INVESTIGATING THE USE OF SEPEDI AND ENGLISH TO INITIATE STUDENTS INTO THE DISCOURSE OF A DISCIPLINE IN A FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY COURSE.

By

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ABSTRACT

This research project set out to investigate the use of an African language, in this case, Sepedi as an academic language of teaching and learning of first year students in the academic subject of Communication Theory at tertiary education level. Of interest was how effective Sepedi is as an academic language of learning and instruction. The focus was on investigating to what extent using a mother-tongue in academia opens up learning possibilities for learners. The research intended to explore whether it is reasonable and practicable to use an African language (in this case Sepedi) in the teaching and learning of Communication Theory in a first year diploma level Communication Skills class. Of interest therefore was whether Sepedi is useful and is a viable academic language in the pedagogy of Communication Theory in a higher education Communication Skills course.

The methods used in the research were qualitative and took the form of a teaching intervention in which a class of Sepedi speaking students voluntarily participated in two lessons in which Sepedi and English were used respectively as a medium of instruction for Communication Theory. Both lessons were observed by the researcher. The class observations were video-recorded and audio-recorded then transcribed for discourse and thematic analysis of the learning and teaching experiences of the participants. Methods used also included a focus group interview and individual interviews and artifacts in the form of an evaluated written formative task and reflective pieces. This was important for evaluating the extent of learning from the lessons observed. Participants' language biographies were also compiled for purposes of writing up each student's profile. The purpose of using all these instruments was to use data from one instrument to positively inform the next and for information to be finally triangulated.

 The research findings suggest that the use of Sepedi (African languages) in the classroom could play a significant role in scaffolding and mediating students who are struggling at first year level in universities. A mixture of African languages and English involving code-switching and mixing may have pedagogical advantages. Also, the

findings suggest that institutions need to support African languages as languages of accessing academic discourse. However use of English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is still necessary and as such English remains dominant and indispensable in academia.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own original work, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text. It is submitted for the degree of Master of English Language Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree of examination in any other university.

Simbayi Yafele………………………………………………….

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: RATIONALE, AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.1. Teaching Context

For the past three years I have been teaching Applied Communicative Skills to first year students at the University of Johannesburg, Doornfontein campus (previously Technikon Witwatersrand - TWR).

1.2 Rationale

a) Context in higher education in South Africa

The campus offers National Diploma qualifications in a range of engineering courses which include Chemical, Civil, Electrical, Industrial, Mechanical and Metallurgy engineering as well as Geology, Extraction Metallurgy, Town and Regional Planning and Building.

The coming of democracy in South Africa in 1994 ushered in a new era which came with what Luckett and Sutherland (2000) and Biggs (2003) refer to as the '*massification*' of education and the '*diversification'* of the classroom especially at tertiary level. This means that universities in South Africa, the University of Johannesburg included, have over the years seen an influx in the enrolment of students from all parts of the country and continent. The students whom I have been teaching are predominantly students for whom English is an additional language. Most have IsiZulu, Sesotho, French, Sepedi and Venda (to name a few) as their home languages. In addition the majority of these students generally struggle with the academic and linguistic demands of university (tertiary level) study. At the University of Johannesburg, English is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). Many of these students have difficulty and struggle with the dual challenges of having to master the second language to the level required in a university environment as well as how to function in this new academic community.

The Department of Applied Communicative Skills (Faculty of Humanities) was opened partly to provide students with preparation for the rigors of higher education. The different Engineering departments felt the need for first year students to be inducted not only in the general communication needs of higher education, but in the specific communication discourses of their faculties and workplaces in preparation for future careers. This, according to Gee (1996) would allow them access to the institutions and apprenticeships in them. Access into the discourses of the academy and the workplace is, according to Gee (1996:139), acquired through interaction.

> *Discourses are mastered ... by enculturation (apprenticeship) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the discourse…If you don't get the Discourse – you don't have it… apprenticeship must precede overt teaching*.

The Communication Skills course (which is divided into two 6- month modules- Module A and Module B respectively) attempts to give students the competence to write in a variety of engineering subject areas. Guidance is given in writing cohesive and coherent paragraphs. The department therefore promotes generic competence. The Applied Communication Skills Department thus services all the Engineering faculties at the campus through a communicative skills course.

The communicative skills course (Module A and Module B) are designed not only to equip students with interpersonal communication skills necessary in the academy but also in working and social environments. The main emphasis is on effective communication and the ability of students to convey their meaning in the form of academic writing, verbal and non-verbal communication and business communication. By the end of the two modules students should be comfortable with the process of writing paragraphs and essays, communicating in front of others, either by means of a formal presentation or in groups or even just in class. They also need to write more business orientated documents. They should also be sensitive to and avoid barriers to effective communication. These include internal barriers such as perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes. For this reason the course includes an introduction to Communication Theory. At the end of the course the students are given a summative assessment task which tests their

knowledge and grasp of concepts in Communication Theory and how to apply these in real life communicative contexts.

b) Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)

I have noticed with some concern that students have problems understanding Communication Theory concepts and it seems to me that their lack of familiarity with English, the medium of instruction, tends to fail them when it comes to written assessment and even in just articulating and demonstrating a good understanding of the subject matter.

During the my teaching experiences at the University of Johannesburg, I came to the realization that the use of English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) was problematic for many students for whom English was an additional language. I became increasingly concerned with finding an alternative approach which would allow students greater understanding and access to the subject content. I debated whether the students' own languages could be used somehow in academic instruction to improve their levels of understanding. I therefore felt that it was important to explore the medium of instruction which would best assist students in enriching their learning experience, grasp concepts well and become fully fledged members of the communities of practice that constitute the academy. To this end, I wished to investigate the issue of the medium of instruction more closely by experimenting with a selection of at least one African language (with which students were familiar) to discover if it were possible to enable students to understand and learn better in their own languages even if they were going to be assessed in English.

I became interested in finding out whether African languages could be harnessed for academic purposes. After intense debate with my colleagues at work and in my Masters Academic Literacy class I realized that the issue of the medium of instruction was an important debate in the South African educational context as a whole.

c) Preliminary research

The debate generated enough interest for me to decide to investigate further. So as part of my MA in Academic Literacy course, I worked on a mini research project(entitled the 'puzzle' in this course) designed to find out what would happen if an African language (Sesotho) were used to teach physics in a foundation programme at the University of Johannesburg. This research is a direct result of the aforementioned mini project which was limited in scope.

I drew up a research project designed to assist in answering the issue raised above. The research was based on two foundation physics lectures in which first Sesotho and then English were used as mediums of instruction and learning. The focus of the research was concerned with how the two languages fared as languages of learning and teaching. The intention was to compare the effectiveness of each language regarding the learning process when the languages were used. Focus was also on code-switching and determining whether a lecture could be conducted entirely in Sesotho for instance. The research site was the University of Johannesburg (The Academic Support Unit- Physics Department). The study was conducted over two weeks during which time I was able collect and thereafter analyze data which was derived from lecture observation, interviews and reflective reports.

My main findings from the project were that African languages (SeSotho) can be used for the instruction of physics, but that scientific terminology was lacking in SeSotho which necessitated code-switching.

As a result, I decided to extend the project and further investigate the possibility of using an African language (this time Sepedi) as a medium of instruction in the teaching of a Communication Skills course. This research sought to investigate the possibility of an alternative medium of instruction.

This more extensive research project was undertaken as a further contribution to the debate mentioned above. In addition, there was some personal motivation for the research. Having grown up and received my education up to university level in Zimbabwe, my experiences of studying in English at the expense of my home language (Shona) made me question the

'sacredness' of English as LOLT. Although during study group sessions, my classmates and I conducted academic discussions mainly in Shona, this language was never officially acknowledged as a valuable resource in academic 'discourse.' This project has provided the opportunity for me to put African languages as academic languages to the test using empirical evidence. I hope that an open, reflective, critical exploration relating to the most appropriate medium of instruction will shed more light on and contribute to teaching practice in tertiary education in South Africa. The research therefore stems from debates in relation to language and learning that are current in the South African context.

d) The language debate

On the one hand is the argument that mother tongues (African) should be used in education. The argument is that one's identity is embedded in one's first language and therefore if instruction were to be given and learning were to be undertaken in that language one would find the learning experience easier, more enriching, rewarding and successful. Student tuition in a home language would promote equity of access to and success in higher education.

The use of English as an academic language (which is acquired as a second language by many black South Africans) at the expense of their own languages can also be viewed in the context of linguistic and cultural imperialism. Modiano (2001) is for instance concerned with the cultural and linguistic erosion that goes hand in hand with the learning and acquisition of English as a second language and its subsequent use as an academic language in institutions of learning. Second language learners of English are disadvantaged and their access to and success in learning and tuition is compromised. Modiano (2001) argues that linguistic imperialism is real and needs to be addressed. A foreign language, it is argued, imposes cultural assimilation on the learner who is forced to become an auxiliary member of a culture and language which is not in harmony with their identity. Cultural integrity is compromised and so is the potential to excel academically. The spread of English and its use in academia is seen as marginalizing other languages. This in turn is seen as an infringement of other peoples' language rights. Hence the argument that the tuition of African people, conducted in their African languages is more meaningful and provides an enriching learning experience which does not contradict their essential identity and therefore disadvantage the learner. This view is shared by among others

Heugh (1995: 2000) and Alexander (1995). Alexander (2000:10) maintains that *"unless the practical assertion of language rights extends to the indigenous use of African languages in all walks of life, the real empowerment of black South Africans will remain in the realm of mere rhetoric"*. Heugh (1995:331) asserts that the status quo of the dominant high-status versus low-status languages has not changed in South Africa. She argues that a *laissez-faire* approach to human rights is adopted, where all languages are not in practice accorded equal status, as is declared in language policy in the South African constitution.

On the other hand English, since it is an international language, has been used for academic purposes for centuries. It is seen as the best suited medium for learning, instruction and assessment the world over – South Africa included. English, it is argued is, a global language and is now a prerequisite language in a large number of activities (academic instruction and learning included). Modiano (2001) argues that English ought to be used as a lingua franca aimed at providing access to the global village (including global academic knowledge). From this perspective English is not an avenue of cultural domination or a handicap to the acquisition of academic knowledge. It suggests that English ought to be seen as a language that is best capable of transmitting academic discourse in a wide range of disciplines. According to Honey (1997) instruction and learning in English gives students the opportunity to partake in discourses that will lead them forward. Webb (1999) and Ridge (1996) argue along the same lines. African languages are believed to be inherently lacking in the capacity to serve as media for the purpose of higher learning. The functional use of African languages is seen as limited. Webb (1999:110) maintains that indigenous languages do not have the status that they require to be used for higher functions. Unlike English, they lack the necessary technical terms and registers in the academic domain. It is inferred that in the interests of democracy – since so many people prefer English as an official language, the language policy should be changed to "a straight for English" one. Additional arguments of this nature which are summarized by Heugh (2000:110), who argues against these views asserting that the arguments which are myths are:

- *In South Africa English is the only language which has the capacity to deliver quality education; African languages do not and can not.*
- *African language speaking learners are multilingual and therefore do not need mother-tongue education.*

- *Bilingual or multilingual education is too expensive and we have only one option: English only (or mainly)*

My research intends to contribute to this debate. I will look closely at the possibility of using an African language (in this case Sepedi) as a LOLT. I will also attempt to evaluate the extent to which English may be necessary for effective teaching and learning.

e) South African Language Policy in Higher Education

Higher education language policy in South Africa generally acknowledges and promotes the importance of home languages in learning, teaching and assessment. The use of multiple languages to cater for the tuition of the linguistically diverse student populations in higher education is encouraged. In a summary of its policy framework the South African Ministry of Education's Language Policy for Higher Education reads,

The above framework is designed to promote multilingualism and to enhance equity and access in higher education through:

- *The development, in the medium to long-term, of South African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education, alongside English and Afrikaans*. (p15 Language Policy for Higher Education Ministry of Education)

In line with the national language policy, most South African tertiary institutions are similarly progressive, democratic and accommodating towards African languages in their own language policies. The University of Johannesburg language policy for example, is based on and includes the following principles:

- *Recognition of different languages as an asset to, and a reflection of the rich diversity of the South African nation;*
- *Parity of esteem and the equitable treatment of all official languages;*
- *Promotion of the status and use of historically disadvantaged languages;*
- *Recognition of the need to use the first (home) language in the learning process;*
- *The University strives towards the progressive provision of teaching, learning and assessment in isiZulu, English, Afrikaans and Sepedi as it is reasonably practicable to do so.*

(p4 – 7 University of Johannesburg Language Policy Document)

Policy documents such as the ones referred to above sound good and appear progressive. However the implementation is 'questionable' because of the pervasive power of English. In reality African languages are hardly used, even alongside English and Afrikaans, as academic languages of tuition. English therefore remains the preferred language of use in tuition in most institutions of higher learning. According to Phaahla (2006), irrespective of what is prescribed in higher education policy documents above, a complaint raised by the Pan South African Language Board is that it has become evident from its interaction with organizations involved in developing language policies that a policy of English monolingualism is being followed in practice. This raises the question of whether institutions of higher learning and policy makers are just being 'politically correct' in their 'progressive' recognition and inclusion in their language policies of African languages as academic languages or are African languages difficult to use and impractical in academic instruction and learning in higher education? These questions have prompted me to investigate and explore this topic in my research project.

1.3. Aims

This research project aims to:
- Investigate the effectiveness and value of an African language, in this case, Sepedi as an academic language of teaching and learning in Communication Theory at tertiary education level. Of interest is how Sepedi fares as an academic language of learning and instruction. The focus is on how using a mother-tongue in academia opens up learning possibilities for students;
- Explore whether it is reasonable and practicable to use an African language (Sepedi) in the teaching of Communication Theory in a first year diploma level Communication Skills class. Of interest therefore is whether Sepedi is useful and a viable academic language in the pedagogy of Communication Theory in a higher education Communication Skills course.

Sepedi has been chosen mainly because it is one of the main African languages that have been designated as a primary language for academic purposes by the South African university which is the site of my proposed research. Also the participants (the lecturer and students) in this project are most fluent in Sepedi (their mother-tongue) and it is their language of preference in the project. I have chosen to work in the Communication Theory course because it is the field in which I lecture and I am likely to have more insight into this subject and its pedagogical as well as assessment requirements than in any other subject.

1.4. The research questions are as follows:

1. What happens in a Communication Theory lecture (course) when Sepedi is used to initiate students into the learning and discourse of Communication Studies in a first-year university course?

2. To what extent is there a need to use English in the course?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction
2. Literature Review
2.1.Bilingual Education
- **a) International research**
- **b) South African research**
- **c) code switching**

2.2.Language and Power

2.3Academic Literacy, Learning and Discourse

2.4Language and cognition

2.5Classroom Communication

Introduction

My question in this project related to whether Sepedi can be used successfully as a medium of instruction for the academic subject Communication Theory. I am also interested in finding out whether it is possible to initiate learners at tertiary level into the discourses of their academic subjects in this case using their mother-tongue (Sepedi). I will also explore the value of English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT).

2. Literature Review

The theoretical frameworks used to analyze and interpret the data was drawn from the work and theories of Gee (1996), Fairclough (1989), Vygotsky (in Cummins 1996 , Rogoff 2003 and Lantolf 2000), Cummins (1996), Zamel (1998) and Street and Lea (2006;2000), Baker (2006), Paxton(2007), Sinclair and Brazil(1982) and Sinclair and Coulthart (1975).

The categories of literature that I will therefore include are

- Bilingual education (including code-switching);
- The Power of English;
- Academic Literacy (Learning and Discourse);
- Language and Cognition;
- Classroom Communication.

2.1. Bilingual Education

a) International Research regarding the importance of the mother tongue

There is much international research on bilingual and multilingual education. Within local and international literature there seems to be a general consensus on the overriding value of the educational use of the home language (mother-tongue). Pearl and Lambert (1962) found bilingual children scored higher on fifteen out of eighteen variables on an IQ test. They argued for the positive effects of bilingualism on thinking and learning. The literature suggests that the home language should not be abandoned in the early years of education as a language of learning and teaching. Most researchers and theorists concur on the cognitive, linguistic, affective and social benefits of bilingual education. The "additive" value of bilingualism is promoted. This involves using the mother tongue together with an additional language as learning and teaching resources.

According to Colin Baker (2006), bilingualism promotes and develops divergent and critical thinking. Bilinguals it is claimed, have an advantage in certain thinking dimensions, particularly in creativity and meta-linguistic awareness. Baker (2006:288) contends that dual medium bilingual education generally promotes the first language and second language for academic purposes across the curriculum and typically increased achievement. He claims, *"Academic empirical research supports strong forms of bilingual education where home language is cultivated.*" (2006:288)

Hakuta's (1990) conclusions from a study in New Haven California involving Spanish mother tongue speakers calls for an emphasis on native instruction and the development of learners' first language and education. The research suggests that additive bilingualism (a form of bilingual education in which the first language is maintained and supported even though it is not the language of instruction) can be a valuable part of educational enrichment of linguistic minority students. Bilingualism is associated with higher levels of cognitive functioning.

Hornberger (2003) is interested in resolving issues around learners speaking a home language which is different from the language of instruction. She is interested (from an American, Latin American and international perspective) in finding the best way to design bilingual education in communities where the local language is an effective medium of communication, but at the same time the language of power (language of wider communication) is highly sought after. These are the issues which address biliteracy which she defines as "*the use of two or more languages in and around writing*". Her main concern is that biliteracy is inescapable in education worldwide "*yet most educational policy and practice continue to ignore it*". (2003: xii). Hornberger documents classroom and learning success but policy implementation failure for an experimental bilingual education programme in Quechua speaking communities of Puno, Peru. There was resistance to Quechua in school since school was regarded as a Spanish domain. Hornberger maintains that multilingual language policies and linguistic pluralism are increasingly becoming a reality from which we can not escape.

b) South African Research

 Several local initiatives towards biliteracy and multilingualism require mentioning. The first has to do with the ground-breaking research that is on-going at the University of Limpopo. The project is being conducted by Ramani, Kekana, Modiba and Joseph (2005 to present). They have begun exploring, conceptualizing and implementing a dual-medium undergraduate BA degree (in SeSotho and English). Drawing from their experiences, they make a case for using African languages as media for instruction in higher education. In a paper published in 2007, they challenge the view that corpus planning should precede acquisition planning and show how academic terminology can be developed for discipline-specific purposes through pedagogic processes. They believe that,

> *African languages in their current state can be used as media of instruction if the focus is on getting learners to engage in cognitively-challenging tasks for grasping new concepts. The absence of specialist terms can be compensated for by the efforts of teachers and learners to create terminology by using well documented practices of translators, such as transference, transliteration and omission.* (Ramani, 2007: i)

They provide several examples of materials development, classroom interaction and assessment to support their view that acquisition planning can drive corpus planning. The examples are all

from the SeSotho dual-medium courses that they teach and show how teachers and learners cope with terminology for academic purposes. (Ramani et al; 2007)

The second initiative is the Ikwelo project 1999-2003 in (Basel, 2004) which was aimed at teaching adults business skills. An outcome-based approach to teaching and learning with non-mother tongue (English) instruction was undertaken. After evaluating and assessing the adult learners involved in the Ikwelo Project, Basel (2004:370) expressed the view that lack of proficiency in English prevented them from doing well. She holds the view that language and cultural behaviours are often hidden obstacles to learning for second language speakers. The results of the project revealed that at all six Ikwelo centres, educators acknowledged that learners had had difficulty in understanding the content of the theoretical classes and felt that mother tongue would have improved learners results.

Banda (2000) argues that English-medium instruction is largely responsible for "*the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth among blacks at high school and tertiary levels*" (Banda, 2000:51)

A third initiative is a study by Banda (2003) in which a survey of literacy practices among African and Coloured learners was undertaken at the University of Western Cape (UWC). The study concluded that learners are able to translate between the home language and an additional language. The research explores the need for functional use of the mother tongue and an additional language such as English in academic socialization. Banda also proposes the need for trained bilingual teachers and literacy mediators. This is seen as a way to promote positive difference, and help learners develop strategies to acquire knowledge, transform and recontextualise it and achieve cognitive skills between first and additional languages in multilingual and multicultural contexts. This study is relevant to my research project which investigates how languages mediate meaning and how that meaning and knowledge are transferred from one language context to another.

