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A case study of the English language practices of six learners in a desegregated urban South African school.

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CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the theoretical framework of my study as well as a review of literature pertinent to my study. I present in this chapter the two main strands of my Research Report. First is the post-structuralist theorising of language and identity. I draw on post-structuralist theory in conceptualizing the relationship between language and identity, emphasizing 'the productive force of language in constituting identity rather than identity being a pregiven construct that is reflected in language use' (Pennycook, 2004: 13). Following Pennycook (2004) and Weedon (1997), I will argue that post-structuralism offers a significant alternative way of thinking about language and identity from the way in which it has been conceived in traditional sociolinguistics. I also draw on the hybridity theories of Bhabha (1994) and Hall (1992b) that highlight the fluidity of identity formation in postmodern (poststructuralist) thinking (May, 1999) and their critiques (May, 1999; Coombes and Brah, 2000; McKinney, 2003) in thinking about the fluid notions of cultural and 'racial' identity and in interrogating the concept of the border and processes of cultural contestation and appropriation (Coombs and Brah, 2000). I also follow Davis and Harré's theorising of positioning in explaining ways in which language is a site where learners construct and imagine themselves and others as language users (Davis and Harré, 1990). Significant for my study is the theorising by Bonny Norton (Pierce), who has also worked within the in the post-structuralist tradition, of the notion of *investment* that signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language or the language being learned (1995; 1997). The notion of *investment* is more useful in this study than the notion of 'motivation' drawn from Social Psychology that has been used in quantifying a learners' commitment to learning a target language.

Also significant in this chapter is Pierre Bourdieu's theorising of notions of 'capital' and 'symbolic power' in thinking of the relationship between language and power. Bourdieu's work is of importance to my study for its recognition of:

> the complicated ways in which linguistic practices and products are caught up in, and moulded by, the forms of power and inequality which are pervasive features of societies as they actually exist. (Bourdieu, 1991: 1-2).

The second major strand of the research report is a discussion of the politics of English as a global language and language of power. I will discuss Robert Phillipson's notion of 'linguistic imperialism' and Alistair Pennycook's notion of 'the worldliness of English'. The discussion of these concepts is of particular relevance to my study as it places my interest in the English language practices of learners and how they position themselves and others in relation to language within a global social, cultural, economic and historical context. Further, I discuss the power and global spread of as well as the indigenization of English. I also discuss multilingualism and the 'investment' in English. A discussion of multilingualism and 'investment' in English is relevant in placing my interest in English language practices and learners' positioning of themselves and others as users of English and other languages within specific social, institutional and policy contexts.

2.2 'Capital' and Symbolic Power

The contribution of the theoretical work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to the social sciences has been immense. In trying to understand the English language practices of learners attending a desegregated school in South Africa, I draw upon Bourdieu's notions of 'capital' especially 'cultural capital', 'symbolic capital', 'linguistic capital' and the notion of 'symbolic power'. Though Bourdieu's terms such as 'capital', 'market', and 'profit' are borrowed from the language of economics, his analysis is by no means 'economic' in the narrow sense of the word (Bourdieu, 1991: 14-15).

Central to Bourdieu's work is the notion of 'capital' or the resource, which is taken to be 'an index of the relative social power' (Hodgson, 2002:14), whose possession enables one to maintain a position in the status hierarchy of society and enables one to resist domination in social relations (Blunden, 2004). 'Cultural capital' is concerned with forms of cultural knowledge, skills, concepts or dispositions that are valued in dominant discourses (Bourdieu, 1993). Bourdieu sees 'cultural capital' as:

> a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts (Bourdieu, 1993:7).

Acquisition of cultural capital is through a long process of familial education, societal education and institutional education. 'Symbolic capital', on the other hand, is that form of capital constituted by 'accumulated prestige or honour' (Bourdieu, 1991:14). The value of symbolic capital is legitimated by people or institutions through the conferring of prestige. The notion of 'Linguistic capital' is taken to mean the capacity to produce utterances appropriate for particular contexts or markets. Given a linguistic market:

> some products are valued more than others; and part of the practical competence of speakers is to know how, and to be able to produce expressions which are highly valued on the market concerned (Bourdieu, 1991:18).

