people 5
People who are in a position of power 6
Other_____
_____
_____

22. Which of these groups do you consider the best speakers of English in South Africa?

White people who grew up speaking English at home 1
People who grew up speaking English at home, regardless of their race 2
People who have learned this language well, regardless of the language spoken at home 3

23. Which of the following accents is the best for a Black South African with a perfect command of English?

British 1
White Southern African 2
American 3
Black Southern African 4
Whatever accent comes most natural 5

24. How well can you learn English, if you have an African language as your mother tongue?

Well enough to compete with people who have English as their mother tongue 1
Competently, but not as well as people who have English as their mother tongue 2
Well enough to get by, but you will always find it more difficult to use English 3

25. Which of these groups can say "English is my own language" in South Africa? You can choose more than one answer.

White people who grew up speaking English at home 1
Indian people who grew up speaking English at home 2

Coloured people who grew up speaking English at home 3
Black African people who grew up speaking English at home 4
Any person who has learned this language well 5
Any person who wishes to say "English is my language" 6

26. Which of the following words best describes your relationship to English?

Foreign language 1
Second language or additional language 2
One of my languages 3

27. How would you describe your command of English in the following situations (please circle the number in the box)

	Mother tongue or almost like mother tongue	**Good Enough**	**Not Good Enough**
1. Speaking to friends	1	2	3
2. Speaking to lecturers	1	2	3
3. Writing for university	1	2	3
4. Writing for fun	1	2	3
5. Reading for school	1	2	3
6. Reading for pleasure	1	2	3

28. Do you think improving your English is important for your self-empowerment?

Very important 1 [CONTINUE TO QUESTION 29]
Somewhat important 2 [CONTINUE TO QUESTION 29]
It is not important 3 [SKIP TO QUESTION 30]

29. If you think improving your English is important for your self-empowerment, why is this? You can choose more than one answer and add more if necessary

I could do better at university 1
I could get a better job 2
I could read more books and articles 3
I could be exposed to more ideas 4
I could follow politics more easily 5
I could communicate better with people who don't know my home language 5
I could make friends more easily among people who don't know my home language 6
I could have more freedom in deciding how to live my life 7
Other:_____
_____
_____

30. Do you think having to use English as a language of instruction has made it harder for you to do well in your school career?

Yes 1
No 2
I am not sure 3

31. If you had the opportunity to get a degree from a very good university using only your mother tongue, would you do that?

Yes 1
No 2
I am not sure 3

32. Do you think it's important for African students to be able to do more of their school work in their mother tongue?

Yes 1
No 2
I am not sure 3

33. Do you think people who have English as their mother tongue have an advantage when they look for work?

Yes 1
No 2
I am not sure 3

34. In order to promote Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa, do you think it's more important to:

Promote a greater use of African Languages, so that people who have these languages as their mother tongue will not have to use English so much to be successful 1

Make English more accessible to people who have African languages as their mother tongue so that it will be easier for them to be successful using English 2

Both are equally important 3

35. In an ideal situation where all South African languages could provide speakers with equal opportunities in this country, would you want to:

Be able to succeed using only your mother tongue 1
Be able to succeed using both your mother tongue and English 2

36. Having to use English in my life has:

Added something to who I am 1
Taken away something from who I am 2
Added something and taken away from something from who I am 3

37. Which of the following statements about black South Africans who like to use English a lot are true, and which are false (circle the number in the box that applies)

Statements	True	False
1. They are more educated	1	2
2. They are from a privileged background	1	2
3. They are more modern	1	2
4. They think they are better	1	2
5. They are less African	1	2
6. They have been successful	1	2
7. They are more international	1	2
8. They speak African languages less well.	1	2

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