In another study carried out in KwaZulu Natal, Chick (2001:7) found that use of Zulu in classrooms can be beneficial. The study found that the use of Zulu in learning was advantageous

in that quick progress was made when "*brighter and more fluent learners can explain to others exactly what is required*" (Chick, 2000:12)

Rochelle Kapp (1998) considers the implications of the national language policy for tertiary institutions and gives some concrete suggestions on how the multilingual policy might be taken seriously. She tackles the issue of why many EAL (English Additional Language) students struggle in tertiary institutions, presenting evidence for the link between language proficiency and cognitive development. She does not advocate a change in the medium of instruction. However, she does argue for acknowledgement and use of the languages of the students as a resource of learning.

c) Code-switching

I expected that there would be code-switching exhibited in my study. I was interested in whether we might need to develop (through borrowing terms from English) a hybrid type of academic language to serve our academic purposes.

The term 'code-switching', describes the practice of bilingual or multilingual speakers who switch from one language to another during the course of a communicative event. Gumperz (1982:52) defines code-switching as *'the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems*" Gumperz regards code switching as one of many discourse strategies which are employed by bilingual speakers in social communication.

Myers-Scotton speaks of the communicative intent of code-switching, and defines code-switching as the "*use of two or more languages in the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence of the turn*" (1993: iiv). She suggests that code switching "*is a way to overcome difficulties in sentence-planning by making use of more than one language.*" Her main premise is that bilinguals, who code-switch, have extra communicative strategies available to them. Heller points out that "*code-switching is a strategy which can signal a shared culture*" (1988:270).

I was of the view that code-switching is beneficial to learning and that it is possible that South African languages can 'work together'. According to Lantolf (2000), "*Vygotsky views language as an artifact which is continually remoulded by its users to serve their communities and their psychological needs. ...*" In the Vygotskian tradition, language is but an artifact which should serve our interests. It is my hypothesis that through code-switching we can harness language to serve our learning needs.

2.2 Language and Power

English in South Africa currently occupies the *de jure* status as a national and international language of academia, followed by Afrikaans. With such a de facto dominance, the unassailable position of English commands respect and power. Due to the policies of colonialist and imperialist powers, the languages of Europe became the languages of power. Ngugi wa Thiongo explains the historical context behind the 'power' of colonial languages**.**

> "*The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth.... (but) economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. For colonialism, this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer. The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized.*" (Ngugi 2005:16)

Heugh (2000:466) blames the current language situation in South Africa (in which language practices promote monolinguism in education and other higher domains) on global societies. In addition, she blames the knowledge economy which is being built upon an information highway infrastructure. She argues that the hegemony of the Western free-market capitalist economy is such that it influences and '*subordinates*' the economies of developing countries. Western economies are characterized by linguicism, which accords privileged status to English, and a lesser position to other languages.

 In the South African context, we may draw on Fairclough (1995) to understand the power of English, how it subordinates other languages and how it is linked to ideology and the institutions in which it is used. Further we can understand why, despite South Africa having a distinctly and demonstratively inclusive and progressive language policy regarded as the most advanced in the world, the belief that 'English is equal to education' prevails widely.

Fairclough (1995) highlights the importance of the power/discourse relationship. He emphasizes the role of discourse in the reproduction and contestation of social relationships in a given context. He argues that "*power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants (inclined in original text)*" (1989: 46). Fairclough suggests that there is inequality of power when "the non-powerful people have cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from those of the powerful people" (1989: 47). He (1989: ix) argues that, *"Access to and participation in power forums of society is dependent on knowing the language of those forums and using that language power enables personal and social goals to be achieved."* Fairclough (1989:14) further argues, "*The gist of my position is that language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being a site of, and a stake in, struggles of power*". The implication is that even in academia, access, participation and success are dependent on knowing the language of power.

According to Alexander (2003:96), the belief that 'English and education are synonymous', "*is deeply carved into the psyche of people who have bitter memories of an inferior early education being forced on them through the medium of their mother tongue under apartheid*".

In South Africa some parents prefer English-medium schools because they believe they will offer better education and that English is an international language that will open the door to more job opportunities for their children (De Klerk, 2000:204-5). Many teachers across the country feel that parents want English. From urban townships to rural situations, teachers express the view that they must teach in English only like the 'multiracial' schools or else they will lose pupils (Gamede et al, 2000). Even at preschool the demand is for English (Bloch, 1998).

In a study carried out in KwaZulu Natal, McKay and Chick (2001) found a pervasive English-only discourse affecting classroom teaching. It was present, for example, in the principal's and teachers' rejection of the use of isiZulu in classes other than in isiZulu lessons. They argued that students need to improve their English, that students need English for economic success (Chick, 2000).

Hornberger (2003) maintains that in South Africa, as is the case in Bolivia, there are challenges at community and classroom levels. She acknowledges that there are challenges confronting community attitudes which favour the language of power in the society. Hornberger asserts that, "*In black South African communities English is the language of power and this has created a deep suspicion of mother tongue education*" (Hornberger, 2003:315).

According to Hornberger (2003:323), who offers an international perspective, such attitudes are at odds with "*developmental evidence that learners learn best from the starting point of their own languages.*" It is her view that the education institutions should counteract deep-seated ideologies favouring English or Spanish.

I draw on the arguments of Heugh (1995; 2000), Alexander (1985; 1989; 2000; 2002) and Hornberger (2003) as proponents and supporters of the value of multilingualism and native languages as mediums of instruction in the South African and international context. Alexander (1989; 1995; 2002) who is a strong advocate for the use of African languages in academia generally, argues that language struggles are part of the broader social struggles for equality and liberty. He calls for a language-in-education policy that addresses the overvaluing of English, and undervaluing of African languages if it is to genuinely promote "equity in outcomes". If "*English is unassailable but unattainable*" as Alexander (2000) puts it, then why should we not at least try African languages like Sepedi?

Heugh (1995) also advocates multilingual policies in South Africa that are embedded within a national language policy. She argues for a multicultural policy which views multi-lingualism as a valuable resource, and which implements additive or multilingual education for all, which will result in equal access to meaningful education. She argues that,

…with subtractive bilingual programmes…inequality is a foregone conclusion. Since subtractive bilingualism in transition -to-English programmes is linked to linguicism and discrimination against speakers of languages other than English, one of the guiding principles of the Constitution is violated. Subtractive / transitional bilingualism, by removing the first language from the educational process, represents a drive toward monolingualism, not multilingualism.…hence the constitution will be violated (Heugh, 1995:51)

My research intends to find out whether African languages can have a role to play in academic learning.

2.3. Academic Literacy, Learning and Discourse

From Gee (1996) I draw on the concept of "Discourse". It is common practice to use English to transmit academic discourse. According to Gee (1996), Discourses are ways of being in the world, they are forms of life. Discourses are social and are products of social history. They explain language and literacy. Discourse is an "identity kit" of sorts and Discourses display (through words, action, values and beliefs) membership in a particular group and of social networks leading to a particular identity.

"Discourses" are ways of behaving ,interacting, valuing, thinking, speaking, reading, and writing that are exemplary (typical or representative) of particular roles (or types of people) by specific groups of people." (Gee, 1996:111)

"A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, read, and often write so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize." (Gee 1996:127) "*Each Discourse protects itself by demanding from its adherents performances which act its ways of being, thinking, acting, writing, reading, and valuing right…*" (Gee 1996:190)

Gee's notion of "Discourse" relates to my study in that there is an objective in the research to teach students to acquire academic discourse. Gee's concept of 'Discourse' affects academic literacy and pedagogy in that we are looking at ways of learning, teaching and 'doing' Communication Theory in higher education. I am interested in the extent to which the use of

Sepedi in the classroom promotes the acquisition of disciplinary discourse. Gee says the following about "Discourse":

Communication Skills and Theory has its own particular discourse. The subject demands a particular register, way of interpreting, being critical and arguing. Gee looks at school and communities as well as tertiary institutions (including faculties and departments therein) as sites where Discourse operates to integrate and sort people, groups and society.

Gee's notion of "Discourses" is related to my project in that it will enable me to ascertain whether Sepedi has the capacity to enable the lecturer to teach Communication Theory with reference to concepts, vocabulary and register and engage in academic activities typical of Communication Skills.

Gee basically defines discourse as ways of,

> *"writing, reading, thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'"* Gee (1996: 131)

Gee suggests (1996:139) that in academic institutions, understanding of particular social practices is essential for students' success in the academy. I was interested in what might be 'missing' in Sepedi as an academic language transmitting academic discourse.

In the discussion on academic discourses, one of the clearest definitions is that of Zamel who defines academic discourse as,

> *"... A specialized form of reading, writing, and thinking done in the 'academy or other schooling situations.'* " (1998:187).

She also explains that, "*each discipline represents a separate culture community*" (1998:187). This definition is especially important for my research. She argues that when students enter into an academic community, they have to learn how to choose the right vocabulary and the proper expression in different contexts, how to behave in specific situations, and how to understand the culture of the community.

I want to have a look at Sepedi in relation to what Zamel and Gee say. Sepedi maybe a different medium but there may not be significant differences to the use of English in terms of both advantages and disadvantages.

Moragh Paxton (2007) has developed the notion of 'interim literacies' which was explored in a research project conducted at the University of Cape Town to investigate "*the intersection of academic discourse and student voice*". For Paxton, 'Interim Literacies' are a reflection of a transition process from school and home to academic literacy. Paxton highlights the fact that many of the students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) find their own familiar discourses at odds with that of dominant discourses of the academy, and that making a transition from one to the other is a struggle. She concludes that spoken discourses from a deeply imbedded cultural tradition can impact on students' present acquisition of academic discourse. I have found this notion of 'interim literacies' to be of relevance to my research work on the extent to which a mother tongue like Sepedi can be a tool of learning used by students. Can Sepedi fulfill an 'interim' function towards developing academic literacy?

2.4 Language and Cognition

I will now briefly refer to the ideas relating to cognition and academic literacy of Street and Lea (2006) who propose three Academic Literacy models to guide educators with regard to writing and literacy practices in higher education contexts. These are:

- a study skills model – which concentrates on teaching language forms, for example, sentence construction, grammar and punctuation. It concentrates on individual and cognitive skills. According to this model students should be able to transfer their knowledge of writing and literacy from one context to another.
- an "academic socialization" model which recognizes that subject areas use different genres and discourses to construct knowledge in a discipline. This model involves student acculturation into disciplinary and subject based discourses. Students use literacy that is typical of a discipline or subject community. The culture of many universities in South Africa tends to be characteristic of Western cultures which may be alien to the background and experiences of my students. Could the use of Sepedi in academic apprenticeship enable the greater socialization of students into university culture and

would this be desirable? This model also relates to the issue of language and power which is central in my study. The research participants have oral competence in Sepedi. Perhaps these students could be more empowered and develop a positive self esteem if their home languages were acknowledged as valuable in academics. This may in turn help in developing their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

- The third model addresses meaning making, identity, power and authority. The focus is on what counts as knowledge in a discipline.

The three models are said to overlap and can be applied to any academic context. I will draw on these models to evaluate the viability of Sepedi as an academic language.

Additionally Street and Lea (1998) introduce the concept of co-operative learning as a viable pedagogical practice. They talk of collaborative learning. I am interested in finding out if this works well in both the Sepedi and English lessons.

In relation to pedagogy, Cummins (1992) argues that initially learning should be contextualized and therefore emanate from familiar ground. He introduces the notion of "context-embedded" and "cognitively demanding" performance tasks in promoting learning in higher education. This means that as facilitators in higher education we must, as part of our pedagogy, start from prior-knowledge which will give our students access to disciplinary discourse. Learning in one's mother tongue can be viewed as "context embedded." Drawing from Vygotsky (1962), Cummins also emphasizes the importance of scaffolding through an understanding of the Zone of Proximal Development. Through this we can scaffold students from "where they are" cognitively to "where we want them to be". Learning is achieved through the support that we give (from feedback for instance) and also the support that students receive from their peers if they work in pairs or groups. Scaffolding helps learners to move from one zone of development into the next. The learning process should also be teacher-structured as this allows for scaffolding (Rogoff, 2003). It is also the purpose of this study to establish whether this is possible when lectures are delivered in either Sepedi or English.

Also pertinent to my research are other ideas of Cummins (1988). He demonstrates the view that cognitive development takes place in bilingual education under certain conditions. According to Cummins (1984), students who have English as a second or additive language often appear fluent at the interactive communicative level, but they may not have the more advanced language skills necessary for developing conceptual understanding in the academic context or writing. The mother-tongue should not be underestimated in cognitive development. The home language, in the case of this study Sepedi, can be used as a mediating tool. Thus, Cummins' notion of CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) gives us a better sense of the particular kind of language needed to succeed at tertiary level. This theorist gives support to the focus of this study which is that linguistic competence cannot be separated from cognitive demands of academic tasks.

According to Baker (2006),

> *"Cummins (1984a; 1984b; 2000b) expressed this distinction in terms of **basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)** and **cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP)**. BICS is said to occur when there are contextual supports and props for language delivery. Face-to-face **'context embedded'** situations provide, for example, non-verbal support to secure understanding. Actions with eyes and hands, instant feedback, cues and clues support verbal language. CALP, on the other hand, is said to occur in **context reduced** academic situations. Where higher order thinking skills (e.g. analysis, synthesis, evaluation) are required in the curriculum, language is **'disembedded'** from a meaningful, supportive context. When language is **'disembedded'**, the situation is often referred to as **'context reduced'**."* Baker (2006:174)

Cummins develops a conceptual framework by which educators can track what cognitive and contextual demands a particular communicative activity makes. The framework consists of two intersecting continua, which range from the cognitively undemanding to the cognitively demanding on the vertical axis, and from the context embedded to the context reduced on the horizontal axis. The two intersecting axes create four quadrants A, B, C and D. Quadrants A and B fall on the left side, (with A at the top and B below), and quadrants C and D on the right side (with C at the top and D below).

Cognitively Undemanding

    A   C

Context Embedded ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ **Context Reduced**

Mediation B   D

Cognitively Demanding
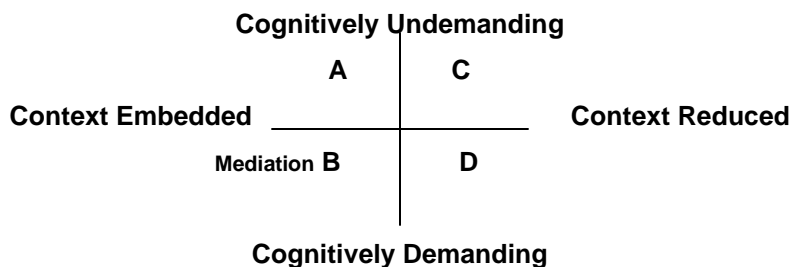
By dividing tasks into these quadrants, it is possible to see easily that the challenge for educators of EAL speakers is to take their students from quadrant A which comprises highly contextualized basic interpersonal communicative skills which are not cognitively demanding through to quadrant D, where we have more academic, decontextualised input comprising high order cognition. Quadrant D describes Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). What is clear in this visual framework is that in quadrant B co-operative learning takes place. In this zone we have support and scaffolding. It is here that Sepedi (mother-tongue) could be used as a mediation tool promoting learning. Part of my hypothesis is that student participants in my research project may not have developed CALP in Sepedi. They have been studying with English as the language of learning and teaching, yet they have oral competence in Sepedi (BICS). What we want is to move them out of their Sepedi BICS into their English CALP which can be improved by using Sepedi as a supporting and scaffolding tool. According to Cummins the final zone, to which we intend to go, is characterized by linguistic competence. This is an area I find worth exploring since the students will anyway in the current context be assessed and examined in English.

A summary of Cummins' (1996) bilingual pedagogical principles is that appropriate teaching begins with and builds on what learners know. This principle applied to multilingual contexts supports prioritizing and developing the languages which the learners already know and use. The mother tongue is viewed as a resource rather than a problem. Baker (2006) refers to the Thresholds Theory (in Cummins, 1976) which summarizes the relationship between cognition and the degree of bilingualism. Research supports the Thresholds Theory in that it was found that competence in mother tongue and a second language increased deductive powers in mathematics for example (Cummins, 2000).

Cummins (1983a, summarized by Baker (1993:89) suggests,

> *…some recognition by the school system of pupil's minority language and culture can facilitate progress where lack of recognition may be connected to failure.*

In fact, Cummins recognizes that where a learner's home language is emphasized there may be increased motivation because the use of home languages improves confidence and self-esteem. Valuing of home language, can be a source of 'refreshment' and can result in increased levels of motivation. Baker (1993:271) sees loss of confidence in self, language, culture and home values as detrimental to learning. It is my intention in this research to determine the extent to which use of English or Sepedi motivates students and aids learning at tertiary level.

My study will also draw upon Biggs (2003) and his notions of good teaching practice. Biggs argues that the learner's activities should be appropriate to achieving the intended outcomes. This is what constitutes a "deep" approach to learning. It is also Biggs' view that learning is interacting with the world, of taking one's prior knowledge, creating new concepts and meanings. Education is about 'conceptual change' rather than the transmission of information from teacher to student,

> "*A fundamental requirement for this to take place is the need for collaboration and dialogue between peers and teacher, in order to deepen understanding and levels of thinking. Good dialogue elicits those activities that shape, elaborate and deepen understanding*" (Biggs, 2003:12).

According to Biggs, teaching works well when you get students to engage in learning –related activities which are aimed at fulfilling a certain objective, such as, theorizing, problem solving, coming up with ideas of their own and reflection. In this way, knowledge is constructed by the student's learning activities or approaches to learning. The deeper approach encourages the student's active engagement in the work. The idea is to try to encourage students to actively engage with tasks and thus go 'deep' into learning. What I was asking in my research project was whether the languages under review achieved the required student active engagement in learning-related collaborative dialogue in academic pedagogy and therefore prompted learning.

2.5 Classroom Communication

Brazil and Sinclair (1982) focus on the language of the classroom. They offer an account of the structures of classroom discourse, seeing it as a special case of verbal interaction, adapted for its particular purpose. They distinguish between teacher talk which refers to the teacher's purposeful utterances during the lesson and student talk which refers to what students say. The classroom is characterized by interactional learning. They emphasize the need to analyze this discourse and I found their work useful when analyzing the discourse of the lesson in which both Sepedi and English were used. The analysis helped with establishing the extent to which the two languages were useful and fulfilled what is expected of classroom talk and interactive learning.

Sinclair and Coulthart (1975) identified the pattern where the teacher *initiates* the exchange, the student *responds* and the teacher *feeds back* his or her opinion to the response (IRF)) as often found in the classroom, particularly in whole class teaching. They identify that teachers generally do IRF when they teach. This is inadequate as students only respond to teachers' questions. The IRF pattern of classroom communication is in stark contrast to "exploratory talk" which is seen as encouraging critical thinking and internalization of knowledge. My research looks at the different types of classroom interaction function to promote learning.

 Barnes (1971) uses the notion of "exploratory talk" to describe how learners explore different ideas through talk to solve particular problems in the classroom and to explore ideas themselves. He describes how children through collaboration in a discussion are '*reshaping their thoughts through talking*' and '*helping one another*'. He illustrates how children use language in "*an exploratory fashion …questioning, encouraging, surmising, challenging, and extending and so on.*' This is the kind of talking that promotes thinking rather than rote learning and memorization. This notion became important in my analysis of classroom talk in English and Sepedi.

The above descriptions of what constitutes 'exploratory talk' are closely related to the term "deep talk".

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

3.1 Research context
3.2 Setting up the project
  a) The research design
  b) Difficulties in setting up the project
  c) The research design and key decisions made
3.3 Research participants
3.4 Research methods
3.5 Data collection techniques
3.6 Difficulties in the Research Design
3.7 Ethical considerations
3.8 Methods and Techniques of Data Analysis

Introduction

This research was designed to give the researcher an opportunity to test the possibility of using an African language (Sepedi) as a medium of instruction.