Bourdieu recognizes that linguistic competence by speakers in any given society is not uniformly distributed for 'different speakers possess different quantities of "linguistic capital"' (Bourdieu, 1991:18). Scholars have stated that English in South Africa currently enjoys a higher status than other languages do (Granville *et al*, 1998; Mda, 2004). As a result of this value placed on English, the capacity to produce competent utterances in English endows one with possible advantages (education, prestige, power, wealth) that are denied to speakers of other languages or those seen to have a 'deficient' competence in English. Differences in the usage of English in terms of accents and varieties become one of the ways of classification or labelling of people. The highly favoured variety is determined by the dominant social group and entrance into the dominant group is determined by the extent of assimilation to the discourse of this group.

Another important concept for Bourdieu is the notion of 'field' that refers to the social contexts (e.g. family and community structures, educational institutions and systems) in which human activity is situated (Bourdieu, 1991:14; Hodgson, 2002). The field is seen as a 'site of struggles' for the distribution of different kinds of 'capital'. Different

fields have specific forms of capital they value and the contestation for this capital is usually for the purpose of maintaining the status quo or indeed attempting to effect change. The notion of 'capital' as an index of relative social power is an important one for my study not only in interrogating the position of English vis-à-vis other South African official languages in a desegregated school space, but also in examining the relative prestige of the different South African varieties of English such as White South African English (WSAfE) and Black South African English (BSAfE).

Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic power' does not make reference to a specific type of power but rather 'to an aspect of most forms of power as they are routinely deployed in social life' (Bourdieu, 1991:23). This 'symbolic power' which is closely intertwined with but not reducible to economic and political power is meant to serve a legitimating function (Bourdieu, 1993:2). For Bourdieu symbolic power is an 'invisible' power whose legitimation depends on the 'shared belief' in the legitimacy of the power by those who wield it and those who are subjected by it (Bourdieu, 1991:23; 169-170). There is a suggestion here of some kind of 'active complicity' by those who are subjected to this power as, for it to be successful, 'those subjected to it believe in the legitimacy of power and the legitimacy of those who wield it' (1991:23). The notion of 'symbolic power' is important in understanding, among other things, the power English has in South Africa in relation to other languages and the role(s) of different players (learners, parents, teachers, administrators) and phenomena (e.g. colonialism and apartheid) in this linguistic matrix. Scholars such as Versfeld point out that a number of 'African language speakers moving into English first language schools are also shying away from their own languages which they are learning to regard as inferior or useless' (1995:24-25). Vivian de Klerk in a study looking at Xhosa speaking parents who had sent their children to desegregated English medium schools documents a situation where African parents at an English-medium primary school 'objected violently to accommodating any African language, saying things like "what good is it going to do our children?" ' (2002a, 1-2)[7]. In the next section, I will shift focus to the post-structuralist theorising of language and identity.

[7] Vivian de Klerk's (2001) study also reports the language shift taking place among Afrikaans first language speaking learners whose parents had sent them to desegregated English-medium schools.

2.3 Language and Post-structuralism

Using the notion of performativity, Pennycook (2004) has argued that post-structuralism offers crucially significant ways of thinking about the relationships between language and identity other than the way these relationships have been conceived in traditional sociolinguistics. Following Judith Butler, Pennycook argues that perfomativity 'can be understood as the way in which we perform acts of identity as an ongoing series of social and cultural performances rather than an expression of prior identity (Pennycook, 2004: 8). Cameron (1997), cited in Pennycook (2004), has postulated that "[w]hereas sociolinguistics traditionally assumes that people talk the way they do because of who they (already) are, the postmodernist (post-structuralist) [8] approach suggests that people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk" (Pennycook, 2004: 13).