3.1 Research Context

The research was conducted at a South African university in Johannesburg, (Faculty of Humanities - Department of Applied Communicative Skills). The Department of Applied Communicative Skills provides students with preparation for the communication rigors of higher education and the workplace. First year students are inducted not only in the general communication needs of higher education but also in the workplace and the social environment in general. The Applied Communicative Studies Department helps students to make meaningful connections with the higher education curriculum and beyond. The Department offers communication skills modules aimed at helping students to learn the specialized practices of academic reading, writing and speaking that characterize tertiary level communication. The module is designed not only to equip students with interpersonal communication skills necessary in the academic but also in the working and social environments. The main emphasis is on effective communication and the ability of students to communicate their meaning in the form of academic writing, verbal and non verbal communication and business as well as social

communication. Students are also sensitized to the barriers and filters to effective communication. These include how perception of self and others affects communication. Generally the skills imparted are those that are vital to academic achievement and to survival in the workplace. The Department promotes student levels of preparedness for social, academic and work-related communicative proficiencies. As part of the course, students are introduced to Communication Theory which involves topics like, Communication and Perception, Stereotyping, Self-image, Verbal and Non verbal communication to name a few.

The students are diverse and the classes are multicultural and multilingual, drawing students from all the corners of South Africa and the African continent. During the research intervention I was a part-time lecturer teaching Communication Skills to first-year students registered for a National Higher Level Diploma in various engineering disciplines. Research data was gathered in the second semester of 2008.

3.2. Setting up the project

a) The research design

For the purposes of comparison, two lectures on different topics in Communication Theory were conducted in Sepedi and in English respectively. Communication Theory was chosen because it is the field in which I lecture and I was likely to have more insight into this subject and its pedagogical as well as its assessment demands and requirements. In the end Sepedi was chosen mainly because it is one of the main African languages that have been designated as a primary language for academic purposes by the University of Johannesburg. Also the participants in my research were fluent in Sepedi as it was their mother-tongue and their language of preference in the project.

 The Sepedi lecture was on the topic of Perception and Communication. The second lecture conducted in English was on the topic of Non-verbal Communication.

The following section reports on:
- the difficulties in setting up the research project;
- the research design and key decisions made in relation to the research methods.

b) Difficulties in setting up the project

The following were the main difficulties:

- The first natural choice of the African language to be used in the intervention was Setswana. This was because it was the mother tongue of the lecturer in the department who had volunteered to participate as the teacher in the intervention. But only two students in the lecturer's class were Setswana speakers. The two could not constitute a viable class and we therefore decided to change to Sepedi;

- It was difficult to find a lecturer who could teach comfortably in Sepedi;

- When a Sepedi lecturer was found, were time constraints as he had to fit in this extra class into his busy schedule. It was therefore difficult to stabilize the variables (as initially intended) by using the same lecturer and the same students under the same conditions for the English lecture;

- It was difficult to find another lecturer in the department to conduct the lecture in English because timetables clashed;

- The English lecture could not be video recorded like the Sepedi lecture because the camcorder and its owner and operator were unavailable.

c) The research design and key decisions made

- We ultimately decided to use Sepedi in the intervention because 15 volunteer participant students from my class spoke Sepedi. A competent Sepedi lecturer was found who was a former colleague who had lectured in my department and who was a specialist in Communication Studies;

- The Sepedi lecture had to be conducted on a weekend when the Sepedi lecturer was available;

- I made a decision to conduct the English lecture myself during normal working hours and lessons. This lecture was on a different topic from that covered in the Sepedi lecture as we did not want to duplicate what had already been learnt during the English lesson.

- I arranged the seating during the English lecture so that the Sepedi speaking research participants sat in the front rows to facilitate discussion and to create a sense of continuity in line with the Sepedi lecture;
- The English lecture was audio-recorded.

The biggest problem regarding methodological choices was getting exact comparisons. It was difficult to get the same lecturer for the two lessons and to teach exactly the same students under the same conditions. In spite of the struggles, difficulties and the reconceptualisation of decisions, the research design, I believe yielded useful and substantial data.

3.3 Research participants

The voluntary participants were from a group of ten Sepedi speaking students (some of whom are multilingual) who were registered for their first year of Mechanical Engineering Diploma level studies at the South African university. All of them study Communication Skills and Theory as part of their diploma qualification.

3.4 Research Methods

a) Case study -Teaching intervention:

This research project was essentially an educational case study in the form of a teaching intervention. It can be described as an evaluative and qualitative case study. Bassey (1999) defines educational research as "*critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgments and decisions in order to improve educational action.*" It is evaluative in that it is an enquiry "*into an educational programme, system or events to determine their worthiness, as judged by researchers, and to convey this to interested audiences*."(Bassey, 1999:58) A 'case study' was appropriate for my research because it enabled me to focus directly on particular students and therefore to conduct an in-depth and detailed study (Wallace, 1998).

 Bassey (1999) outlines the key features of an educational case study. He describes it as an empirical enquiry which is conducted:
- within a localized boundary of space and time;
- into interesting aspects of an educational activity, programme, institution, or system;

- in order to inform the judgments and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers;
- in such a way that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able to; provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments. (Bassey, 1999: 58)

b). Qualitative Research

Knobel and Lankshear (1999:87) refer to data analysis as a "*process of making sense or meaning*" from detailed descriptions taken during field research. Based on my interpretations of data collected from observations, interviews and artefacts, I conducted an analysis of these data using extensive literature on language policy; academic language and multilingualism; academic discourses and academic literacy; teaching and learning and classroom communication and interaction. My method of analysis was informed by Silverton (2000:2) who refers to qualitative analysis as depending "*on making a series of analytical assumptions.*" The analysis method was also informed by Hammersely (1994:2) who says,

> "*The analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions mainly in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations...*"

Hence to answer the research questions, a qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual design was used. The actual data gathered by researchers are specific to a particular context (Gillham, 2000:12), and thus the results may not be taken as a statistical generalisation. However, I still hope that the study will provide an insight into how African languages in comparison with English can be used as academic languages to initiate learners into academic discourses in South African universities.

Knobel and Lankshear (1999:84) refer to qualitative research as "field research" where data collection tools primarily involve observations of "real life events". According to Gillham (2000:10), such methods focus on "'*what people tell you, what they do' that will enable you to understand the meaning of what is going on.*" Consequently, participants are directly involved in data construction. In my study qualitative methods such as observations and interviews were used.

c) Research Focus

My research was concerned with learning behaviour and how it is affected by LOLT, so qualitative methods were more suited for my purposes. I hoped to find out if Sepedi is at least a good mediation tool towards achieving CALP or if African languages do not have academic discourse at all. Silverman (2000:2) says of qualitative methods. "… *if you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior then qualitative methods may be favoured*".

Four data gathering instruments were used:

- Class observation. This was necessary as I had to immerse myself in a set of events in order to gain knowledge of the situation;
- A focus group interview with participant students and individual interviews with students and the Sepedi lecturer;
- Artefacts in the form of an evaluated written formative task and reflective pieces. This was important for evaluating the extent of learning that resulted from the lessons observed;
- Participants' language biographies were compiled. This was to determine the extent to which the participating students were comfortable and proficient in the languages of instruction that were used in the project and how this could impact on learning. I later compiled a student's profile.

The purpose of using all these instruments was to use data from one instrument to inform the next and for information to be finally triangulated.

3.5 Data collection techniques

a) Observations

First Class Observation: video-recorded

Two class observations were conducted. The ten participant students were present in both the Sepedi and English classes. The first class observation was made on an hour-long Sepedi lecture given by the Sepedi lecturer on Communication and Perception. During this observation, I took

the role of a non-participant observer taking field notes which were collated with notes from another lecturer from the Department who had volunteered to help. To facilitate accuracy of data, I also made some journalistic notes which are "notes written after observations" (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999:92). The lesson was also video recorded and transcribed.

Second class observation: audio-recorded

The second observation was the English lecture. In this lecture I was both participant observer and lecturer. Data on this observation consisted of an audio recording of the introduction and notes taken during the course of the lecture and immediately afterwards. As already explained, this was because the Sepedi lecturer and the students were unable, due to their busy schedules, to meet over another weekend for the English lecture. I had difficulties arranging for another lecturer in the department to conduct the English lecture as there were timetable clashes. This was not necessarily a bad decision because the most important lecture (from which the richest data was expected) was the one conducted in Sepedi and the English lecture was important for the basic purpose of contrast and comparison. It also meant progress in the project was less dependent on other people and this gave me more organizational control. The class observations focused mainly on the Sepedi rather than the English lesson. The English lesson provided an opportunity for contrast and comparison and enabled the researcher to obtain a clearer comparison with which to evaluate the success and failure of the Sepedi lesson.

b) Interviews

Interviews with Students and the Sepedi lecturer

This section focuses on the interviews that were conducted with the lecturer and students.

"*Interviewing includes a wide variety of forms and a multiplicity of uses*", (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:645). I conducted two different kinds of interviews both being semi-structured. The main reason was to allow for greater flexibility during the sessions as I think it preferable not to be tied to a rigid schedule. Semi-structured interviews are also useful in helping the researcher to *"probe responses, develop themes that emerge in the course of the interview that provide valuable and relevant information"* (Knobel and Lankshear, 1999:98). The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information from learners and the Sepedi lecturer as another means of data collection and to facilitate triangulation.

 Focus group interviews, reflective reports and individual interviews

One of the reasons for having group interviews with learners was that l judged that the class might feel more comfortable in a group and less intimidated by the lecturer. Questions were framed around the students' learning experiences from the two lectures and their academic language preferences. The interview with the teacher was framed around his teaching experience in the intervention, the challenges involved, the strengths and weaknesses of the academic language used and his language preference as a medium of instruction. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The participants were asked to write reflective pieces on the lessons in which they were expected to report on the most important aspects (positive or negative) worthy of mentioning. Refer to Appendix 6 for copies of the reflective reports.

Focus group: Interview questions given to the students:

1. In relation to the Sepedi and English lectures what did you like or dislike about the lessons and did you find the lessons accessible? Why?

2. In your view what were the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson?

3. Did Sepedi help or interfere with academic teaching and learning? Why?

4. Did you find English useful as an academic language of teaching and learning? Why?

5. Were you able to freely and fully participate in class discussions in both languages? Why or why not?

6. Would you have preferred the Sepedi lesson in English or the other way round?

7. Did you code-switch and or code-mix? When and why did this happen?

8. What recommendation with respect to teaching and learning in Sepedi in comparison
to learning in English in other classes, do you make?

Students' Reflective Reports on the English and Sepedi lecture

Please write a reflective piece (of at least a paragraph) on each of the two lessons (the Sepedi and the English one) and assessment exercise(s) that went with them. This simply means that you think about the most important aspects (positive and/or negative) worthy of mention about each lesson and assessment exercise(s) and put your thoughts in writing.

Language biography: Give a brief account of your linguistic history (language biography).

Individual interview

Questions asked of the Sepedi Lecturer

1. Did you feel you were able to teach well in Sepedi?

2. Do you think Sepedi can be used successfully to teach Communication given that it was probably your first experience to instruct in the language?

3. What prior experience do you have in teaching in an African language and would you actually prefer teaching in an African language?

4. In your view is it possible to come up with some form of 'new language' which is a hybrid

(mixture and combination) of English and Sepedi and possibly other South African languages

– and use that 'new language' for academic purposes?

5. Do you have any recommendation with respect to teaching and learning in English in comparison to Sepedi?

6. What challenges were there and which were the most important?

Lecturer's reflective report on the lesson taught

Please write a reflective piece on each of the two lessons (the Sepedi and the English one) and assessment exercise(s) that went with them. This simply means that you will think about the most important aspects (positive and/or negative) worthy of mention about each lesson and assessment exercise and put your thoughts in writing.

In the focus group interview, a rough agenda reflecting the interview schedule was put on the board and the ten participant students were asked to think and talk through it among themselves before addressing the specific interview questions.

3.6 Difficulties in the research design

- Firstly I am not Sepedi speaking myself and had to rely on proficient Sepedi users for making translations into English. Sepedi was mainly chosen because it was the mother tongue and preferred language for all the research participants;

- The other difficulty had to do with the 'exactness' of the two interventions. There were a few variables. Firstly the interventions were conducted in different contexts. The Sepedi lecture was conducted by a lecturer proficient in Sepedi and I had to conduct the English lecture. I would have preferred the option of having the Sepedi lecturer also conducting

the English lecture, but this proved impossible because of logistic problems as explained earlier (refer to page 30). Secondly, the Sepedi lesson was conducted outside normal teaching when the Sepedi lecturer was available and my English lecture was conducted during normal teaching time;

- Finally the Sepedi class observed was small consisting of only ten participating students. About six or seven students simply did not attend the lecture as they had promised.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct research was sought from the relevant University authorities before this research was undertaken.

- Through a process of informed consent it was explained to all the potential students that participation in this research was voluntary and that should they choose not to participate, they would not be affected in any way. They would still be able to withdraw from participation at any time should they wish to do so, without being disadvantaged;

- The research proposal, together with letters explaining the nature of the research project, a list of the interview questions and consent forms in regard to both participation in an interview and the video and audio-taping of the lectures and interview respectively, were prepared and send to the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee for approval;

- Confidentiality of all participants was ensured by the use of pseudonyms in the research report.

3.8 Methods and Techniques for Data Analysis

Interaction and Thematic Content Analysis

Data analysis was done through thematic content analysis.

- Content was decided by the themes that surfaced from the data. The themes that emerged from what people said were key opinions, ideas, controversial elements and topics. The orientation that interviewees emphasized also formed the basis of the thematic analysis;

- Field notes as well as transcripts from interviews were reviewed by looking for patterns and identifying themes related to teaching and learning.

Selected Sepedi data was first transcribed and then a translation into English was provided. English data was also selected and transcribed. Statements that particularly relate to academic language of instruction, teaching and learning were identified, and I looked for patterns in these statements and discourses. Therefore in regard to the interview data and written work from participants I did a thematic content analysis. From the classroom observation I analyzed interaction patterns. Observation data was partly captured and encoded into categories. The categories were reduced to thematic constructs. Data from the interviews were captured and encoded into a transcript that was later reduced to themes, categories and sub-categories. I hoped to find out whether Sepedi could be used successfully or usefully as an academic medium of instruction for Communication.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

 Introduction
4.1 OBSERVATIONS
a) The Sepedi lecture: class observation transcript
b) Data description
1. Interaction and responsiveness
2. Learning and understanding
3. Code- switching: Sepedi and English Mix
4. Non-verbal (visual) aspects
5. Discussion of Data

4.1.3 The English lecture: class observation transcript
4.1.4 Description of the Data
1. Interaction and responsiveness
2. Learning and understanding
3. Code- switching: Sepedi and English
4. Non-verbal (visual) aspects
5. Discussion of Data

4. 2 INTERVIEWS AND REFLECTIVE PIECES
4. 2.1 Focus group interviews and Students' Reflective Pieces
1.Interaction – participation and free expression
2.The fear factor - silence
3.' Understanding is the key'-Access to learning and free expression
4. Other views
5.Code Switching and Bilingual Education
6.Pride and identity in the use of mother tongue
7. Disadvantages of use of Sepedi
8. Advantages of use of English
9. General Summary & Discussion of data

4.3 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW (SEPEDI LECTURER)
1. Interaction and participation
2. Learning and understanding
3. Code switching : Sepedi – English Mix
4. Disadvantages of Sepedi Lecture
5. Affective factors

4.4 SEPEDI LECTURER'S REFLECTIVE REPORT
Themes from the whole research
1. Participation and responsiveness
2.Code switching
3. Bilingual Education
4. Affective factors
5. Pride and identity in use of mother tongue
Conclusion

Introduction

What follows in this chapter is a description and analysis of data comprising class observations, focus group interviews, individual interviews, and reflective reports. The data will be first described. Secondly, themes emerging from the data will be highlighted and exemplified. Finally, there will be a section focused on reflection, discussion and commentary on the data in relation to the literature review.

4.1 OBSERVATIONS

a) **The Sepedi lecture: class observation**

The following is a transcript of selected sections of the Sepedi (Communication Studies) class observation. The transcript will be followed by description and commentary.

Sepedi Lesson transcript

Topic of the Sepedi lecture: Perception and Communication

Key:

T - Teacher
S - Any Student
S1 /S2/ S3 /S4/S5 - Differentiates between different students when they speak.
Bold italics – Descriptions, comments and class activity

N.B I have translated all of the Sepedi into English and all translations are in *italics*. Also, when English is used in code-switching, the text is written in *italics.*

T:	Dumelang	1
	Good morning	2
S:	Dumelang (choral response)	3
	Good morning	4
T:	Lekae?	5
	How are you?	6
S:	Re gona	7
	We are fine.	8
T:	Ko irua Bapedi ka moka mo?	9
	Are we all Sepedi speakers	10
S:	Eng	11
	Yes	12
T:	Mairia a lean ke ba mang.	13
	Give me your names please.	14
S:	Mairia ka a tee ka o tee	15

	(Students introduce themselves one after another.)	16
T:	Matseno. Mo ke sepetsigo go na bjalo ka morutisi ga ka ka ke ruta Sepedi. Euipa lehono ke tlo ruta Sepedi.Ke tlo ruta thutwena ye ya lekia ya sejahlapi *communication* ka mokgena wa go e fetolela go Sepedi; gomme, Ke rata go re le lokolageng gore re tle re ipshine ka thutwana ye y arena. Hloluiomelang: Mantsu a Sepedi a hlaetele gomme tle rata re thusana gore naa mantsiu a a ra go reng, for *example, Perception and communication* ka Sepedi ke go reng?	17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24
	I will start with a self introduction. Though I have been a teacher for quite a number of years now, I have actually never taught in Sepedi. However I am going to teach you in Sepedi today .We will try to teach the subject Communication in Sepedi. We all need to participate in this lesson in order to reap the full benefits and enjoy the learning. Please note that Sepedi vocabulary is a bit limited. So lets help each other in translating some of the words, for example, Perception and Communication. What does Perception and Communication mean in Sepedi? In pairs let us briefly discuss and compare our responses before we discuss them as a class. **(Students discuss in pairs enthusiastically in Sepedi for a few minutes before giving some of the following responses)**	24 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35
S:	Dipono le di- poledisano *Perception and Communication (**alternative meaning**)*	36 37
S:	Diphono ebipsha e sego le dipoledisano fela…*(**another alternative meaning**)*	38 39
	(Students and teacher engage in a lively animated debate on finding working translations coming up with various other alternatives, but finally agree on both the above)	40 41 42
T:	A re dumelalaneng gore ke dipono ke dipano le dipoleledisana re tsweleng pele. *Sepedi. In the same manner that we came up with Sepedi translations, I would now like us to think about Sepedi equivalents for the following terms and concepts which we are going to deal with in this lesson.(**Writes on the board as he speaks in English**) Stereotype ,perception, context, self-fulfilling prophesy. ne*	43 44 45 46 47 48 49
T:	Tcie ratu gore ge re filial mafelelong a thutho ye te be ka g arena re i thulile dilotse di latego tse tharo *specific outcomes.* *The following are the objectives or specific outcomes of today's lesson and I will be quite satisfied if by the end of this lesson you will be able to say you have mastered them.*	50 51 52 53 54
	*(**Writes on the board in English as he spells out (orally) in English to the students the lesson objectives**)*	55 56

	You should be able to:	57
	a) Discuss how perception of the self may influence communication with	58
	others	59
	b) Illustrate the powerful effect of perception on communication.	60
	c) Identify common stereotypes in a communication context	61
	G eke he – gare ke ngwala mo,len le swanetse gore le be nagana gore naa ka	62
	Sepedi ditaba tse re ka di hlalosa bjang. *What do we mean when we talk of the*	63
	powerful effect of perception?	64
	Ka moo o iponogo ka gona le ka moo o itebelelago ka gona go omana bjana	65
	poledisano ya gago le batho ba bangwe?	66
	How does self perception influence or affect one's communication or	67
	interaction with others?	68
S:	*Can powerful effect be* Sebetja *in Sepedi?*	69
	*(N.B **Sebetja** is actually a weapon in Sepedi)*	70
	*(**Students and teacher laugh**)*	71
T:	Sebetja ga ke dumelane le rona – a re nyakag leutsu le le kaone.	72
	Weapon- No I disagree. Let us find a better word.	73
S1:	*I think 'Effect' is 'Kamo' in Sepedi.*	74
S5:	*What of 'Khuetsano'? Could we use that?*	75
S3:	*In my view we can also use 'Ditlamorago' which also means results or*	76
	impact in English.	77
	*(**A brief debate involving the teacher on the term before the lesson continues**)*	78
T:	Bontsa kamano ya ka mo iponago ka gona le poledisano.	79
	Indicate how perception of self influences communication.	80
	But what is Perception?	81
	*(**Silence**) Let's get into pairs again and brainstorm what meaning we would*	82
	*have in Sepedi.(**speaks in English**)*	83
S1:		84
	*(**Students break into pairs and discuss before giving the following selected responses**)*	85
	My partner and I finally agreed that perception could be 'Pono' in	86
	Sepedi *(**speaks in English**)*	87
S2:	*We thought 'Pono' is not strictly perception. 'Pono' means more like*	88
	*vision in Sepedi.(**speaks in English**)*	89
	*(**Another brief debate, but the majority of the class agree 'Pono' is a good Sepedi equivalent of 'Perception'**)*	90
S:	*I have a question*. Perception ke ka mo o iponago ka go na empa e ka ba	91
	ke gape le ka moo obonago batho ba bangwe ka gona?	92
	Does perception have to do with the way you perceive yourself as well as other	93
	people and things? Is it true to say that?	94
T:	*(**redirects question to the rest of class**)* "Dilo" ga se batho, goba ke bato	95
	dilo? A re tlogeleng dilo.	96
	Should we include perception of things? Why?	97
	*(**Silence**)*	98

T:	Ka mokgwa wo o iponago ka gona go amana bjang le ka moo o bonago batho ba bangwe. *Specifically indicate how perception of self influences communication.*	99 100 101
S:	Ga se ka mo o iponago fela empa le ka moo bonago dilo ka gona.i.e ga se taba ya balho feela, empsa le dilo ka kakaretso. *(perception is) not only the way you perceive yourself and others, but includes how you … you perceive things as well.*	102 103 104 105
S1:	Demelana le moithuti. *I agree with that view.*	106 107
S2:	Ka mo motho a lebelelago dilo ka gone… *I also agree (Perception refers to) the way one perceives things in general*	108 109 110
S3:	Ipotsa gore delo se se bjalo- go go ka mokgwa wo mongwe wo o ka se lebelelago. *(Perception is) the way one perceive things in general, and without accepting or thinking of any other alternative view.*	111 112 113 114
S4:	Demelelana ti S2 *I agree with S2*	115 116
S5:	Demelelana ti S2 and S3 *I agree with both S2 and S3*	117 118
T:	*Now that we have linked perception to stereotypes let us identify common stereotypes in a social situation. Stereotypes …Dikgopolo tse re nayo le tsona ka* batho. *These refer to whatever thoughts or views we have about people in general. Before we move on,please help me with the Sepedi equivalent of the term 'stereotype'.(speaking in English)*	119 120 121 122 123
S2:	*I think stereotype is 'ponokakaretso'.* **(There is a general agreement after a brief discussion in Sepedi that 'ponokakaretso' will do)**	124 124 126
T:	I *will give an example of a stereotype*. Bapedi ga se ba no hlahlaraaa!! *Pedi people are stupid.* (**Laughter**) *This is a stereotypical view. Can you give any other examples?(in English)*	127 128 129 130
S5:	Basadi gab a kgobe go othlela. *Women are bad drivers. That is another example.*	131 132
S1:	Batho gba baso ba bonala ele baloi. *Very dark Africans are normally believed to be witches.* (**More laughter**)	133 134 135
T:	Mehlala ya tsatsi ka tsati? *Do you have any other examples?*	136 137
S2:	Mabunu ba na le kgethologano. *Boers are racists.*	138 139
T:	Ke stereotype? Nthuseng gs se seema? *Is that an example of a stereotype? Can please help me?*	140 141
S3:	Ke sona. *Yes, it is.*	142 143
	Dieeina le tsona e ka ba di-*stereotypical.* *Idiomatic expressions can also be classified as stereotypical* (**Explains further- inaudible on recording**).	144 145 146

T:	*Good and thoughtful comment*. Rethalosa bjang lefoko la boraro- ka gore thomile fiela ka go fa mehlala. *How do we explain Specific Objective 3(**points to board**) because we have not done that yet? We started off by simply giving examples of stereotypes.*	147 148 149 150
T:	*Stereotypes* ka Sepedi ke eng? *What is the Sepedi equivalent of "stereotype"?* (**Moments of silence**)	151 152 153
S1:	kgopolo-kakaretso *that's stereotype.*	154
S2*:*	*I think we agreed on* ponokakaretso	155
T:	Hlalosa	156
	(**Teacher rounds off with Specific Objective 1 to 3 and indicates by referring to the written objectives on the board and drawing arrows that link the 3 objectives and certain words. He also underlines key words as he emphasizes his points**)	157 158 159 160
T:	Di bolelda ytho ye tee, empa ka melewa ya gofapama. *The 3 objectives say exactly the same thing, but in different ways.*	161 162
T:	Ditlamorago. *Now Consequences...* D ka tsea mafupa u mabedi – tse di botse go bat se mpe. *Consequences may be good or bad* Ditlamorago di laolwa ke ka moo o iponago ka gona le ka moo o amanago le batho ba bangwe ka gona. *The consequences of stereotyping are influenced by perception.*	163 164 165 167 168 169 170
T:	*To conclude are stereotypes true? Are stereotypes truthful?(**translation**)*	171
S1:	Ken mete ge di sa akaratse, empa maaka go di aluretsa. *Yes, if they are true we.. they do not generalize. There is a grain of truth in them. (**translation**)* *But if we generalize and apply the view to everyone without looking at individuals as unique then it becomes problematic. It becomes problematic when you generalize. (**translation**)*	172 173 174 175 176 177
S2:	Dimelana *I agree with P1*	178 179
S3:	*Stereotyping is problematic when generalized, but there may be truth in specific situations. For example, some student says and views Mr Rampedi (**the lecturer**) (**spoken in English**)* O na le hlogo ethata- Empa Bapedi ban a le hlogo tse thata ga se yona. *For example some student may view Mr Rampedi as a hard –headed lecturer. Because Mr Rampedi is Sepedi speaking, the student concludes that all Sepedi speaking people are hard headed. This is problematic.*	180 181 182 183 184 185
S4:	*I will give another similar example. If there are two learners and one of the learners is influenced by the previously given view that Mr Rampedi is hard headed ,the student will automatically interpret Mr Rampedi's actions and words as those of a hard headed man. But if the other student is not influenced by such negative ideas of Mr Rampedi he\she will have no such negative views. (**speaking in English**)*	186 187 188 189 190 191

T:	Diputsiso? Re mafelelong.	192
	Good answers.	193
	This is also how the self-fulfilling prophecy works. In Sepedi how would we	194
	*define self-fulfilling prophesy?(**English**)*	195
	*(**A moment of silence**)*	196
	Let us quickly brainstorm the meaning of self-fulfilling prophesy in our	197
	pairs.	198
	(Students break into pairs and discuss before giving the following selected	199
	responses)	200
S3:	*For me and my partner self-fulfilling prophesy in Sepedi is* – Tsweletso ya	201
	selo seo se nagannego.	202
S1:	*We came up with* – Phethago ya pono ya gago.	203
S4:	*We think its* – Kgotsofatso tsa pono.	204
	(self- fulfilling prophesy proves difficult to translate for both the students	205
	and the lecturer)	206
T:	*Do you have any questions? We are ending now.*	207
S1:	Monna ke hlogo ya lapa	208
	The man is the head of the family. Is this true or false? Is it a stereotype or	209
	a truth?	210
	*(**Laughter**)*	211
S2:	Dumelana	212
	I agree with that.	213
	*(**More laughter**)*	214
T:	*Okay. I would like you to discuss that in pairs. And your assessment task is to*	215
	write a paragraph on, how gender stereotyping can cause conflict in the	216
	workplace.	217
	(Gives the students the assessment task in Sepedi. The students discuss in	218
	threes mixing Sepedi and English before the teacher officially ends the	219
	lesson)	220

b) Description of the data

The Sepedi lesson was conducted in an environment where English is normally used as the medium of instruction. This was reflected in the teaching and learning materials (text books to which students referred to occasionally, teaching notes and learning notes and some white board notes) which were in English.

I identified four main themes or patterns emerging from the classroom observation data as follows:

1. Interaction and responsiveness
2. Learning and understanding
3. Code- switching
4. Non-verbal (visual) aspects

5. Discussion of data

1. <u>Interaction and responsiveness</u>

"Interaction and responsiveness" comprised what the lecturer said which will be referred to as teacher talk, how the students responded and what they said (student talk) and also questioning behaviour that characterized the lesson.

The basic structure of the teaching exchange started off as initiation by the teacher and response from the students as evidenced by the greetings and introduction in the first 16 lines. As the lesson progressed, the teaching exchange assumed the pattern of "initiation-response-feedback" in which the teacher initiated exchange, the students responded, after which the teacher gave his opinion or reaction to the response (e.g. lines 119-141). Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) refer to this as the IRF pattern. Though the initial students' responses were very brief or minimal (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982) the purpose was served of establishing a controlled academic rapport (e.g. line 1-16) of the transcript.

The lecturer at times transmitted information as part of the teacher talk. The teacher's initiation in communication episodes took the form mostly of statements. The teacher makes authoritative and declarative statements and gives his opinion for the sake of giving information. Examples are found in lines 120-121 where the lecturer makes a declarative and authoritative statement about stereotypes,

> **T:** *Stereotypes* …Dikgopolo tse re nayo le tsona ka
> batho. *These refer to whatever thoughts or views we have about people in general*

Another example is found in lines 127-130 in which the lecturer gives an example of a stereotypical view.

> **T:** I *will give an example of a stereotype (**in English**).* Bapedi ga se ba no hlahlaraaa!!
>
> *Pedi people are stupid.*
> (***Laughter)***
> *This is a stereotypical view. Can you give any other examples? (**in English**)*

Or in line 194, *This is how the self-fulfilling prophesy works. (**in English**)*

In other instances the teacher's initiation was imperative; it took the form of a command with the function of giving direction to the lesson and developing thoughts. Examples are in line 80. He commands in English, "*Indicate how perception of self influences communication*" and again in line 101, "*Specifically how perception of self influences communication.*" He also uses imperatives in the various instances where he instructs students to discuss something in pairs. See lines 32, 82 and 215. At the end of the lesson the lecturer also gives directives. He gets the students to do things, ordering, instructing and controlling them thus organising the teaching process and scaffolding.

The teacher also made moves to steer the discussion towards key learning points, using hedges and deliberately vague language. Examples of this phenomenon are when he directs the lesson from one point of focus to another in line 119, "*Now that we have linked perception to stereotypes let us briefly identify common stereotypes in a social situation*". In line 167 he is not specific when he says, "*Consequences* (of stereotyping) *can be good or bad*". He also tried at times not to impose his ideas directly as when he redirected a student's question instead of imposing his own view in line 95.

The teacher clearly valued all that was said by students. He highly valued any sign that pupils were interested or actively involved. There were regular positive evaluations of what students contributed (e.g. frequent insertions of "*Good and thoughtful comment*" in line 147 and "*Good answers"* in line 193)

The lecturer demonstrated questioning behaviour. Questions were used in facilitation to engage learners and promote verbal responses. This facilitated interaction as well as established the topic and the student to speak next. Some of the questions were "closed" or convergent, for example, "*But what is Perception*?"(e.g. line 81) or *"Is that an example of a stereotype*?"(e.g. line 141). Other question*s* were "open" or divergent, for example, "*Can you give other examples of stereotyping?*" (E.g. line 130). Or "*Should we include perception of things as well? Why?"* in line 97.

 Students' participation levels were high and there was generally a free-flow of ideas. Although students' responses were initially brief and minimal (see the first 15 lines), as the lesson progressed their responses became more elaborate, exploratory and sophisticated. One good

example of this phenomenon is in lines 173-177 in which a student responds to the question whether stereotypes are truthful:

S1: Ken mete ge di sa akaratse, empa maaka go di aluretsa. *Yes, if they are* (**stereotypes**) *true we.. they do not generalize. There is a grain of truth in them. / But if we generalize and apply the view to everyone without looking at individuals as / unique then it becomes problematic. It becomes problematic when you generalize.*

Another example is found in lines 186-191 where a student exemplifies negative stereotyping.

S4: *I will give another similar example. If there are two learners and one of the learners is influenced by the previously given view that Mr Rampedi is hard headed ,the student will automatically interpret Mr Rampedi's actions and words as those of a hard-headed man. But if the other student is not influenced by such negative ideas of Mr Rampedi he\she will have no such negative views.*

Such elaborate students' responses generally took the form of personal interpretations and suggestions. The lecturer encouraged, through his questioning techniques, students to give such detailed responses.

Peer to peer talk was evident especially in instances where the students were tasked to discuss something in pairs (e.g. lines 34-35; 84-85 and 218-220). Students mediated each other. They talked and took notes from each other. Students also spent lengthy periods of time working out Sepedi translations for English terms such as 'perception' and 'self-fulfilling prophesy'. When students interacted they took turns to speak (see lines 172-191). Students also freely asked questions for example in lines 91-94:

S: *I have a question.* Perception ke ka mo o iponago ka go na empa e ka ba ke   gape le ka moo   obonago batho ba bangwe ka gona? / *Does perception have to do with the way you perceive yourself as well as other people and things? Is it true to say that?*

2. Learning and understanding

Talk has the *"function as a crucial teaching and learning tool"* (LINC materials, 1992)).The students worked together to clarify each other's contributions leading to clarity and comprehension. There were instances where a student (S1) would come up with a key problem-solving idea which would be taken further and clarified by the intervention of others. A telling example runs from lines 102-116. In this section one student tackles the key question of whether "perception" goes beyond perception of just people. His problem-solving idea is that the concept of perception includes *"not only the way you perceive yourself and others but how you perceive things as well."* This idea is taken up by S1 who reiterates in agreement that, *"perception refers to the way one perceives*

things in general." S3 attempts to further modify the idea when he says, "*Perception is the way one perceives things in general, and without accepting or thinking of any other alternative view.*" This to me is evidence of students building meaning collaboratively. There was also evidence of students using their talk to reflect and interpret. This is illustrated in lines 201-206 in which students brainstorm the meaning of 'self-fulfilling prophesy'. Students volunteer a variety of definitions and interpretations. Active engagement with problems was conspicuous, especially when they worked in pairs and when they debated issues in the various section highlighted in the transcript. Students also corrected each other, reminding each other of meanings that they had collaboratively built, e.g. in line 155 when S2 reminds S1 that the consensus of the class is that the Sepedi equivalent of stereotype is "*ponokakarets*o."

Also important to comment on is the laughter after one of the students suggests the word "*sebetja*" as a Sepedi alternative translation of the English phrase "powerful effect"(lines 69-71). The teacher and other students laugh because they find *"sebetja"* an awkward alternative. *"Sebetja"* actually means a weapon in Sepedi so it is not a suitable and meaningful alternative. Criticism and correction comes in the form of laughter and the class eventually manages to come up with a more concise and clear definition. Important to note is that the class has fun engaging in translation and such engagement allows them to transfer meaning from one code to the other and explore central concepts. This may result in the deep learning referred to by Biggs, 2003. According to Biggs,

"When using the deep approach in handling a task, students have positive feelings: interest, a sense of importance, challenge, even exhilaration. Learning is a pleasure."(Biggs, 2003:16)

The lecturer demonstrated questioning behaviour as has already been highlighted. Questions were used in facilitation to engage learners and promote verbal responses. This facilitated interaction, established the topic and turn taking. The lecturer used questions to seek clarification from students, thus helping students to make sense of what he had said e.g. "*Is that an example of stereotyping?"* (Line 141) The lecturer also provided models and examples to students as when he gave an example of stereotyping in lines 127-130.Students were then able to give their own personal examples (lines 131-139).

3. Code- switching: Sepedi and English mix

Also noticeable during the lesson was much code-switching between Sepedi and English. The Sepedi and English mix manifested itself both in written and oral forms. The lecturer and students mixed the languages when they debated the meaning of perception and communication. English was mainly used for technical or specialist (subject specific) terms for which Sepedi replacement terms are difficult to find. The lecturer and the class struggled to find Sepedi equivalents of technical and subject specialist terms such as "*stereotype*", *"perception"* and "*communication* (lines 36-42;84-90), "*effect*"(lines 69-74)*,"self-fulfilling prophecy"* (lines 201-206)*,* for example. This was evident in the debate mentioned above. The lecturer also mixed the two languages when he explained the specific objectives of the lesson which he wrote in English on the board (see lines 55-61).

4. Non-verbal (visual) aspects

The teacher made use of role-play and simulation. For example he acted out a 'horse with blinkers' to demonstrate the narrow- mindedness of stereotypical perceptions. He also impersonated communication contexts in which stereotyping on the grounds of race or gender interfered with communication, for example; how black people are associated with dishonesty and crime and how women are perceived as bad drivers.

Non-verbal reinforcement and positive feedback from students indicating understanding and shaking of heads was evident. The students were generally very attentive when explanations were given. The lecturer used hand gestures to accent and complement his verbal messages. He also made good use of space, moving towards students when emphasizing a point and towards the chalk board when he wanted to write something.

There were many incidences of laughter (lines 71; 129; 135; 211; 214) by the class, individuals and the lecturer. There was intentional humour. The lecturer, for example, made fun of how the Sepedi themselves stereotype and are stereotyped. Students had fun laughing at each others' awkward or humorous responses as they tried to find Sepedi equivalents for English technical terms as has already been demonstrated in all the instances of laughter in the transcript.

But there were also moments of silence especially when the lecturer asked questions that students found complex or difficult. Such questions normally had to do with Sepedi translation of English technical terms. Students remained quiet during the period in which they were formulating responses (see lines 82; 98; 153 and 185).

5. Discussion of the data

This section discusses and reflects on the data from the Sepedi lesson, and relates the comments on the data to the relevant literature. The following commentary will list the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Sepedi lecture from my view point.

Strengths of the Sepedi lesson

In relation to interaction and responsiveness the following comments are made:

- The initiation-response-feedback (IRF) pattern of classroom interaction allowed for feedback which in turn facilitated early correction and allowed particular difficulties to be isolated, for example, when the teacher disagreed with some students' translations. The feedback allowed the teacher to shape the material being taught. Such feedback is important in teaching according to Sinclair and Brazil (1982:44) who maintain that "*feedback is an important component of theories of learning.*";

- In their interaction the lecturer and students struggled together and went together through the difficulties of finding Sepedi alternatives for technical terms. Clearly the teacher and students became partners in learning. Greater mutuality was created between the learners among themselves and the teacher as they worked collaboratively (Cummins, 1992);

- The lecturer consciously created opportunities for students to exchange ideas through his questioning and pair work. Students in the debates were reshaping their thoughts while talking;

- Co-operative learning appears to have worked well in the Sepedi lesson. The class observation data seem to support Street and Lea (1998) who suggest the implementation of co-operative learning as a viable pedagogical practice. In the lesson, contributions were generated collaboratively;

- The classroom interaction in the Sepedi lecture also suggests that use of the mother-tongue, to a certain extent, can some of the time achieve more clarity in academic instruction and explanation and therefore encourage learning. Such a suggestion is in tune with Biggs (2003) notion of explicitness as a way to deep learning. In the end the teaching environment explicitly brought out the structure of the subject and the teaching elicited active response from the students, for example, from the questions he asked and the problems presented.

In relation to the theme of learning and understanding the following comments are made:

- The teacher managed to engage students in 'exploratory' talk that sought to establish working definitions in Sepedi of specialist terms. In the 'debates' the teacher encouraged and allowed initiation of discourse by students. Student responses gradually became longer and more elaborate. This phenomenon is closely related to Speech Act Theory (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) which claims that in group exploratory talk the students are actually involved in many speech acts. When you use language you are actually ***doing*** something. In talking therefore, the students are doing and becoming knowledgeable in the subject matter. Student talk was exploratory as they seemed to be learning through talk. When the students were struggling with translations and offering tentative Sepedi alternatives for English terms, they were engaged in 'exploratory talk.' It would appear that exploratory talk was a vehicle for learning. Perhaps as they struggled with terms and tried to come to grips with concepts, they were learning;

- Learning in one's mother tongue can be viewed as "context embedded" which is supported by the data. Use of the mother-tongue meant that discussions were not 'artificial' and that the constraints imposed by efforts to use appropriate register in English disappeared. Students in the Sepedi lecture felt free to converse and use language with the aim of achieving understanding. In relation to pedagogy, Cummins (1992) argues that initially learning should be contextualized and therefore emanate from familiar ground. He introduces the notion of "context-embedded" and "cognitively demanding" performance tasks in promoting learning in higher education. This means as facilitators in higher education we must, as part of our pedagogy, start from prior-knowledge which will give our students access to disciplinary discourse. Drawing from

Vygotsky (1962), Cummins also emphasizes the importance of mediating through an understanding of the Zone of Proximal Development. In this zone we can scaffold students from "where they are" cognitively to "where we want them to be". Learning is achieved through the support that we give (through feedback for instance) and also the support that students receive from their peers if they work in pairs or groups. Scaffolding helps learners to move from one zone of development to the next. The learning process should also be teacher-structured as this allows for scaffolding (Rogoff, 2003). The data establishes that this is possible when lectures are delivered in Sepedi - a home language which is context-embedded;

- Cummins (1988) also demonstrates the view that cognitive development takes place in bilingual education under certain conditions. According to him, the mother tongue should not be underestimated in cognitive development. The classroom observation data seem to point to the fact that home languages, in the case of this study Sepedi, can be effectively used particularly as a mediating tool.