While humanist theories generally see language as an expression of the individual identity of the speaker, Chris Weedon, who has worked within a feminist post-structuralist tradition, sees post-structuralism as offering 'an alternative theorization of subjectivity and language which is more open to radical change' (Weedon, 1997: 81). In line with post-structuralist theory, which claims 'a fundamental role of language in human life' (Pennycook, 1994: 32), Weedon argues that:

> language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of our selves, our subjectivity, is *constructed* (1997: 21).

For Weedon post-structuralism goes beyond the assumption that language reflects an 'already given social reality'; an 'expression of unique individuality' or that social reality has fixed intrinsic meanings which language expresses (1997: 22). Post-structuralists argue that 'meaning is constituted within language and is not guaranteed by the subject which speaks it' (Weedon, 1997: 22). Unlike structuralists who see meaning as relatively fixed, for post-structuralists a plurality of meaning which is

[8] I am aware of the debates concerning the differences between postmodernism and post-structuralism. While writers such as Hall use postmodernism and post-structuralism interchangeably, I will follow writers' preferences when making reference to their work, but I will use post-structuralist elsewhere in this Research Report (see McKinney, 2003).

'never fixed once and for all, but is constantly *deferred*' exists (Weedon, 1997: 24) and 'always open to challenge and redefinition' (Hodgson, 2002: 18).

Chris Weedon's post-structuralist theory of subjectivity has been influential in a number of scholars' work such as Norton (Pierce) (1995; 1997) and McKay and Chick (2001) in framing the notion of subjectivity/identity[9] and understanding learners' multiple and changing identities. Weedon (1997) sees 'subjectivity' as 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (p. 32). Important in Weedon's formulation of subjectivity is that subjectivity is not an in-born phenomenon but a socially *constructed* process. Furthermore, the subjectivity which has been proposed by post-structuralists is 'precarious, contradictory and in the process of constantly being reconstituted in discourse' every time one thinks or speaks (Weedon, 1997:32; 85).

Weedon recognizes that individuals are not 'mere objects of language' but are 'sites of a discursive struggle' (1997, 102). Weedon here argues that individuals are endowed with agency to resist 'particular interpellations or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses' (1997, 102). I will pick up this strand below where I discuss the notion of 'positioning' as postulated by Davis and Harrè (1990).

Weedon also recognises that seeing subjectivity as a process open to change does not deny 'the importance of particular forms of individual subjective investment' nor does it suggest that material structures such as 'the family, education, and the work process, which constitute and discipline our sense of ourselves, both conscious and unconscious, can be changed merely at the level of language' (Weedon, 1997: 102-103). Following Foucault, Weedon argues that discursive practices 'are embedded in material power relations which also require transformation for change to be realized' (1997: 103). The significance of post-structuralist theory to my study lies in its recognition of the constitutive force of discourse and its discursive practices and also

[9] Some writers use the terms identity and subjectivity interchangeably and I will use the writers' preferences in referring to their work, but elsewhere I will use the term identity.

recognition that individuals are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices (Davis and Harrè, 1990: 46).

2.4 Identities in Transition

In thinking about identity construction that resists suggestions of fixed, 'rooted' 'racial' or cultural identities, cultural theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall have put forward hybridity theories that recognise what Gilroy calls the 'purity-defying metamorphoses of individual identity' (Gilroy, 2000: 117). The notion of hybridity, as May (1999) points out, 'is viewed as being able to subvert categorical oppositions and essentialist ideological movements-particularly ethnicity and nationalism-and to provide, in so doing, a basis for cultural reflexivity and change' (p.22). The notion of hybridity is of relevance in discussing the potentially problematic process of identity construction in a desegregated school space that is a 'contact zone' characterised by a mixture of cultures and languages that foregrounds what Paul Gilroy calls the 'syncretic complexities of language and culture' (2000: 117).