In relation to the theme of code-switching the following comment is made:

- The code-switching during the course of the lesson became a resource which aided understanding and learning.

- Although little research has been conducted at tertiary level, the research seems to indicate that talking through problems in the home language is an aid to learning. Masasanya (1996:28) refers to Barnes' (1975) notions of "exploratory talk" arguing that "exploratory talk" and the process of thinking issues through can take place in the home languages of students although the final assessment could be in English. Students in groups think aloud together in their mother tongues and "embedded languages" (Myers-Scotton 1993a:46), with technical borrowing from English. A key finding was that the final assessment, written or oral, may be in English, but the learning has taken place in the home languages. The implication is that home languages can be used in mediation although students can be examined and tested in English. Masanyana (1996) emphasizes this idea.

"Languages here fulfill their dynamic roles – where one language becomes insufficient in stimulating cognition, the other assumes the responsibility." (Masasanya, 1996:36)

Peires (1994:21) also agrees that using language "this way is a learning benefit." He claims that a combination of languages (English and the students own languages) can enhance cognition and enrich the learning experience.

<u>Weaknesses of the Sepedi lesson</u>

In relation to mixing languages the following comments are made:

- Although, it is suggested above that the discussions relating to definitions was useful, it may equally be argued by some that Sepedi is not appropriate for developing Academic Literacy. This is mainly because there was much code-switching and mixing. The lecturer acknowledged at the start of the lesson that much of the technical terms and jargon cannot be translated easily into Sepedi. For example "stereotyping", "perception", "self-fulfilling prophecy" and so on. This means that the specialist terms of the subject in which the knowledge of the subject is embedded, are lost if purely Sepedi is used in instruction. This problem in my view means it is difficult to use Sepedi only to acculturate students in disciplinary or subject discourses. The disciplinary jargon is lacking and this prevents students from using the terminology that is typical of Communication Theory and the subject community;

- It is difficult to talk about what counts as knowledge in Communication Studies (Theory) using Sepedi. Specialist language that captures the essence of concepts is simply non-existent. This may be regarded as an important limitation;

- Also related to the above point is the fact that meaning may be lost in translation.

In a study on translation as literacy mediation in multilingual/multicultural learning contexts conducted at the University of Western Cape, Banda (2003:70) makes interesting findings. He concludes that,

> *One problem …is that neither learners nor their teachers have the bilingual teachers training to effectively translate between L1 and L2 and vice-versa" and that "translation does not always work to the benefit of the learner.*

> His claim is that translating between L1 and L2,
> *…is more complex than switching of labels of the same 'concept'. It entails translation of socio-cultural and cognitive skills as well*" (Banda, 2003:82).

> Giving weight to the claims above Mohan (2003:4) would argue, "*If a concept fits into one taxonomy in L1 and into another in L2 it is not the same concept any more."*

4.1.3 <u>The English lecture: class observation</u>

In this section I describe the lesson which I conducted in English. It was a different lesson which I had to teach myself but with the same students (refer to the method section pages 31-32 for an explanation of this situation). The lecture's focus was on non-verbal communication. The lesson was audio recorded.

The following is a transcript of the introductory sections of the English (Communication Studies) class observation. The transcript will be followed by a description and commentary.

<u>**English Lesson transcript**</u>

<u>Topic of the English lecture: Non Verbal Communication</u>

Key:

T - Teacher
S - Any Student
Bold italics – Descriptions and class activities

T:	*Let us settle down for our lesson please.*	1
	(Students become silent and attentive)	2
T:	*Good morning*	3
T:	*Today we are going to look at Non-Verbal Communication.*	4
	(Writes the topic on the board)	5
T:	*It is my hope that by the end of this learning unit we should be able to define*	6
	and explain Non-Verbal Communication as well as its functions. Also we would	7
	have had a had a successful lesson if at the end you are able to discuss the	8
	the importance of appropriate non-verbal communication	9
	skills, explain how non-verbal communication influences our behavior and	10
	evaluate individual non-verbal communication. What do you understand by	11
	non-verbal communication?	12
	(Silent / hesitant moments. A few students mumble	13
	inaudible answers)	14

T:	*I can not get what you are saying. Malele what do you*	15
	think?	16
S:	*It's...It's when you send messages without using words-*	17
	without speaking.	18
T:	*Yes good. Do we have an alternative answer? Yes give us*	19
	your view Sibongile.	20
	(Teacher directs question to Sibongile (student) although she has	21
	not volunteered to provide an answer)	22
S:	*The communication does not use words. Words are neither*	23
	spoken or written - Anything else other than words is used.	24
T:	*Exactly. That is a well put response. In other words these*	25
	are messages people convey through their bodies, touch,	26
	vocal variations (tone), use of space, time and objects.	27
	Obviously non-verbal communication is different from verbal	28
	communication. How is it different from verbal communication?	29
	(Silence. Teacher directs question to another student)	30
T:	*Yes Thabiso. What is your view?*	31
	(Thabiso seems not ready to give an answer. Another	32
	student comes to the rescue and gives a response)	33
S:	*Communication has words. Non-verbal doesn't.*	34
		35
T:	*That's right. According to our textbook more than 60% of*	
	messages are actually non-verbal. That means we use it	36
	more than verbal communication. What examples of	37
	non-verbal communication from everyday situations can you give me.	38
S:	*Hailing a taxi.*	39
T:	*Yes. That's part of gesturing, which consists of body*	40
	movement to convey a message. That branch of Non Verbal Communication is	41
	called Kinesics. We will cover that in detail later. Any other examples?	42
S:	*Smiling.*	43
T:	*What is the message behind a smile?*	44
		54
S:	*A smile indicates happiness. It is a positive message.*	46
T:	*Yes. Good. Smiling also falls under of kinesics. It has to*	47
	do with movements which the face makes- facial expressions. Do you have	48
	*further examples? Give us more examples. **(Moments of silence. Most of the***	49
	students refer to their textbooks and manuals after which they discuss in L1	50
	(Sepedi) before answers are volunteered.	51
S:	*When we shake hands or kiss we are showing friendship and love.*	52
T:	*Good. That branch of Non Verbal Communication is called haptics. This has to*	52
	do with how you touch, who you touch and where you touch.	54
	(Laughter)	55
	look at haptics in detail later. Can you give us more examples of	56
	communication which doesn't use words please?	57
S:	*If you are always late for lessons and cannot keep time it*	58
	sends negative messages about you.	59

S:	*What name do we give to the study of how time is used to communicate?*	60
S:	*Proxemics*	61
T	*Good. We will deal with that in detail later in the lesson*	62
T:	*So how would you define non-verbal communication?*	63
S:	*Non Verbal Communication is the study of message conveyed through touch,*	64
	the body, vocal variations, the use of space – without use of words	65
T:	*Good. Now let's move on to the functions of non-verbal*	66
	communication. Non verbal communication can complement	67
	a verbal message. That is, you can use non-verbal cues to	68
	enhance the meaning in verbal cues or words. For example	69
	if you apologize, you will use apologetic words e.g. 'I'm	70
	sorry' but you can complement this message with a fitting	71
	facial expression, tone or posture. That way Non Verbal Communication	72
	complements or enhances verbal messages. Are we together?	73
	Most students nod to show understanding. Teacher role plays making an	74
	apology assuming a matching apologetic tone, facial expression and	75
	posture)	76
	(Laughter)	77
	Now in pairs let us discuss and give more examples of the complementary	78
	function of non-verbal communication.	
		79
	(Students break into pair work and start discussing mixing	80
	English and their African languages as they discuss after which answers are	81
	more forthcoming)	82
	(The lesson continues in the same trend and	83
	communicative pattern of IRF. At the end students are given	84
	formative assessment task in which they are required to	85
	write a paragraph on how haptics functions in their respective cultures.	

4.1.4 Description of the data

This section describes the English lecture. In this lecture I, the researcher was a participant observer as I had to conduct the lesson as well. Data on this observation consists of:

- an audio recording of the lesson;

- observation notes made during the course of and immediately after the lesson;

- reflective pieces on the lesson from students. The data from the reflective pieces will be discussed together with the interview data in the next section.

The description of this lecture will be briefer and less detailed than the Sepedi lecture observation data as use of English as a medium of instruction has been common practice for these students and the lecturer.

The aim is not to compare the two lessons and establish which provided a richer learning experience. The comparison was not exact (as mentioned in the method section pages 31-32). The intention was to highlight some of the differences which could be construed as significant in relation to the learning process. The aim was more to explore the pedagogical implications of each in order to find out the extent of pedagogical usefulness from each type of lesson. A key finding was that home languages can be used in 'exploratory talk' and mediation although students can be examined and tested in English.

Also, as has already been mentioned in the method chapter there is a need to point out a few limitations as the two lessons were not exactly the same. The two lecturers had different styles of teaching and whereas the Sepedi lecture was conducted outside normal teaching time, the English lecture was part of a normal teaching session. Also, the topics of the lessons were different.

I again identified the same four main themes or patterns emerging from the classroom observation data as follows:

> 1 Interaction and responsiveness
> 2 Learning and understanding
> 3 Code- switching
> 4 Non-verbal (visual) aspects

1.   Interaction and responsiveness

"Interaction and responsiveness" includes what the lecturer said (teacher talk), how the students responded and what they said (student talk) and also the questioning behavior that characterized the lesson.

In the above extract the teacher is in control of the situation. He speaks more than any of the students. He controls the discourse by asking a series of questions (for example in lines 11-12; 15-16; 19; 29; 38; 42; 56-7; 63) which encourage students to think and to which they are expected to respond. He then reacts to their responses, for example his positive evaluations in

line 25 "*Exactly*" and "*Yes. Good*" line 46. This sort of pattern (where the teacher *initiates* the exchange, the students *respond* and the teacher *feeds back* his or her opinion his opinion of or reaction to the response) was identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) as often found in classrooms, particularly in whole class teaching.

A feature of teacher talk as exemplified in the feedback consisted of praises and encouragement. Students' responses were validated by positive feedback. Also teacher talk took the form of lecturing. The teacher also used the ideas of students, recognizing contributions and rephrasing some of the students' contributions as illustrated in the lines 23-29;

S:	*The communication does not use words. Words are neither*	23
	spoken or written - Anything else other than words is used.	24
T:	*Exactly. That is a well put response. In other words these*	25
	are messages people convey through their bodies, touch,	26
	vocal variations (tone), use of space, time and objects.	27
	Obviously non-verbal communication is different from verbal	28
	communication. How is it different from verbal communication?	29

and throughout the teacher's utterances in the transcript (see also lines 43-57).

The teacher signposted the lesson and gave guidance as to the content of the lecture. Teacher talk also took the form of giving information related to the specific objectives of the lesson as well as an explanation of the lesson's aims (see lines 4-11). Part of the teacher talk consisted of questions, as has already been referred to above**.** Questions were used in facilitation by the lecturer to engage learners and promote verbal responses e.g. *"What do you understand by Non-Verbal Communication?" (Line 11-12) or "Malele what do you think? (Line 14-15)*

A feature of the English lecture is that students took time to give their responses. They were initially hesitant in providing answers (e.g. lines 13-14; 21-22; 30 and 50-51). In the English lecture, the lecturer initially had difficulty eliciting responses, ideas, reactions and contributions from students. Most of the times the lecturer 'exerted pressure' on different students as voluntary answers and responses were at first rare (see examples in the lines above). Students were generally silent and attentive. One got the impression that students held back at first and did not contribute to their full potential. There were moments of awkward silence in the English lecture. The students took time to construct their responses. There were hesitations before 'venturing'

into giving an answer.The extract below shows more examples of the how the teacher 'pushed' students into responses asking for students' opinions and views. A good example is in lines 19-22;

T:	*I can not get what you are saying. Malele what do you think?*	15 16
S:	*It's...It's when you send messages without using words-without speaking.*	17 18
T:	*Yes good. Do we have an alternative answer? Yes give us your view Sibongile.* **(Teacher directs question to Sibongile (student) although she has not volunteered to provide an answer)**	19 20 21 22

This facilitated interaction, established the topic and turn taking. Some of the questions were divergent, inviting a range of possible and personal answers. The questions were designed to enable students to explore their personal views in relation to topics under discussion. The questions were purposeful, enabling learning and attempting to impell students to think and to make meaningful contribution since there was a tendency for them not to volunteer answers. In contrast students tended to be more spontaneous and initiated responses themselves during the Sepedi lecture.

Though the students' responses were not generally spontaneous, the quality of answers was good. There was evidence of reasoned thought and relevance in students' responses as exemplified in lines 17-18; 23-24 and 34. For example, in lines 23-24 a student gives the following response in defining non-verbal communication,

The communication does not use words. Words are neither spoken nor written - Anything else other than words is used.

2. Learning and understanding

Questions were aimed to engage students and pressure them to think thus facilitating learning. The questions were intended to be enabling, asking students to provide prior knowledge and scaffolding before concepts were explained e.g. "*What do you understand by non-verbal*

communication?" (Lines 11-12).The lecturer made an effort to generate students contributions (since students seemed not free to contribute spontaneously) requesting for answers even from students who had not volunteered and were not forthcoming with responses.

Learning was facilitated by use of examples. Questions directed students towards giving examples of particular phenomena. Technical terms such as 'Kinesics' were defined via exemplifications that students gave, as shown in the example below:

T:	*What examples of*	37
	non-verbal communication from everyday situations can you give me.	
		38
S:	*Hailing a taxi.*	39
T:	*Yes. That's part of gesturing , which consists of body*	40
	movement to convey a message .That branch of Non Verbal Communication is	41
	called Kinesics. We will cover that in detail later. Any other examples?	42

We have similar examples with the definition of "*haptics*" (lines 52-54) and "*proxemics*" in lines running from 58-61.

The lesson was structured to move from one stage to the next with the lecturer signaling the next stage into which the lecture was going (see lines 66-67):

> *Now let's move on to the functions of non-verbal communication.*

At the end there was pair work when students were asked to discuss and give examples of the complementary function of non-verbal communication. Students worked in pairs discussing and helping each other before giving their answers (in L1) with more confidence (see lines 79-85). Students also used L1 in their peer to peer (pair) discussion in lines 50-51. Discussion between Sepedi speaking students was possible because they were asked to sit next to each other occupying the front rows. This sitting arrangement was the best compromise in the situation because the research participants were, during this normal everyday lecture, part of a larger linguistically diverse class.

3. Code- switching: English and Sepedi mix

The lecturer used English only as he is not proficient in Sepedi but the students code-switched between Sepedi and English in their peer to peer talk when they were tasked to work in pairs (see lines 50-51 and 79-85).

4. <u>Non-verbal (visual) aspects</u>

In the English lecture, the lecturer demonstrated the concept of 'kinesics' through role-play when he made an apology assuming a matching apologetic tone, facial expression and posture (line 74-75).

Also there was laughter (lines 55 and 76). The laughing was by the class, individuals and the lecturer. There was intentional humour in the examples that the lecturer gave as shown in the extract above. The whole class found the role play amusing. An apparent observation was that the laughter was less than in the Sepedi lesson.There were also moments of awkward silence when students took time to respond to the lecturer's question and cues as exemplified earlier. This was a significant contrast to the Sepedi lecture in which responses did not take much time.

5.   <u>Discussion of the data</u>

 This section discusses the data on the English lesson and will list the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the English lecture from my view point.

<u>Strengths of the English lesson</u>

- The lecturer gave students the opportunity to discuss certain issues in L1 (Sepedi) when they did pair work. The code-switching allowed in pair discussions in the English lecture seemed to have facilitated student engagement and raised levels of confidence in the students. The learners' academic discussion in pairs was mostly done in their mother tongue (L1). Although the lecture was in English, the Sepedi speaking learners followed up on their work and in discussions in their mother tongue;
- Definitions of concepts and terms were made through exemplification and directly in English). This may have made it easy to grasp the concepts as they were self defining in English.

<u>Weaknesses in the English lesson</u>

 I observed that:

- There was less class interaction. The English lesson was more teacher-centered. The teacher spoke more and had to encourage student response. Students contributed and participated less;

- Silence was a common feature of the lesson. Note the long and awkward pauses as the lecturer waited for responses from learners (e.g. lines 13-14; 30);

- The lecturer was impelled to not only formulate questions for the learners (e.g. lines 19; 31; 44), but also having failed to coax full and meaningful responses, out of the learners, he was forced to elaborate on the students' responses and spell out answers (25-29; 47-48). This may have perpetuated what Banda (2003:79) calls the "dependency syndrome";

- What the data seems to suggest is that students face constraints of appropriate register (language) when they have to learn in L2 (English) and this may be a handicap to effective participation.

4.2 INTERVIEWS AND REFLECTIVE PIECES

4.2.1 Focus group interviews and students' reflective pieces

This section presents the focus group interview (mentioned in chapter 4) data together with data collected from the students' reflective pieces. The reason why data from the two instruments is combined is that the themes that emerged were very similar. I also analyze the pedagogical implications of the data and describe what happens in a Communication Theory lecture (course) when Sepedi compared to English is used to initiate students into the learning and discourse of Communication Studies in a first year university course.

I identified a number of themes emerging from the data as follows:

1. Interaction- participation and self expression
2. The fear factor- silence
3. Understanding is key –Access to learning and understanding.
4. Code-switching and Bilingual education
5. Pride and identity in the use of the mother tongue.
6. Disadvantages of use of Sepedi
7. Advantages of use of English.

8. General summary and discussion of data.

1.   Interaction - participation and free self expression.

Students thought and felt that use of Sepedi allowed them to participate freely and fully in the lesson and that this had facilitated 'deep learning' as they were engaged in discussions on the Sepedi concepts behind technical / specialist terms.

Tlou: Yes. Like I said before it was easier for me to speak… participate in Sepedi than in English. I don't have any... *fear*. I can say anything what I want. It was very much good.

Malele: The vocabulary you see… When you are speaking in your mother tongue, you feel your thoughts…the way you see things…unlike in English… *where you get stuck*. You run out of words. I mean …You want to say…I mean you want to say something the way you see it. But I mean the words…They are not there. And in the end you say something different. You end up saying what you didn't mean to say or you say nothing.

Cedric: Say if I have I have an idea now say if… I want to add this idea to the discussion and I want to put it across…I can put across better in my mother tongue. So it's better …. (***Laughter***) *If you want to talk you can talk.* So I think it's very much easy.

Clearly the use of Sepedi as a medium of instruction facilitated high levels of participation and a sense of freedom and ease in interacting with others in the process of learning – a phenomenon which students perceived as beneficial to learning. The perceptions expressed above in the interview validate and give credence to Street and Lea's (1998) claim that co-operative learning is a viable pedagogical practice. This aspect worked very well in the Sepedi lesson according to the views expressed in the interview above. Students were conscious that they worked together and collaborated easily in Sepedi. Sepedi allowed the students to talk in pairs. As a class they mediated each other, sharing ideas without constraint. This was a strong point in favour of using Sepedi as a language of tuition.

The utterances above seem to support Rogoff's (2003) Vygotskian view that students learn to use tools for thinking provided by culture (language) through their interaction with more skilled partners in the zone of proximal development. The students' expressed views also confirm a study carried out in KwaZulu Natal by Chick (2001:7). The study found that the use of Zulu in learning was advantageous in that quick progress was made when "*brighter and more fluent learners can explain to others exactly what is required*" (Chick, 2000:12). The above quotations therefore indicate the students' sentiments that participation is important and that use of Sepedi improved

didactic interaction. It seems the students found it useful to use their own language to think through, explain concepts or decode problems or assessment questions and tasks. Finally it is clear from the interview that during the lesson students found it useful to think through ideas and discuss them using an African language (Sepedi). Use of Sepedi for discussion therefore seemed to help students to grasp concepts or emphasize concepts or prove understanding.