Homi Bhabha postulates that it is crucial politically and theoretically to muster a thinking that goes beyond narratives of originary subjectivities by focussing on 'those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference' (1994: 1). He contends that the 'in-between' spaces, that defy claims to any essential way of being, and lie between fixed identifications, are sites that open up possibilities of cultural hybridity 'without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, 1994: 4). Bhabha is cognizant, however, that these 'borderline engagements of cultural difference' are highly contested and may be consensual or conflictual (Bhabha, 1994: 2). Coombs and Brah (2000) affirm that while moments of hybrid interaction may be viewed as cultural exchange, at another level they are frowned upon as a threat of 'contamination' to those who espouse essentialist notions of purity. Furthermore, Ali Rattansi (1999) cautions against over-glamorising the 'liminal' spaces and 'border' cultures given the elements of homophobia, misogyny and cultures of nihilism that have colonised these spaces. Rattansi further asserts that 'liminality by its very nature is transitional and transitory' (1999: 106). This he argues is as a result of the fact that 'cultures and identities under discussion are usually of young people, often in

marginal situations', and whose 'transformative potential can only be guessed at…' (Rattansi, 1999: 106).

Although the concept of 'race' has no biological basis, as a social construct it is a powerful category in South Africa where the legacy of apartheid has ensured that people's imagining of their identities never strays far from 'racial' identities (*cf*. McKinney, 2003). Stuart Hall in his concept of 'New Ethnicities' (1992b) is interested in deconstructing the notion of 'race' and specifically the category 'black'. Hall's emphasis here is to demonstrate that the notion of 'race' is a socially constructed category with no foundationalist guarantees. He argues for:

> recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which has no guarantees in Nature (Hall, 1992b: 254).

Nonetheless, McKinney is emphatic that though the category of 'race' is a social construction, it is 'a very real category, especially in its effect on the experience of individuals' (2003: 50). This is more so in the South African context where the category of 'race' has a particular historical resonance and is still a powerful category of social differentiation. Important in Hall's 'new ethnicities' is his recognition that racism 'operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories' (Hall, 1992b: 255). Following Hall, it can be extrapolated that racially constituted categories in South Africa such as 'Black South African English' (BSAfE), 'White South African English' (WSAfE), 'Black accent', 'Indian accent' are a product of racist thinking powered by a positioning of black people as being an inferior species (*cf*. Hall, 1992b); hence the tendency to discuss varieties such as Black South African English 'in prescriptive terms as a variety deviating from the norm (De Klerk and Gough, 2002: 356). The significance of Hall's 'new ethnicities' according to Ali Rattansi lies in its 'attempts to chart and indeed to recommend new, more open, non-absolutist forms of cultural politics within and between the minority communities and their articulation with the politics of the 'centre'…' (1999: 97). As Homi Bhabha argues, it is through the exploration of the 'in-between', liminal 'third space' that 'we may elude the politics of polarity' (1994: 38-9) (*cf*. May, 1999).

Despite emphasising complex, contingent and contested aspects of identity formation, hybridity theories do however have their limits (May, 1999; McKinney, 2003). May asserts that Bhabha's celebration of the 'in between' liminal 'third space' is an acknowledgement of the existence of bounded spaces. Border crossing, as May argues, 'in effect, assumes that (closed) borders were there to begin with' (1999: 23). Similarly, Alistair Pennycook in his argument for disinvention and reinvention in language studies deplores strategies of pluralization such as language rights, mother tongue education that 'reproduce the same concept of (discrete) language(s) that underlies all mainsteam linguistic thought' (2004: 6-7). McKinney has argued that the difficulty with Hall's 'new ethnicities' lies 'in his attempt to de-couple ethnicity from 'race' at a time when a strategic use of 'race' continues to be necessary' (2003: 53). Nonetheless, thinking of identities in transition as foregrounded in post-structuralist theory is crucial in understanding how individuals position themselves as well as how they position others.

2.5 Language and Positioning

Davis and Harrè (1990) put forward the notion of 'positioning' as an alternative to overcome the problematic limitations of the concept of 'role' in developing a social psychology of 'selfhood' (identity). Davis and Harrè postulate that positioning 'is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversation as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines' (1990: 48). They further add that '[t]here can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another' and also 'reflective positioning in which one positions oneself' (1990: 48). Davis and Harrè also emphasize that neither interactive positioning nor reflexive positioning is necessarily intentional. Though an individual positions him/herself or is positioned by others from particular standpoints within a discursive practice, s/he emerges not 'as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate' (Davis and Harrè, 1990: 46). As Chick (2001: 30) emphasizes, an individual may not take up a particular positioning and may resist such a positioning by developing quite different storylines as the subject has agency in this conception of social identity that Davis and Harrè put forward. The notion of positioning is relevant

to my study in explaining different ways in which language becomes a site where learners imagine themselves and are imagined by others as users of language; and ways in which they take up such representations or indeed resist such representations through the creation of counter discourses. In the next section I present the theorising of the notion of *investment* by Bonny Norton (Pierce) (1995; 1997), who like Pennycook (2004), Weedon (1997) and Davis and Harrè (1990), has also worked within the post-structuralist framework in thinking about language and identity.

2.6 From 'Motivation' to 'Investment'

Norton and Toohey (2001) in thinking about good language learners emphasise that proficiencies of the good language learner are tied up by, among other things, how they are positioned by others in their access to the target language. Studies in second language acquisition have often used the concept of 'motivation' drawn from the field of social psychology as a way of quantifying a learner's commitment to learning a target language and explaining their success or lack thereof. Further, Bonny Norton Pierce contends that the concept of motivation:

> as currently taken up in the SLA literature conceives of the language learner as having a unified, coherent identity which organizes the type and intensity of a language learner's motivation. (1995: 19).

Norton Pierce (1995) rejects the notion of 'motivation' with respect to second language acquisition for the assumption that the second language learner 'can choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target community and that the language learner's access to the target language community is a function of the learner's motivation' (Norton Pierce, 1995:12). Norton uses the notion of *investment* 'to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it' (Norton 1997:411). She further adds that 'an investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's own social identity, which changes across time and space' (p. 411).

The theory of 'capital' by Pierre Bourdieu discussed earlier is vital in understanding the notion of 'investment'. In economic terms, one invests in expectation of returns in the form of profit. Similarly *investment* in learning a target language such as English in South Africa is made by learners with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic goods (e.g. education) and material resources (e.g. money) which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital exemplified by educational qualifications and skills (Norton Pierce, 1995: 17; Hodgson, 2002). The discussion of *investment* in the English language by learners and their parents is a significant one for my study on English language practices for it provides a useful starting point in interrogating how a learner's relationship to the target language is socially and historically constructed (Norton, 1997).

There are a number of factors that could explain learners' investment in English in the South African context where second language learners constitute the majority of people learning English. Social economic imperatives are among other factors that account for learners' desire to learn English, as it is associated with a wide range of symbolic and material resources (Norton and Toohey, 2001). The global currency of English is also an important reason why learners invest highly in English. The global dominance of English in domains such as the mass media, popular culture, politics and business is significant in accounting for learners' desire to learn English. Nonetheless, as Norton Pierce (1995) recognises, learners' motivation to speak English is 'mediated by investments that may conflict with the desire to speak' (pp. 19-20). The spread of English as scholars have argued is linked to the ideological, economic and political domination by particular western states (Phillipson, 1992) and poses a significant threat to languages it comes in contact with (Kamwangamalu, 2003). In the next section I will discuss ideas relating to how the inequalities between English and other languages have been historically established and maintained.

2.7 Linguistic Imperialism and the Worldliness of English

The work of Robert Phillipson is of significance for it places my interest in English language practices of learners in a desegregated school in urban South Africa within a global social, cultural, economic and historical context. Phillipson (1992) introduces the important concept of 'linguistic imperialism' and argues that the global spread of

English has not been as a result of natural forces, but rather is a result of deliberate (or strategic) interventions of particular western nations and their institutions, such as the British Council, for ideological, economic and political purposes.