 Strongly emerging from the reflective pieces is a similar theme that Sepedi encouraged the full active participation of all the students leading to a cross fertilization of ideas and ultimately promoting 'deep learning'. According to Biggs, 2003:17, 'deep learning' can be promoted as a result of, "teaching to *elicit* an active response from students." Tlou expresses contentment when he writes that use of Sepedi allowed him:

> *… a chance to discuss in pairs where we were able to share ideas.*

Dominic concurs when he writes:

> *I was able to talk about some of the concepts during the lesson, which I am not used to doing.*

Malele is surprised by the success of the learning experience when Sepedi was used and writes:

I must say at first I thought it wasn't going to work, but right now I feel the lecture should have gone on. What I found much interesting was the interaction we had. All of us were participating and to my amazement all of us seemed very comfortable.

Through this interaction and 'talk' as a result of using Sepedi, one may see evidence of Paxton's (2007) 'interim literacies" between their primary and everyday discourse (BICS) and achievement of proficiency in secondary (academic) discourse (CALP).What is suggested is that 'Deep' (or 'exploratory') talk achieved through a home language enables a group of students to develop their thinking and learning further through a collaborative and interactive process.

 From the data, I became aware of the fact that the students (through interaction in Sepedi) were entering into a phase of interim literacy. As they underwent transition from everyday literacy (talking in their everyday first language) to academic literacies (language), their identities began to shift and became more aligned to the institution and the discipline (Paxton, 2007:46-48). Speaking in Sepedi was a sort of 'interim literacy' with benefits. It was a useful tool of

mediation. It provided an opportunity for students to work in that zone where students together with the teacher mediated each other.

2 The fear factor- silence

Better proficiency in the mother tongue may have raised the confidence levels of the students. When students participated they "were confident and not scared." Apparently the **fear factor** impeded full and active participation during the English lecture. According to a student, silence is a characteristic of English lessons as students "*are usually quiet.*" The following extracts serve as evidence of this finding:

Student C

> *"The only difference (between) the two lessons was that in the English lecture, participation and interaction between the lecturer and students was minimal, that is, **we were a bit quiet**. This is because most of us. We are not too fluent in English. But in Sepedi we **were confident and not scared of** of speaking or making grammatical errors. Sepedi is the language I grew up speaking. I used Sepedi one hundred percent of my communication even though mostly not for academic purposes. That is why it was easy to express myself more comfortably in the Sepedi than in the English lecture."*

Student B concurs:

> *"I still stand amazed by how some of my pals **who are usually quiet** during English the English lesson participated fully. Given that Mr. Yafele (the English lecturer) is a funny character, he did somehow manage to draw the students attention there and there .However you could see in some students' eyes that they want to say something .They looked rather **shy** or **scared because neither of them were comfortable speaking English** which is not their mother tongue, **I myself get butterflies** whenever I have to speak in English, especially during class because you **are afraid** of using incorrect words. Give students a chance to learn in their mother tongue and you will see miracles in the academic field because they will now learn not only to pass exams but that they can understand fully"*

Student T

Student T is afraid that failure to express himself properly in English will turn him into a source of ridicule. He writes:

> *"...other students will laugh at me or take me otherwise"*

He goes on:

> *"Sometimes when I learn in English I don't understand."*

The students' comments echo Ramphele's statement (1995: 209):

"*It is amazing to observe the ease with which people who can't speak English, or speak it in a non-standard accent, are often dismissed as unintelligent*"

The students' comments clearly reflect that sense of 'fear' and alienation from learning culture of the university. Also, the comments suggest a sense of feeling publicly humiliated in the classroom when they are ridiculed because of a grammatical error. In the above section, students identify the medium of instruction (English) as a major stumbling block

Clearly the students felt participation was generated more by Sepedi than English. The implication is that the more participation in Sepedi encourages exploratory talk, interaction and scaffolding. Interaction leads to 'deep' talk through which some requirements of academic discourse begin to be developed.

3. 'Understanding is key' –Access to learning and understanding

Some of the comments from the interviews suggest that use of Sepedi in teaching resulted in good understanding of concepts, theory and issues and clearly facilitated learning. The following comment is telling.

What you do and learn depends on how much you understand. Understanding is key. I understand better in Sepedi. I can even try to explain it (my understanding) in Xhosa or Zulu because I think I know Zulu a bit. And I can even try to explain it in Venda. I can...can explain it. If you understand it (something) then you know it. Understanding... it is very important to understand first. (Student T)

There was general consensus that when issues and theory were explained and talked about in Sepedi, things were clearer as revealed by the following comments:

The most important thing is understanding. Students who learn in their own language...they have an advantage. They easily explain what is happening. Therefore we have to understand to take things as they are." (Student B)

If you don't understand...You can never go anywhere without understanding. You know what I mean? (Student C)

*You have to apply your knowledge. For you to apply the knowledge you need to understand. (**General agreement from the rest of class**). Ja…So I think understanding is the most important thing. (Student D)*

The statements were easy to understand in Sepedi. (Student E)

The comments above seem to suggest that for many students use of Sepedi enriched their learning experience.

In the students' reflective pieces there was a consensus that use of Sepedi allowed students access to and success in learning and understanding. In his reflection *Student C* shows insights

into how use of his home language in academia promoted learning and opened the doors to better understanding. He writes:

I think it was conducive using our home language during lecturing because we easily understood and expressed ourselves...If students are allowed to sometimes use their home languages during lectures, it can easily make Communication easier.

In agreement with the above sentiments student B writes:

During the Sepedi lecture it was very easy for me to understand. I was able to ask questions as our lecturer was trying to explain everything. Most of the lesson was easy to understand.

Other written comments from other students are equally telling:

I have enjoyed the Sepedi lesson very much. I've learnt a lot and what I like is that I did not only learn but learnt to understand because everything it was in my mother tongue. I liked the way I expressed myself. I could easily ask questions freely if I didn't understand without having doubt…

Student D writes:

I found the lesson in my home language very understandable. I don't struggle to find words that are suitable for what I want to say and after the lecture it was easy for me to remember what I have learnt. Sometimes reasoning in your home language you get more facts.

The above comments illustrate Cummins' (1992) argument that initially learning should be contextualized and therefore emanate from familiar ground. Cummins introduces the notion of context-embedded and cognitively demanding performance tasks in promoting learning at higher education. (Refer to the diagram in chapter 2 on page 23). This means as facilitators in higher education, we must as part of our pedagogy start from prior- knowledge which will give our students access to disciplinary discourse. The use of their home language meant the lesson became 'context embedded' and cognitively demanding as students were using a language they were familiar with and which they had always used. Thus this aspect of Cummins' ideas was fulfilled in the pedagogy of the lesson, suggesting the viability of the African language as a medium of instruction. 'Success' was constructed specifically through granting Sepedi high status and relying upon the cultural artefact of the home language.

 Use of Sepedi in the classroom also directs the other members of the class into an "assumed shared world" (McCarthy, 1991), with which they are all familiar. The learners and the teacher bonded as they shared a common language which in itself represented a shared world.

The comments made by students in this section suggest that the use of Sepedi as a medium of instruction accords them the right and opportunities to speak in class thus removing the perceived gate-keeping role of English.

4. Other views

In contrast to the views expressed in the above section, two students felt that learning in Sepedi alone would be an impediment to effective learning. English instead is characterized as a rich language better suited to academic discourse. These students were mainly concerned about the impracticability of using Sepedi as an academic language. The following elaborate argument is typical of such a view:

I think this works (using Sepedi as an instruction medium) and I liked it, but it can work in Communication subjects only. And even in Communication subject there is a problem. The problem is in Sepedi we have a shortage of words. Like the word 'stereotype' would have a translation in the form of a paragraph in Sepedi. I disagree that Sepedi or other African languages could be used as an academic language. The reason is we have a shortage of words. For example I'm doing mechanical engineering and it is impossible for me to do electronics and mechanics in Sepedi. The first question that I have is, what is (the meaning of) mechanics in Sepedi? Is there only one word (in Sepedi) that has the same meaning as electro-technology? What I know is that we are going to use a paragraph (to define and translate into Sepedi), instead of one word – like gravity, resultant or force. (Student G)

This student raises an important concern, namely, the question of how we can deal with the technical / specialist terminology in a multilingual and diverse academic and educational environment especially in relation to science subjects. The sentiment borders on resistance to the use of Sepedi in academia seeing it as practically impossible to teach in Sepedi at university.

However almost all the students also generally acknowledged that they could learn and understand when English was used as a medium of instruction. But they could not resist the temptation of vacillating towards as Sepedi the preferred choice.

Student C writes the following for example:

*"Comparing the **Non- Verbal Communication** lecture offered in English and the **Perception and Communication** lecture in Sepedi; the understanding of both concepts taught in different languages was attained irrespective of the language used…The objectives of both the Sepedi and English lecturers were achieved"*

Student B writes:

The lesson was just like any other lesson. However comparing it to the Sepedi lesson which we had a few weeks ago, we can say that (the English lesson) was "not bad."

5. Code-switching and Bilingual education

When asked if they code-switched and why there was code- switching, that is, mixing English and Sepedi in the Sepedi lecture one of the interviewees had this to say:

Malele: Yes. Because each and every language…I mean…How do I put it…depends on other languages. In order for English to be where it is now… it's because they have taken other words from other languages. Just like in Sepedi we also take words from other languages. So we had to borrow. It's just a way of communicating and learning.

The implication here is that switching codes was a resourceful way of learning.

The majority of the students (more than half) felt more at ease striking a balance between the use of English and African languages as media of instruction. Indirectly the students were in fact advocating for some form of bilingualism or multilingualism in higher education. They expressed contentment and felt there was a resolution in a learning context in which both English and African languages were used for tuition. Typical comments read thus:

"I think learning communication in our home language should be considered by the university …The challenge is translating some terms from English to Sepedi, but I think combining Sepedi and English would be an advantage."
(Student D)

"If students are allowed to sometimes use their home languages during English lectures, it can easily make Communication easier."
(Student C)

"I think we must introduce a new system where we combine all South African languages because I think what is important is to understand."
(Student T)

" Mixing Sepedi and English its good, I think it will be a very 'overwhelming' lesson to be taught because we could understand English and Sepedi very well and quiet possibly it could work" (Student A)

The views expressed in the extract above give weight to the argument proffered by Kapp (1998:22) that it is important to, "*view the many languages spoken in the institution as a resource which can play a major role in the development of an appropriate learning culture.*"

6.   Pride and identity in the use of the mother tongue.

Also emerging from the group interview is a positive sense of pride and identity in being able to use one's mother tongue as an academic language of instruction. A perception of pride in one's own language is echoed in the following:

Malele: Countries like China. They use their mother tongues even in parliament they use their mother tongue. They have got translators. They translate into English. Why can't we do that? We are a big country. Why can't we speak (use) our own languages and show our own... (Inaudible) ...It works.

Tlou: If you can look at that. If you can look at China ... They very much produce. There is much production …because…They are so much creative because they are not limited. They use their mother tongue.

It is interesting that in the interview extracts quoted above the students allude to the importance of the increased self-esteem that stems from using one's mother tongue in academia. Research has shown the direct benefits to learning in the mother tongue, especially in the areas of attitude and motivation. Cummins (1993a, summarized by Baker 1998:89) suggests**,**

"… some recognition by the school system of a pupil's minority language and culture can facilitate progress where lack of recognition may be connected with failure."

The issue of identity as a theme also emerged from the reflective pieces written after the Sepedi lesson. There was a sense of students' resistance to a perceived as domineering, 'English' environment (Kapp 1998:22). The dominance of English was perceived as having the potential to disrupt previously held conceptions of identity. Some students expressed pride in African languages, viewing them   as equally capable as English or even better at transmitting academic discourse. A typical comment in this category is:

I feel with enough preparation (in Sepedi) we could do excellent. After all the academic subject of Communication is not the English language itself. We are Africans. South Africa is a country which is alive with possibilities .So I think it's about time we show the world our pride in our mother tongues. (Student B)

Student D shows his pride by using the possessive pronouns "**our**", **"your"** and **"you"** in the following respective sentences from the student's writing:

*"I think learning Communication in **our home language** should be considered by the university"*

*"Sometimes reasoning **your** answer in **your language, you** get more facts."*

There appears to be an obvious pride and sense of belonging and identity with one's home language embedded in the use of the possessive pronouns.

7. Disadvantages of use of Sepedi

Generally the students felt that they had difficulties with the translation of English subject specific terms into Sepedi during the English lesson. They also expressed the view that this was time consuming:

"We had problems here and there trying to explain English words... We struggled trying to explain English (words)." (Student B)

"The problem in the Sepedi lecture is that it took so much time trying to find proper words to use for academic purposes as it was unusual using Sepedi for academic purposes." (Student C)

Some may argue, as the students do here, that valuable learning time was wasted unpacking terms instead of going into the content or main subject matter of the Sepedi lecture. Talk seemed to have stimulated the students to correctly express their meanings. I suggest that the class talk was not a waste of time but a way of sharpening 'thinking' skills. When students, through group talk, struggle to find the 'appropriate' language in Sepedi, individual students are forced to think more deeply about making meaning clear to one another thus engaging in 'exploratory talk'. In my view this results in cognitive development.

One student commented that the learning problems associated with using Sepedi as a medium of instruction were more severe in comparison to the English lecture.

"*Learning in Sepedi during the Communication lecture was...not as exciting as learning in English. The English lesson is far much better than the Sepedi one because you don't have to crack head wanting to translate or explain some of the words because they already explain themselves in English. I preferred the English rather than the Sepedi lesson. The English lesson was not time consuming .We got to the point much faster and we were more fluent in speaking than in the mother tongue itself. It is more profound to learn in English than in Sepedi" (Student A)*

The statement highlights the intensity of disagreement and debate surrounding the issue of language choice in academic discourse and in terms of the appropriate medium of instruction. About 3 of the students felt this way.

8. Advantages of use of English.

There were some other positive statements regarding the continued use of English as a language of instruction and learning. These statements also seem to amount to some form of resistance to the sole use of Sepedi.

"English is better. It is an international language. I prefer English. Some concepts are expressed only in English. From primary we were using English. We grew up with English as the language of schooling. We can not just change now. Also there are the Venda, Zulu and Shangaani – they would not understand if lectures were conducted in Sepedi. For me English is the way forward as a language of education. Even in the workplace English is used. English is the best."

This statement took me by surprise. I was not expecting resistance to the use of Sepedi by Pedi students. Three students clearly preferred English as their choice of the schooling language at higher education. This interviewee continues:

I think coming to English … Because it has a lot of words than any other language in the world... I think that's why we use English. We can be able to communicate with other people from different …uhm... nations in English. Because I think the reason why from my own opinion…Why they make English a worldwide language if I may say that …Uhm…it's because we can easily learn, and easily... uhm…It is has lot of (inaudible) in it than any other language. So English for me is a very much preferred language. Any person could understand that language.

This student thinks English is rich in vocabulary having "*a lot of words*." Secondly it can be used to "*communicate with other people from different nations*." Thirdly, "*Any person could understand that language*"

More than half of the students expressed ambivalence towards English as they acknowledged (at the same time that they indicated preference for Sepedi) its potential to open doors its use as a lingua franca. Also two students perceived English as a unifying force – as a means of building a common culture. This is clearly exemplified in the comment,

"English unites us."

In the end the debate between Sepedi and English as a medium of learning, instruction, and assessment remained unresolved.

9. <u>General conclusions and discussion of data.</u>

In the following section I discuss the reflective pieces and focus group interview data relating the comments on the data to relevant literature. In relation to the theme of learning and understanding the following comments are made;

- The interview data in this section supports local and international research and literature on bilingual and multilingual education in which there seems to be a general consensus on the overriding value of the educational use of the primary or home language (mother-tongue).The literature suggests that the home language should not be abandoned early as

a language of learning and teaching. Many researchers and theorists concur on the cognitive, linguistic, affective and social benefits of bilingual education.

Baker (2006:288) claims academic empirical research supports strong forms of bilingual education where the home language is cultivated. Baker (2006) refers to the Threshold Theory (in Cummings, 1976) which summarizes the relationship between cognition and the degree of bilingualism. According to Baker (2006) research supports the Threshold Theory in that it was found that competence in mother tongue and a second language increased deductive powers in mathematics for example (Cummins, 2000). Hakuta's (1990) conclusions from a study in New Haven California involving Spanish mother tongue speakers calls for an emphasis on native instruction and the development of learners' first language and education. According to Hornberger (2003:323), who offers an international perspective, there is "developmental evidence that learners learn best from the starting point of their own languages."

- In relation to the points made above, evidence suggests that African languages do have a place in academia. The evidence suggests that learning should combine development of content knowledge in both languages.

In relation to the theme of pride and identity issues, I make the following point;

- The Sepedi lecture seemed to have induced a sense of pride in some students in their own language and it gave them a way of valuing the home language. In fact, Cummins (1986) recognizes that the success of bilingual education where the learner's primary language is emphasized may be due either to increased cognitive proficiency or to increased motivation because it improves confidence and self-esteem. Baker (1993:271) sees the loss of confidence in self, language, culture and home values as an indication for teaching multiculturalism explicitly.

In relation to the resistance to the sole use of Sepedi as an academic language I made the following observation;

- There is a perception among some students that it would be difficult if not impossible to teach in Sepedi at university, let alone translate teaching material into the language. The resistance is perhaps due to social attitudes and practices all in favor of English, as well as values and ideologies meant to maintain the status quo. Such learners appear to have internalized the perception that Sepedi cannot accommodate the demands of academic subjects.

4.3 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW (SEPEDI LECTURER)

This section presents the data from the individual interview with the Sepedi lecturer together with data from his reflective piece.

What follows is a presentation of the data from the lectures' comments under the following headings:

1. Interaction and participation
2. Learning and understanding
3. Code switching: Sepedi – English mix
4. Disadvantages of the Sepedi lecture
5. Affective factors

1. <u>Interaction and participation</u>

The lecturer was pleased with student levels of participation during his lecture. He felt that the use of Sepedi as an academic language made a difference to teaching, learning and understanding. In the interview he reveals that,

"I am certain that the students actually did understand ...ah...ah what was actually going on. I am positive given their participation and active involvement. As well the... like I told you earlier on... they were quite instrumental in reviving my own Sepedi vocabulary. So...So... they were also mediating, scaffolding each other and myself .....There was a cross-fertilization of ideas among the students themselves.

When they were discussing ...When I asked them to clarify certain concepts to certain other students who did not understand, I was queit convinced that they helped each other."

He adds that,

"Students were quite involved in the lesson, exuberantly participating in the discussions and also asking questions. The students themselves also confirmed at the end of the lesson that they found the lesson quite exciting and useful because they understood very well what was being taught."

The interview data above clearly supports student active participation and student talk as a useful and viable pedagogical practice. Even when they used Sepedi students were able to mediate each other. This evidence supports Rogoff, B's (2003) Vygotskian view that learners learn through their interaction with more skilled partners in the zone of proximal development. Street and Lea's (1998), claim that co-operative learning is a viable pedagogical practice. As already presented in the observation data and the students' interviews and reflective reports, there was collaborative learning when students unpacked English specialist / subject specific terms and helped each other with Sepedi translations. The aspect of collaborative learning worked very well in the Sepedi lesson according to the views expressed in the interview above. The lecturer is of the view that participation is important and that use of Sepedi improved didactic interaction.

2. <u>Learning and understanding</u>

The Sepedi lecturer was excited about the possibility of using Sepedi in the classroom and thought that,

"On the basis of what I saw in this particular lecture ...I really would believe that Sepedi has a place in academia."

He felt strongly that Sepedi should be given,

"...the right platform and space that English has enjoyed over many decades as a medium of instruction right across curricula and institutions, and it (Sepedi) will surely be useful as a language of instruction. In fact, any language can be developed to the level and "status" of English today."

Also clear is that the teacher himself was going through a learning process together in partnership with the students.