Phillipson in his definition of 'English linguistic imperialism' sees the 'dominance of English' as being 'asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (1992:47). In explication of English linguistic imperialism, Phillipson states that 'structural' refers to the material properties such as institutions and financial allocations and 'cultural' to immaterial or ideological properties such as attitudes and pedagogic principles. My study is informed especially by Phillipson's argument on cultural or immaterial inequalities between English and other languages in as far as I have attempted to study the learners' positioning of themselves and others in relation to English and other official South African languages.

Phillipson (1992) also expounds here as well as in later works such as Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) on the 'spurious' nature of the argument that the spread of English has been a neutral activity as well as the 'facile' nature of the argument that English has not been forced on anyone. Phillipson's arguments are relevant to the current study in so far as the spread of English is linked to the exercise of power in society (Phillipson, 1992:306) and also that the consolidation of English is linked to the neglect of African languages in South Africa (Kamwangamalu, 2003).

Without distancing himself from Phillipson's work, Alistair Pennycook (1994:56) sees a major shortcoming in Phillipson's 'extensive documenting of English linguistic imperialism', employing a neo-Marxist analysis, as precisely his assumption that third world minds are uncritically being ingrained with the English language through education and the media by some western institutions and sections of the western media. I am interested in pursuing Pennycook's argument in examining the role that second language speakers of English have played in the promotion of English (*cf.* 'symbolic power' 2.2) and how this is enmeshed with their identities.

In expounding issues concerned with English as a second language Pennycook (1994) introduces the notion of the 'Worldliness of English' which refers to:

> the material existence of English in the world, its spread around the world its worldly character as a result of being so widely used in the world, and its position not only as reflective but also as constitutive of worldly affairs (Pennycook, 1994:36).

Like the other post-structuralists, in understanding the nature of English as an international language, language for Pennycook is not some objective descriptive category but should be understood as a discursive construct where meaning making is constantly being negotiated (1994:36). Pennycook (1994: 23-24) like Phillipson (1992) and Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) dismisses the notion that the spread of English is 'natural', 'neutral' and 'beneficial'.

2.8 The Power and global spread of English

English currently occupies an important position globally as it has come to be the language of global commerce, politics, media, education, and according to Graddol (1997) is 'at the leading edge of technological and scientific development, new thinking in economics and management, new literatures and entertainment genres' (p. 2). Many scholars have dubbed this overwhelming role of English in the global scheme of things as the 'power of English'. The power of English, according to Kachru, 'resides in the domains of its use, the roles its users can play, and attitudinally-above all, how others view its importance' (1986: 4). Following Bourdieu, we can state that the power of English is a form 'symbolic power' as its legitimation is dependent on the shared belief of the legitimacy of the power by those who wield it and those who are subjected to it (Bourdieu, 1991) (see 2.2). The power of English in South Africa currently is demonstrated by its status as the language of all the high status domains such as education, government, commerce and the media. Further, access to economic opportunities, political participation, educational development and mobility in wider society is dependent on how much one has mastered English (Webb, 1996; De Klerk, 2002a; Kamwangamalu, 2003). Studies by Kapp and Rudwick also show that though some learners in township schools hold ambivalent views regarding English, they have a very high regard for English nonetheless (Kapp 2000, 2004; Rudwick 2004). These learners recognise the salience

of English for their future social mobility that entails 'transcendence of the boundaries of the township' (Kapp, 2004: 258).

Granville *et al* (1998) acknowledge this power of English in South Africa and also its hegemonic status. Recognising this, they emphasise the need for a language-in-education policy that guarantees 'the right of access to the language of power' (p.263), English, and at the same time gives 'a more critical view of its importance and value, as well as an appreciation of the importance of students' own languages for education' (p. 257). This, they argue, is important as most learners have left school with an inflated view of the importance and value of English without getting full knowledge of it (Granville *et al*, 1998: 257) (*cf*. symbolic power).