"... Like I told you earlier on... they were quite instrumental in reviving my own Sepedi vocabulary. So...So... they were also mediating, scaffolding each other and myself."

"Learning... was evident in the work...tasks that I at some stages asked them to engage with."

3. Code-switching: Sepedi – English mix

The lecturer admitted that code-switching was inevitable. The lecturer acknowledged that some concepts cannot be translated easily into English. For the lecturer this was a real challenge and limitation:

"I really used code-switching and mixing and mixing to some extent you know. I am not so sure how to put it because it could be one of two things. It could be that the terminology is missing in the Sepedi. It's not adequate enough that it matches the English vocabulary. Or as in the example I cited earlier on, I am as a teacher limited in the Sepedi vocabulary and I modified that saying if you contact Sepedi linguists you might find that the vocabulary is in abundance."

The lecturer felt he had no choice but to code-switch:

"I was bound to (code switch); because I was asked to teach "Communication Theory" in Sepedi, so I had to make sure that the students understood the concepts both in English and Sepedi."

"Finding words in Sepedi of the equivalent of the English concepts used in the course was a bit of a challenge. In other words, it was not always easy to translate certain English concepts into Sepedi."

The lecturer acknowledged that a lot of subject-specific terms and technical / specialist language cannot be translated into Sepedi .For example "stereotype", "self fulfilling prophesy", "perception", "communication theory", "frame of reference", "context" and "perceptual predisposition". This means that the specialist language of the subject in which the knowledge of the subject is embedded is lost if purely Sepedi is used instruction. This problem in my view means it is perhaps difficult to use purely Sepedi to acculturate students in disciplinary or subject discourses. The disciplinary jargon is lacking so this prevents students from using the literacy that is typical of Communication Studies and the subject community. Some of the comments from the lecturer's interview are telling,

"Some of the terminologies cannot be explained in Sepedi",

It would appear that, because of limitations in the use of specialist/technical terms of Communication Theory presented by Sepedi, it is difficult to talk about what counts as knowledge in physics using Sepedi.

The lecturer however perceives both English and Sepedi as useful languages of teaching and learning:

"*Both languages are useful as languages of teaching and learning – English because of its supposedly rich vocabulary, and Sepedi because of its accessibility because it is my mother tongue.*"

Clearly the teacher here sees code switching as a resource rather than a problem.

4. <u>Disadvantages of the Sepedi lecture</u>

The teacher acknowledged that there were some difficulties and challenges that he encountered:

"*The minor challenge I was faced with was finding the equivalents of some English concepts in Sepedi – minor because the students were themselves able to quickly identify the relevant Pedi jargon to match or at least come close to the English concepts*"

He continues that,

"*The other limitation that I might have had is that… although I'm actually a Sepedi speaker that doesn't mean or necessarily translate in …in you know to me being a Sepedi language expert .I'm not. So then I realized during the course of the lesson that Sepedi is limited to some extent …The students themselves were very quick to remind me of…of… certain Sepedi concepts when I was sort of wanting to find out, for instance, What is a stereotype .They were quick to say … what stereotype is, so that helped not to spend too much time trying to explain the concepts as opposed to actually teaching.*"

The lecturer as shown above felt his own Sepedi was inadequate for academic teaching purposes and that this may have had a disadvantage that valuable instruction time on content was spent unpacking the English meanings and contexts into the Sepedi instead of actually proceeding with the subject matter at hand. But I would argue that when" too much time" was spend "trying to explain concepts as opposed to actually teaching", it was perhaps advantageous to students as they were engaged in exploratory talk

5. <u>Affective factors</u>

The lecturer showed preference for Sepedi rather than English when it comes to teaching:

"*Given a chance I would prefer teaching in Sepedi. Even though there were minor challenges here and there relating to the jargon, I felt very much relaxed and at home in teaching in my home language.*"

The lecturer was "relaxed and at home" teaching in his mother tongue. This feeling is similar to the feeling expressed by the students when they typically revealed in their interview and reflective pieces that, "*We tend to be more comfortable when discussing (in Sepedi*)."

The lecturer is clearly proud of and identifies with his home language and is optimistic that it is a practical academic language. Baker (1993:271) sees the loss of confidence in self, language,

culture and home values as an indication for teaching multiculturalism explicitly. The Sepedi lecture seemed to have induced a sense of pride in the facilitator and in his own language and it gave him a way of valuing his home language which may have led to better facilitation.

Refer to Appendix 5 for a full transcription of the audio- recorded interview with the Sepedi lecturer.

4.4 SEPEDI LECTURER'S REFLECTIVE REPORT

Although the Sepedi lecturer was teaching in Sepedi for the first time, it would appear his appropriate and effective teaching methods may have ensured the lesson's success. In his facilitation, he was able to engage the students, mediating their learning and allowing them to mediate each other through exploratory talk. This way the students' cognitive skills and understanding of concepts were perhaps developed. This section presents data from the reflective report on the Sepedi lecture that the lecturer was requested to write. In it the lecture aptly alludes to in summary to the themes that emerged from his interview and the major learning events in the lesson as well as the whole research. The full text of his reflective paragraph is given below:

Hi bru, for me the responses(in my interview) above are the reflective report you require – so I will just pull them down here as follows:

The major highlight of the lesson for me was the enthusiasm with which the students were involved in and with the lecture. The minor challenge I was faced with was finding the equivalents of some English concepts in Sepedi – minor because the students were themselves able to quickly identify the relevant Pedi jargon to match or at least come close to the English concepts. With a bit of linguistical panel beating and polishing of especially the jargon by specialists/linguists Sepedi can definitely be used successfully as a medium of transmission for Communication. Even though there were minor challenges here and there relating to the jargon, I felt very much relaxed and at home in teaching in my home language. Sepedi should be given the right platform and space that English has enjoyed over many decades as a medium of instruction right across curricula and institutions and it (Sepedi) will surely be useful as a language of instruction. In fact, any language can be developed to the level and "status" that the English language is enjoying today. The very nature of the lesson itself dictated the use of mother tongue translation. Finding words in Sepedi of the equivalent of the English concepts used in the course was a bit of a challenge. In other words, it was not always easy to translate certain English concepts into Sepedi. However, the use of Sepedi as a medium of instruction made a difference because the students were quite involved in the lesson, exuberantly participating in the discussions and also asking questions. The students themselves also confirmed at the end of the lesson that they found the lesson quite exciting and useful because they understood very well what was being taught. Both languages are useful as languages of teaching and learning – English because of its supposedly rich vocabulary, and Sepedi because of its accessibility because it is my mother tongue.

Themes

The following themes are drawn from the reflective report above:

1. Participation; interaction and responsiveness
2. Code switching
3. Bilingual education
4. Affective factors
5. Pride and identity in use of mother tongue.

1. <u>Participation; interaction and responsiveness</u>

The lecturer highlights the students' '*enthusiasms*" and *"involvement*." He points out that when using Sepedi students "*were quite involved in the lesson, exuberantly participating in discussions and also asking questions."* This may have led to the exploratory talk and 'deep learning' alluded to in this whole research study. He is confident that students as a result understood and learnt. He writes, "*The students themselves also confirmed at the end of the lesson that they found the lesson quite exciting and useful because they understood very well what was being taught."*

2. <u>Code-switching</u>

It is apparent that code switching took place when the class had to translate English specialist terms into Sepedi equivalents. The lecturer admits that this was a challenge which was overcome when "*students were themselves able to quickly identify the relevant Pedi jargon to match or at least come close to the English concept."*

3. <u>Bilingual education</u>

The lecturer seems to see the use of both English and Sepedi as useful in academia and advocates for a bilingual form of education as he write, *"Both languages are useful as languages of teaching and learning – English because of its supposedly rich vocabulary and Sepedi because of its accessibility because it is my mother tongue".*

4. <u>Affective factors</u>

It would appear from the evidence that when Sepedi was used both the students and the lecturer felt the learning environment comfortable and pleasant. They both talk of being "*relaxed and at home*." This is contrast to students feeling of fear during English lectures.

5. <u>Pride and identity in use of mother tongue</u>

The Sepedi lecturer has obvious faith in the use of Sepedi as an academic language. He sees Sepedi as full of potential and promise in the future. He writes,

Sepedi should be given the right platform and space that English has enjoyed over many decades as a medium of instruction right across curricula and institutions and it (Sepedi) will surely be useful as a language of instruction. In fact, any language can be developed to the level and "status" that the English language is enjoying today With a bit

He suggests that there is need by stakeholders to make an effort to develop the language so that it can be used in higher domains like the instruction of Communication studies. He writes,

With a bit of linguistical panel beating and polishing of especially the jargon by specialists/linguists Sepedi can definitely be used successfully as a medium of transmission for Communication.

<u>Conclusion</u>

As a conclusion to this section the following comment is made:

- In the end the lecturer acknowledges that both languages English and Sepedi are useful "useful as languages of teaching and learning: English because of its supposedly rich vocabulary: and Sepedi because of its accessibility as my mother tongue". It would be my argument that, the most successful combination appears to be use of African languages for explanation and a mixture of African languages and English for complete learning. African languages can be used for clarifying, understanding, for visualization and identifying concepts. But use of African languages alone may not suffice since technical vocabulary is not always available. Some concepts do not seem possible without English which has the terminology as well as most of the books. But home languages help to frame the concept and internalize it, to put it in the students' own words yet technical \ specialist words may be lacking. This need not be an obstacle in the long run. As the teacher points out when he writes, "…*Any language can be developed to the level and "status" that the English language is enjoying today."* Wolff(1998) has similarly also pointed out that, "developed" languages like German and English itself, use loan translations for scientific words such as "oxygen", "nuclear fission" and "telephone."

CHAPTER 5

CONLUSIONS

1. **Participation and interaction**
2. **Learning and understanding**
3. **The power of English and resistance to Sepedi**
4. **Bilingual education and code switching**
5. **Interim literacies and mediation**
6. **Recommendations**
7. **Conclusion**

In this chapter I draw material together, summarize and comment upon the significance of my findings. The chapter also includes recommendations for further research as well as recommendations for policy and practice changes. I reflect on the extent to which the research project answered the two main research questions:

1. What happens in a Communication Theory lecture (course) when Sepedi is used to initiate students into the learning and discourse of Communication Studies in a first year university course?

2. To what extent is there a need to use English in the above course?

I identified various themes which pointed to the usefulness as well as disadvantages of using English and or Sepedi to develop academic discourse. While there are several overlaps in terms of the thematic categories of the findings, I have divided these up into six main aspects:

1. Participation and interaction
2. Learning and understanding
3. Bilingual education and code switching
4. Interim literacies and mediation
5. Recommendations
6. Conclusion

1.   Participation and interaction

For me the most interesting phenomenon was the ease with which the students interacted in the Sepedi lecture. I had always found them to be interactive during ordinary lessons, but there was more interaction in the Sepedi lesson. For instance the students became invested in trying to find

alternative meanings in Sepedi for technical subject specialist terms like "stereotype', "self-fulfilling prophesy", "context", "perception and communication". They brainstormed ideas and meanings together as a class which promoted "deep learning". In my view, the height of the learning experience during the Sepedi lecture was when the students, together with their lecturer, struggled in partnership to transfer knowledge from English into their own language and engaged in "exploratory talk". The interview data suggests that the enthusiasm generated fullness of participation and involvement in class activities. As one student commented, "*I was amazed by the level of participation.*" I too was surprised by the high levels of student involvement. The data suggests that the accommodation of African languages in instruction can enable meaningful exchanges and exploratory talk in classroom and facilitate mediation.

What is apparent from the observation data, interviews and reflective reports was that participation in the English lesson was not as lively and involving. This may suggest that use of English did not allow full access to successful learning as it excluded those for whom it is an additional language (L2) from full participation and success in their academic activities.

An emerging theme from the interview and reflective reports data is the 'fear factor'. In the interviews and reflective reports students allude to their fear of participating during the English lesson lest they be laughed at for making grammatical errors. The classroom may have become a site of potential humiliation. Perhaps students were alienated from learning because of the fear which explains their silences.

Also the 'silence' in the English lecture may mean that I (the English lecturer) was unaware of the levels of difficulty that students were facing. This can lead to a serious gap in communication between the lecturer and students. In such situations the result may be that concepts are likely to remain unclear. Less 'talk' and involvement can hamper development of academic discourse.

This data suggests that the use of Sepedi (African languages) in the classroom can play an invaluable role in bridging the gap for students who are struggling at first year level.

2.   <u>Learning and understanding</u>

The reflective reports and interview data suggest that difficulty with the common medium of instruction (English) may be a major factor impeding students' progress in academic learning. (See Chapter 5: 5.3) A typical comment from the interview data is "*Sometimes when I learn in English I don't understand.*" Such evidence suggests a learning link between language proficiency and the understanding of concepts. English only, it seems, places considerable burdens on students who have an African language as their first language. The implication is that the use of an African language may give students access to academic success. It may give students who have English as an additional language the right and opportunity to speak and participate and therefore to learn in a meaningful way as when students translated English terms into Sepedi. Cummins and Swain (1986) argue that the promotion of mother- tongue facilitates learning. The mother tongue allows students to understand and manipulate academic language. It is possible that Sepedi can be equipped to be used as a language of tuition but to a limited extent. In trying to find Sepedi equivalents of specialist and technical terms in Communication Theory, the students became 'wordsmiths' in the art of communication. This resulted in greater familiarity with some of the concepts which in turn facilitated understanding. More than this, it appears to have it assisted students to become familiar with the type of thinking they are required to demonstrate in the discipline.

Cummins' notion of academic language proficiency, particularly the idea that knowledge in the home language is transferable to the additional language is relevant here. Cummins' distinction between the 'conversational' basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and the cognitively demanding academic language proficiency (CALP), together with his notion of a common underlying proficiency (CUP) contributes to the argument that African learners should be taught in the mother tongue even at tertiary level.

3. <u>The power of English and resistance to Sepedi</u>

However, there were one or two students who indicated in their reflective pieces and interview responses a resistance to the use of Sepedi in academia. Such students clearly did not want to be taught in that language. (See Chapter 5 section 5.3.7),

The English lesson is far much better than the Sepedi one because you don't have to crack your head wanting to translate words because they explain themselves in English. I preferred the English rather than the Sepedi lesson. It is more profound to learn in English

There is also a perception among some students that it would be difficult if not impossible to teach in Sepedi at university level, let alone translate teaching material into the language. This resistance may be due to social attitudes and practices all in favor of English, as well as values and ideologies meant to maintain the status quo. Heugh (2000) and Alexander's (2000) ideas on the power of English are relevant here. Some learners appear to have internalized the perception that Sepedi cannot accommodate the demands of academic subjects. One could argue that such perceptions as exemplified above are evidence of the dominance an exerting power of English which marginalizes and 'inferiorises' African languages as unsuitable for use in academia. The privileged status of English is clearly established. However, some people could argue that it is every student's democratic right to be taught in the language of their choice. Asked if they thought Sepedi can work as an academic language in higher education most replied, *"It's okay but…"*

One student comments,

English… has a lot of words than any other language in the world… I think that's why we use English. We can be able to communicate with other people from different …uhm... nations in English... from my own opinion... English is a worldwide language. So English for me is a very much preferred language. Any person could understand that language.

4. <u>Bilingual education and code switching</u>

Through an analysis of reflective pieces, interviews and class observation the research demonstrates that code switching can be a tool for learning. The research suggested that the more students can discuss something whether in English or Sepedi, the more they will master the topic. A typical comment from the data is:

I think learning communication in our home language should be considered by the university …The challenge is translating some terms from English to Sepedi, but I think combining Sepedi and English would be an advantage." (Student D)

Through code-switching, language becomes a tool and aid to learning. The focus is removed from grammatical correctness. Both languages are used for exploratory and communicative purposes. Code-switching can guide interpretation of concepts and enable students to voice difficulty and participate in class to gain the required academic discourse. It can act as

'scaffolding'. I would therefore argue in favour of using the languages the students bring to the learning environment as a resource. Sepedi and English can both be used productively. Both languages remain available to aid students' learning. The question is how much of each language should be used and for what purpose.

English has developed a wide range of academic terminologies as well as many books and the literature is extensive – but Sepedi can help to frame the concepts and internalize them to put them in the student's own words. Specialist or subject specific terms for academic subject are not always available in Sepedi. The Sepedi lecturer aptly expresses this in his reflective report:

Both languages are useful as languages of teaching and learning – English because of its supposedly rich vocabulary, and Sepedi because of its accessibility because it is my mother tongue.

The fact that technical specialist words may be lacking in Sepedi need not be an obstacle in the long run. As the Sepedi lecturer points out when he writes "…*Any language can be developed to the level and status that the English language enjoys today*." Wolff (1998) has similarly also pointed out that, "developed" languages like German and English itself, use loan translations for scientific words such as "oxygen", "nuclear fission" and "telephone".

Also code-switching may have ensured that students were 'comfortable' with the language of the classroom. Code-switching could have made learning less threatening, thus reducing the fear factor. This may in turn have led to more confidence, higher self esteem and more relaxation on the part of students. I would argue that the use of Sepedi in the English classroom can 'refresh' and 'remotivate'. It may also break down barriers to learning.

5. Interim literacies and mediation

The data appears to support the notion of "interim literacies" and suggests that Sepedi and other African languages have the potential to help learners learn. Sepedi can be a 'bridge' to the development of academic literacy. Moragh Paxton (2007) has developed the notion of 'interim literacies' which was explored in a research project conducted at the University of Cape Town to investigate "*the intersection of academic discourse and student voice*". For Paxton, 'Interim Literacies' are a reflection of a transition process from school and home to academic literacy. Paxton highlights the fact that many of the students for whom English is an additional language

(EAL) find their own familiar discourses at odds with that of dominant discourses of the academy. In making a transition from one to the other is a struggle and that spoken discourses from a deeply imbedded cultural tradition can impact on their present acquisition of academic discourse. I have found this notion of 'interim literacies' to be of particular relevance to my research on the extent to which a mother tongue and therefore 'embedded' language like Sepedi, which is related to the notion of identity and the 'idea of who you are', can be used by students who have it as a home language to acquire academic discourse.

6. Recommendations

In relation to the whole research project I would make the following recommendations:

- Institutions need to support African languages (in this case Sepedi) as a language of accessing academic discourse;

- The most successful combination appears to be for instruction to take place in English with explanation in African languages when required. A mixture of English and Sepedi appears to be a viable alternative for the purposes of learning and teaching. Sepedi could be used for clarifying, for confirmation, understanding visualizing and identifying concepts. In this way knowledge is mediated. Once students have understood a topic in Sepedi, they are likely to transfer this knowledge to the discourse of the subject and could perhaps perform better in their assessments even if they are in English. The translations of subject specific terms in the Sepedi lesson support this view. The English / Sepedi mix gives students a way of testing their understanding;

- Where possible brighter competent or post-graduate students can co-teach (using African languages) in tutorials with lecturers and thus mediate those other students who struggle with English. Rochelle Kapp (1998) argues for the acknowledgement of the languages of students as a resource for learning. As a model for how this might happen, she describes the University of Cape Town's EAL (English as an Additional Language) system of team-teaching in which tutors and students use code-switching during tutorials, as a tool for learning. A similar system has been adopted in some departments at the University of Johannesburg. Such a system could generate discussion which in turn will enable students to appreciate multiple perspectives and give space to students' voices;

- There is need for well-trained bilingual teachers and mediators to facilitate transfer of knowledge between additional languages like English and home languages like Sepedi;

- Educators could go as far as allowing students to speak, respond, revise and reflect in their home languages and then ask for translations from the linguistically proficient or competent students. Classroom practice could 'aspire' to developing learners' ability to mediate between the different perspectives and different meanings born of two languages and cultures – a capability far beyond a monolingual native speaker.' (Kern, 2000:305);

- Even monolingual lecturers could make an effort to incorporate some elements of African languages into their lessons. Even greetings in the home language of students may make students feel more comfortable. The 'affective factors' which emerged in the data suggest that students were 'feeling at home' and 'relaxed' using their mother tongue. This may be conducive to the learning environment. Lecturers could acknowledge and promote different home languages spoken by learners in their classes. Lessons can be designed to affirm all their learners' languages. The findings of this research suggest that when this is done, learning improves and even the quiet and reserved learners start to contribute more substantially to class activities;

- Students could be encouraged to form organized study groups in which they use their home languages for exploratory discussions. Perhaps these should be formally constituted. It would be useful if they were structured as a workshop in which learners interact, analyze, comment and engage each other around various academic related texts and topics. Study groups could also be constituted in such away they allow for negotiation of meaning.