The growth of English, especially as a second language, has been an unprecedented phenomenon in world history (Reagan, 2002: 3). David Crystal's argument of what makes a global language as having little to do with 'the number of people who speak it' but more to do with 'who those people are' provides a useful starting point in understanding the global spread and status of English (Crystal, 1997:5). Crystal's definition of what constitutes a global language underscores the centrality of power attached to the spread of English. In discussions of the spread of English, it is important to be aware of the falsity of a notion, largely conceived in English monolingual lenses, that "everyone speaks English" in the world (Reagan, 2002). Though English has grown as a *lingua franca* of important global domains such as commerce, science, technology, education and politics, it is by no means a language that most people in the world speak (Crystal, 1997; Reagan, 2002).

The spread and the current status of English has been a complex and highly contested phenomenon. A number of scholars have put forward reasons that could account for the unprecedented growth and spread of English across the world. One theory that has been advanced by scholars such as Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) is called '*the Anglo-American conspiracy theory*' which holds that the global spread of English 'has been engineered by powerful British and American interests even after the removal of direct imperial power through systematic and often semi-secret language planning policies' (Kamwangamalu, 2003a: 67).

Another theory that has been used to explain the global spread and dominance of English is W.B. Arthur's economic theory of increasing returns (Granville *et al*., 1998). In Arthur's theory 'if a product gets ahead in the market place it can wipe out its competitors, even if it is an inferior product' (Granville *et al*., 1998: 258). From the spread through colonial domination and the teaching of English as a second language in post-colonial times worldwide, the English language has come to assume a dominant position globally. Granville *et al*. (*ibid*) argue that with the increasing domains in which English is used, more people will need to learn it and with more people knowing English, 'the more the domains of its use can expand and the more profitable it is to produce resources in English. A cycle of increasing returns for English is thus perpetuated' (p. 259).

Charles Ferguson has argued that while it has been 'a familiar phenomenon' in world history that one language becomes dominant among other languages, the growth and spread of one language, English, is one of the most overlooked phenomenons of the twentieth century (in Kachru, 1983: ix). One of the results that this phenomenal spread of English has had is the threat it poses to the long-term survival of some languages it has come into contact with (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Grenoble and Whaley, 2001). The threat that the spread of English poses to other languages it comes into contact with across the world and, indeed, in South Africa is real. Although indigenous African languages in South Africa are not currently threatened with extermination in the process of coming into contact with English, the demise of Khoisan languages and Indian languages in South Africa, for example, has a well-documented history (Kamwangamalu, 2003a) (*cf*. Batibo, 2005).

2.9 Towards the Indigenization of English?

Njabulo Ndebele's often quoted words that 'South African English must be open to the possibilities of becoming a new language' (Ndebele, 1986:18) provide a useful entry point into the debates of the role and future of English in countries where the majority of people are non first language speakers of English.

Greatest value is usually accorded to language varieties, utterances and accents that are seen to conform to the 'standard' of a particular society. Scholars such as Edwards

(1986) recognize a long tradition of negative attitudes to what is considered as 'non-standard' speech. While Randolph Quirk has argued that 'Standard English', that is the form of English used and popularized by announcers at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), should be 'the target of English language learning worldwide', Braj Kachru, a strong advocate for nativisation of English feels that "Quirk's 'deficit Linguistics' approach ignores the sociolinguistic and pragmatic realities of the huge range of contexts in which English is used as a second and foreign language, and is therefore misguided" (Phillipson,1992). Furthermore, Kachru has argued that while it is not disputable that the 'criterion of "native-like" control is appropriate in *most* language learning situations', nonetheless, he is doubtful whether such a goal for performance could be applied for English 'in *all* situations' considering its unique global spread and its differing roles in different contexts (Kachru, 1983: 35).

These arguments inevitably raise the question of ownership of the English language. Could English be said to belong to 'native speakers', 'to the speakers of standard English, to white people, or to those who speak it, irrespective of their linguistic or cultural history'? (Norton, 1997: 422). The words of the Indian-born British writer Salman Rushdie are telling when he points out that 'the English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago' (Crystal, 1997:130) (*cf*. Ndebele, 1986). What is over-whelmingly clear is the need for English to take on the character of its different locales and users in the light of the growing number of 'Englishes' used internationally (Kachru, 1983; Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998; Ramanathan, 1999). Vivian de Klerk and David Gough (2002: 356) have argued that in its global spread and use in various domains, such as education, politics and popular culture, English has 'acquired various identities and multiple ownerships' such as Black South African English (BSAfE).