7. Conclusion

I would like to conclude by pointing out a limitation in the research project in terms of its scope. The research, though bilingual in approach, was conducted in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural learning environment. The research could be replicated only in certain parts of South Africa where there is one dominant African language. For example in Limpopo, where at the University of Limpopo, Ramani (2007) and her colleagues have been involved in ground breaking research in which Sotho was used as medium of instruction in a Bachelor of Arts programme. Similarly replication is possible in KwaZulu Natal where the main African language is Zulu or in the Eastern and Western Cape where Xhosa is dominant. Universities in South Africa are increasingly becoming diverse, multi- lingual and multi-cultural. This means there are more challenges in diverse contexts such as Gauteng. This is a limitation for this project as more research is needed in this kind of context.

A detailed and wider study focusing on multilingualism and cognition in institutions of higher learning is necessary. Further research could be useful to record lessons and see how multiple languages and English interacted in problem solving. Then, students involved would need to be tracked to monitor how this interaction changed them and if it led to success.

In conclusion, a mixture of African languages and English involving code-switching and mixing may have pedagogical advantages. African languages are not yet ready for use, in their pure state, as academic languages of instruction; learning and assessment. Language experts and applied linguists still need to develop African languages to their full potential. Such a development can only become possible if money and funding is made available. Willpower and motivation from various stakeholders including institutions of higher education is also required. The development of Afrikaans as an academic language and its use at higher education institutions like the Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg) is clear testimony that "where there is a will there is a way". In the interim, code-switching and mixing appear important for tuition especially given that students who use English as a second or additional language struggle with proficiency in English. The findings suggest that an 'English only' curriculum can be a barrier to access and success in higher education.

 South African languages can 'work together'. I would like to end by referring to Vygostky and suggesting that it is possible, for learning and teaching purposes, to create a 'combination' of two or more languages for example. According to Lantolf (2000), "*Vygostky views language as an artifact which is continuously remolded by its users to serve their communities and their psychological needs*." Language is but an artifact which should serve our interests. Bilingual education which accommodates code-switching and learning, or better still, multilingual education can cater for our linguistic diversity and serve our learning, teaching and assessment needs at higher education, not only in Communication Theory but in other subjects and disciplines.

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Appendix 1: Permission to conduct research

UNIVERSITY
OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

School of Education
Department of Applied English Language Studies

The Head of Department
Department of Applied Communicative Skills
Faculty of Humanities
University of Johannesburg

Request for permission to conduct research

My name is __Simbayi Yafele_____, and I am conducting research for the purposes of Masters of Arts in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is investigating the practicability and viability of using an African language (Sepedi) as medium of instruction ,learning and assessment in a humanities subject (Communication) and how this African language compares to English as an academic language. I would like to request permission to conduct this research in the Applied Communicative Skills Department in the second semester of 2008.

The overall objective of the research is to explore the extent to which an African language (Sepedi) can be used as an academic language in a humanities subject in a tertiary institution and how well it works in comparison to English in :

- instruction, learning and assessment
- transmission of the discourse of the subject
- its viability as an academic language of pedagogy in Communication Theory

 Participation in this study would entail: a group and individual interviews with selected students (fluent in English and Sepedi) as well as an interview with their Communication Skills lecturer and observation of two double lectures in theory related aspects of communication. One of the lectures will be conducted in Sepedi and the other in English. I would like to video record the class observations and audio record the interviews as well as collect samples of work. Reflective reports and any form of formative assessment exercises and assessment tasks will be collected from the participants. Towards the end of my research, I will also hold discussions with some , if not all of the participants to verify my interpretations and conclusions.

I will seek permission form the participants. At no stage in the research will the identities of the institution, any staff or students be identified. The research participants referred to will be given pseudonyms. You may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time. I would be happy to answer any questions relating to the proposed research project and to address a committee if necessary. My contact details are given below. Alternatively you can contact my supervisor, Ms Stella Granville, Applied English Language Studies, School of Education at Stella.Granville@wits.ac.za or telephone number 011 717 3186.

If you are willing to grant permission for the research to be conducted, please sign in the space below.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Simbayi Yafele
076 539 4390
011 559 6377

The signature below grants permission for the abovementioned research to be carried out.

………………………………   ………………………………
Representative of the Applied Communicative   Date
Skills Department. Faculty of Humanities.

Appendix 2: Participant (Subject) Information Sheet

School of Education
Department of Applied English Language Studies

Dear participant

My name is __Simbayi Yafele_____, and I am conducting research for the purposes of Masters of Arts in Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite you to participate a research project I am conducting in the second semester of 2008. in this research I am interested in investigating the practicability and viability of using an African language (Sepedi) as medium of instruction ,learning and assessment in a humanities subject (Communication) and how this African language compares to English as an academic language.

The overall objective of the research is to explore the extent to which an African language (Sepedi) can be used as an academic language in a humanities subject in a tertiary institution and how well it works in comparison to English in :

- instruction, learning and assessment
- transmission of the discourse of the subject
- its viability as an academic language of pedagogy in Communication Theory

 With your permission, I would like to conduct group and individual interviews related to the study with you and observe you in two double lectures in theory related aspects of communication. One of the lectures will be conducted in Sepedi and the other in English. I would like to video record the class observations and audio record the interviews as well as collect samples of work. Reflective reports and any form of formative assessment exercises and assessment tasks papers will be collected .Finally at the end of my research, I would like to meet with some , if not all of you so that you may contribute to my interpretations and conclusions.

Your name will not be recorded in any way and you will be given a pseudonym when I write my research. You can change your mind about participation and withdraw from this research at any time. You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you do not want to take part.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me for clarification. I will be willing to explain things in more detail if you wish.

Attached to this letter are four different forms where you can give permission to participate in different activities or not. Please fill in your name for the different activities you agree to and leave it blank for those you do not wish to participate.

Yours sincerely
Simbayi Yafele
076 539 4390
011 559 6377

Appendix 3a: Consent Form (Interview)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by ___Simbayi Yafele_____ for his/her study on _the viability of African languages (in comparison to English) as mediums of instruction and learning. I understand that:
-          Participation in this interview is voluntary.
-          That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
-          I may withdraw from the study at any time.
-          No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed _____ Date

Appendix 3b: Consent Form (audio-recording)

I _____ consent to my interview with ____Simbayi Yafele_____ for his/her study on the viability of African languages (in comparison to English) as mediums of instruction and learning being audio-recorded . I understand that:
-          The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organization at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher.
-          All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
-          No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed--   Date-------------------------------

Appendix 3c: Consent Form (video-recording class observations)

I _____ consent to my participation in a lecture observed by __Simbayi Yafele for his/her study on the viability of African languages (in comparison to English) as mediums of instruction and learning being   video-recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person other than the researcher and his supervisors any time
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed--   Date-------------------------------

Appendix 3d: Consent form (collection of artifacts)

I _____ consent to _____   using artifacts that I produce as part of his study on the viability of African languages (in comparison to English) as mediums of instruction and learning. I understand that:

- 'artifacts' include reflective reports on the research project and any assessment material stemming from the lectures which are part of the research. .

- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report and my writing will remain confidential.

Signed--   Date-------------------------------

Appendix 4

Focus group interview

<u>Parts of Interview with students after Sepedi lecture</u>

<u>Were you able to fully and freely participate in class discussions?</u>

Tlou: Yes. Like I said before it was easier for me to speak… participate in Sepedi than in English. I don't have any… fear. I can say anything what I want. It was very much good.

Malele: The vocabulary you see… When you are speaking in your mother tongue, you feel you thoughts…the way you see things…unlike in English… where you get stuck. You run out of words. I mean …You want to say…I mean you want to say something the way you see it. But I mean the words…They are not there. And in the end you say something different. You end up saying what you didn't mean to say.

<u>Did you code-switch and mix? Mix English and Sepedi? Why?</u>

Malele: Yes. Because each and every language…I mean …How do I put it…depends on other languages. In order for English to be where it is now… it's because they have taken other words form other languages. Just like in Sepedi we also take words from other languages. So we had to borrow. It's just a way of communicating and learning.

"

Thabiso: English is better. It is an international language. I prefer English. Some concepts are expressed only in English. From primary we were using English. We grew up with English as the language of schooling. We can not just change now. Also there are the Venda, Zulu and Shangaani – they would not understand if lectures were conducted in SeSotho. For me English is the way forward as a language of education. Even in the workplace English is used. English is the best."

I think coming to English … Because it has a lot of words than any other language in the world… I think that's why we use English. We can be able to communicate with other people from different …uhm... nations in English. Because I think the reason why from my own opinion…Why they make English a worldwide language if I may say that …Uhm…it's because we can easily learn, and easily… uhm…It is has lot of (inaudible) in it than any other language. So English for me is a very much preferred language. Any person could understand that language.

Tlou: I agree with him, but I don't agree with him. (Laughter).The reason being …first English is a good language. If we can communicate with everybody, you can go anywhere in the world. You can easily communicate with other people. But when we come to the learning process it's based on understanding. Of course English you can teach it as a subject. We can learn it left and right, but now when we come to understanding and learning in your own language and understanding so that we can apply it and…(inaudible) you know in the industry. I once went to work at a plant. Communication is not much important, but what you do…know…is much important. What you do depends on how much you understand. So if you understand that in Communication like myself (if) I understand better in Sepedi. I can even try to explain it in Xhosa or Zulu because I think I know Zulu a bit. And I can even try to explain it in Venda. I can…can explain it. If you understand it (something) then you know it. Understanding it is very important to understand first.

Malele: Countries like China. They use their mother tongues even in parliament they use their mother tongue. They have got translators. They translate into English. Why can't we do that? We are a big country. Why can't we speak (use) our own languages and show our own… (Inaudible)

Tlou: If you can look at that .If you can look at China. They very much produce. There is much production and its not based on language its based on understanding…because…They are so much creative because they are not limited. You can't say some things. Say if I have I have an idea now say if… you uhm …. Want to add this ideas and I want to

put it across…I can put better in my mother tongue. So its better …. (Laughter) If you want to talk you can talk. So I think its very much easy.

Thabiso: Well its not based on understanding. I think understanding is something else. Because why English… (Inaudible). Someone comes to me and asks 'I did not understand what the lecturer meant in the lecturer' Even in your own language there are there are concepts you cannot easily understand….What is happening here and there coz...

Malele: If you don't understand. You can never go anywhere without understanding. You know what I mean?

Tlou: You have to understand before you can explain anything to anyone. Because what I realized especially in Engineering is that most of us when we come to a definition of something you just take it the way it is…like even if you don't understand it. As long as the lecturer says it is going to be in an exam, you just take it as it is. You don't even care what…like… how much you can apply it to the real world. That why you feel like when we graduate you go there (to work) just like every Monday you gonna start learning everything…again… from scratch. Because here we are taught in English – you are just writing to pass. But when you get to the plant (I have been there) – you just start to learn new things. Things like the Engineering Council of South Africa. Everything is just new to you .Here we are writing to pass. The most important thing is understanding. Students who learn in their own language…they have an advantage. They easily explain what is happening. Therefore we have to understand to take things as they are.

Malele: This is…I mean we are trying to develop our country .And if we don't have those people with knowledge and understanding…I mean where do we see ourselves in 20 years time.

Tlou: When you work there in the plant (I am speaking form experience now) they are not going to ask you definitions those that they ask you at university. You have to apply your knowledge. For you to apply the knowledge you need to understand. (General agreement from the rest of class).Ja…So I think understanding is the most important thing.

Creating a new academic language .Hybrid of S.A languages

Malele: NO….Its going to be very difficult to mix languages. Like when you go to Spain you find the whole country speaks Spanish. It becomes very easy to apply Spanish in the class. We have students in our classes who only understand Xhosa or Zulu. It wouldn't make sense to mix languages. But if we were in countries like Japan where all of them speak Japanese it would make sense. But for South Africa, it is really going to be difficult. To create a language it will take years and years.

Tlou: If you can look at South Africa before 1994…I think Afrikaans was the only official language .But form 1994 there was more of English which was also difficult for us... but we also managed to learn it. So since we have all those cultures in South Africa , I think it is possible to use all languages. Maybe Pedi people can lecture in Pedi and Zulu people they can lecture in Zulu. So I think its possible but its just expensive to use your mother tongue.

   WE need English just to know how to communicate with other cultures- in a multicultural, multilingual society. But you need to understand what you are doing so that when you understand you can apply. Then you can communicate with others. You can go to Arabia- speak in English and you will explain what you understood in your own language.

Malele: That will give you a chance to take English out of the way.

Dominic: Here in South Africa we have so many lecturers who came here without understanding English. They first had to learn English maybe in 3 months. They had the knowledge. As long as you can learn the basics and you can explain what you know… it becomes easy for students to understand. Even if (the lectures) they cannot pronounce the words well I still get what they want to say. They know what they are talking about. If you can explain that is fine.

Tlou: I want to give an example. Right now in South Africa we have a soccer coach who is not South African. He can not even speak English. But he has the knowledge and this understanding which is very much important. Here in South Africa he is applying his knowledge. There is someone who is translating. To show that the understanding is very important, he is talking about what he understands. So it shows that with your understanding you have everything. You conquer. You can go anywhere in the world and you will still be successful.

<u>What challenges did you face as a learner learning in you first language</u>

Mmopi: In my own language, I understood it. I did not have any challenges (laughter)
I don't think I had any challenges, problems or difficulties learning in Sepedi.

Tumi: I think translating other words from English to Sepedi was difficult. Because there are some words that you can find in English but in Sepedi they are not there.
Tlou: There is mainly the challenge of translation but everything was fine.

Thabiso: The words, translating them form English to Sepedi was a challenge. It was difficult.

Dominic: Translating these words was a big problem but the concepts were understood.

<u>Can Sepedi work as an Academic language?</u>

Malele: For Communication Theory it can work, but we are not sure about other subjects.

Tlou: It can work but there are those words in English which we cannot explain in Pedi.

Appendix 5

<u>Parts of interview with Sepedi lecturer</u>

<u>Teaching Difficulties</u>

Motopi: Teaching difficulties? I wouldn't…I wouldn't …wouldn't say I experienced or encountered any. Would that refer to things like methodology and so on and so on. No. I wouldn't say I had any difficulties.

<u>Preference of teaching language</u>

Motopi: I would prefer to teach in Sepedi.It was my first experience, but I would say given a   chance I would prefer Sepedi.

<u>Code switching and mixing</u>

Motopi : We.. We…I really used code-switching and mixing and mixing to some extent you know. The terminology in vernacular …in Sepedi and that ..I am not so sure how to put it because it could be one of two things.It could be that the terminology in vernacular .. is missing in the Sepedi.Its not adequate enough that it matches the English vocabulary. Or as in the example I cited earlier on, I am as Motopi limited in the Sepedi vocabulary and I modified that saying if you contact Sepedi linguists you might find that the vocabulary is in abundance.

<u>Sepedi can develop?</u>

<u>Motopi</u> : If you look at the way that the English language has developed over the years…English is regarded today as the international language.Surely there was a beginning of some sort.I yhink the most important thing is the will power on the part of the people concerned about the particular language.If the will power is there….(inaudible)

<u>Hybridity – possibility of developing a new academic language. A mixture of South African languages</u>

<u>Motopi</u>: All languages ..most languages develop that way.You should be aware of Fanakalo.Its actually a language that is used for communication purposes by the people who come from different backgrounds in the mines and the job environment where there is no specific language.They just coin.There is a coinage of bits and pieces from different languages and that's actually a language people are able to understand and communicate with.

You know the concept of …Creoles …pigeon English in Nigeria. Its hybrid English.There are even terms specific to pigeon English. But different…

The point I am wanting to make is, if you want to work on Fanakalo and polish it and refine it, you ca actually come up with Fanakalo as a language that can be used for academic purposes.I actually want to believe that… Sepedi as well is a language that I think could be …(inaudible) as long as there is will power and there are people who actually want to work on it,it can be used for academic purposes.You must remember as well that languages actually develop on the basis of… they steal words from other languages in order to enrich themselves. So… it could actually go a long way Sepedi if the need exists.

<u>Challenges you faced in using Sepedi in instruction –The two most important</u>

Motopi : Its exactly the one we have been harping over .The one about the vocabulary. I wouldn't think of a second but… (inaudible)

TEACHING?

Motopi : I din't encounter any problems worth mentioning.

Did the students learn –Grasp concepts?

Motopi: In terms of teaching I did not experience any problem.I don't think there was any problem.I am quiet certain that the students actually did understand …ah…ah what was actually going on.I am positive given their participation and active involvement. As well the… like I told you earlier on… they were quite instrumental in reviving my own Sepedi vocabulary.So…So… they were also mediating, scaffolding each other and myself…..There was a cross-fertilisation of ideas among the students themselves.

Learning… that was quiet evident in the work…tasks that I at some stage asked them to engage with. When they were discussing amount themselves…(inaudible) Because of the lesson…. When I asked them to clarify certain concepts to certain people that were not understanding, I was quiet convinced that they helped each other…

Do you feel the use of Sepedi as a medium of instruction made a difference to teaching and learning? Why do you feel ?

Motopi: Ja… You see I only had these students today. So I don't have their backgrounds as to how they learn in other languages and so on and so forth. I actually never taught them… them in English, so that I would be in a position to compare learning in another language to what is happening in Sepedi.

But on the basis of what I saw in this particular lesson today I…I…I really would believe that Sepedi has a place in academia.

Recommendations ?

Motopi: Uhm…What would I say ? I would say …yes…To see how people – those that are interested in developing African languages would sort of explore these kind of possibilities to see if indeed there could be a…a…a language – an alternative language that could be used in academia as opposed to… as an addition to English or Afrikaans

Teaching – were you explicit – was explicitness achieved ?

Motopi: From my point of view I tried as much as I possibly could to be explicit but I think the students are the ones who should answer that question better.

Can the expicitness you achieved be possible in a more technical subject like Physics or Chemistry ?

Motopi : It goes back to what we have been saying. We need linguists and language experts to refine our language.Or…or…to make available the necessary vocabulary that is needed. That can be done. Once that is done this language can be used as medium of instruction for physics, chemistry or whatever.

The only challenge at the moment is finding equivalent concepts or vocabulary in Sepedi… in our own vernacular language.

Do you feel that you spend most of the time debugging the meaning (unpacking)than effecting the lesson.Was a higher percentage of the lesson spend on debugging the meaning and the context of the English context into Sepedi (translating and finding the Sepedi equivalent) than actually proceeding with the lesson and subject matter under concern.

Motopi: It's a good question.No. We didn't spend….You know I'm not so sure if we… You heard what I mentioned that… the limitation.The other limitation that I might have had is that…I'm not … although I'm actually a Sepedi speaker that doesn't mean or necessarily translate in …in you know to me being a Sepedi language expert .I'm not. So…then… I realized during the course of the lesson that Sepedi is limited to some extent because you know…The students themselves were very quick to remind me of…of… certain Sepedi concepts when I was sort of wanting to find out , for instance, What is a stereotype .They were quick to say … what stereotype is, so that heped not to spend too much time trying to explain the concepts as opposed to actually teaching.

<u>The population of Sepedi speaking people</u>

Motopi: I don't know. I know that most Sepedi speakers are in Limpopo.We are talking of a population of about 5 to 6 million. But we don't want to assume that Sepedi speakers are only in Limpopo. But Sepedi is widely spoken in Johannesburg.

<u>Why is Sepedi not used in Universities?</u>

Motopi: I wouldn't be in a position to speak on behalf of universities. But it may be also be because … explained around social hierarchies in which English is more important… even its values. That influences academic languages … even in the workplace where meeting are not conducted in African languages. It all goes to show the power of English. Because of social values that are associated with English …it naturally finds itself as the preferred language in academia and in the workplace. Its more of social values than policy issues.

Lear (fellow lecturer):   It is also an issue with the lecturers themselves because at times it is very difficult to get lecturers who will conduct… like you said you had limitations in vocabulary.Even in Afrikaans some lecturers cannot conduct classes in Afrikaans.There is only on lecturer in our department who speaks Afrikaans, so it is also a matter of shortage of resources…of manpower.

Motopi : If we can overcome some of those impediments to learning … then learning becomes accessible to everyone.