However, Sinfree Makoni has argued that in a country like South Africa 'discourse about new varieties of English' such as BSAfE is 'diversionary and unrelentingly subversive' (1999: 137). He has argued that 'labels' of the new varieties of English:

> are diversionary and subversive because, instead of drawing attention to the problems second-language speakers have with learning English as a target language, they present them largely as sociolinguistically acceptable features of *English* (Makoni 1999: 137, my emphasis).

Unfortunately, the 'new varieties' of South African English are not usually valued in schools (mostly formerly white only schools) and learners who use varieties such as Black South African English (BSAfE) are labelled as having a deficit competence. A sociolinguistic belief in 'imagined communities'[10] (*cf.* Hall, 1992a; Kanno and Norton, 2003) of 'Black English speakers who achieve solidarity through the use of English' for Makoni is responsible for the assumption that there are different varieties of English by second language speakers of English (1999:137). As Stuart Hall has argued, categories such as 'black' are essentially politically and culturally '*constructed*' categories that are not 'grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories' (Hall, 1992b: 254). While it is true that the use of English varies according to speakers, as sociolinguistic studies have attempted to show (e.g. De Klerk and Gough, 2002), what Makoni deplores here is the fixation of linguists with describing features of emerging varieties such as BSAfE without looking at the problems that 'Black users' of English are confronted with when using English (Makoni, 1999: 137).

The discussion of the global spread of English and the different character it assumes in different places is a very important one for this study. Not only does it show the power relations as I have argued earlier in discussing the spread of English, it also helps in understanding the relative prestige of the different varieties of English in an environment where White South African English (WSAfE) is imagined to be the norm. Further, it also helps in thinking about who sets the 'standard' within a particular society and in desegregated schools especially, which by their nature are sites where different languages and cultures converge, and are sites for the contestation of unequal power relations.

2.10 Multilingualism: An obstacle or resource?

The South African Language-in-Education policy (Section 3(4) (m) of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) has been hailed as one of the most progressive

[10] Drawing on Hall (1992a; 1992b), I see the notion of 'imagined communities' deriving from a sense of identification based on essential categories such as 'black', 'coloured', 'white', 'Indian', 'Zulu', 'Xhosa', 'Sotho', 'South African', etc. Hall (1992a) has argued that these categories are socially constructed and are not an essential part of the nature of individuals.

in the world for its democratic ideals underpinned by a need to redress the discrimination of the past and to transform society (Hornberger, 2001; Probyn, Murray, Botha, Botya, Brooks and Westphal, 2002). It not only recognizes the country's 'cultural diversity' as 'a valuable national asset', but also 'embraces language as a basic human right and multilingualism as a national resource' (Hornberger, 2001: 216). The Language-in-Education Policy further recognizes that 'multilingualism' is the 'global norm today' and urges that 'being multilingual should be the defining characteristic of being South African.' It is in due regard that the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 recognizes eleven official languages that include: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.[11] Advocates of multilingualism see the imperatives of its entrenchment to be both pedagogical and constitutional (DoE, 2001: 47; Heugh, 2002a). However, in spite of the significant benefits which could accrue from successful implementation of the multilingual policy, classroom based studies show little implementation of policy in schools (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999; Heugh, 2002a; Probyn *et al*, 2002).

Scholars have put forward a number of factors that militate against successful implementation of the Language-in-Education policy. These include entrenched attitudes and practices among many others. Vally and Dalamba (1999) find that at the micro level multilingualism has not been used as a classroom resource, but rather 'for divisive and segregationist purposes'. They cite from their research an example of the English component of parallel-medium schools consisting of black learners and the Afrikaans component consisting of whites learners as an instance where multilingualism is used for segregationist purposes. At a macro level, Heugh (2002a; 2002b; 2003) sees the problem lying in the lack of an implementation plan by government. Further, she sees arguments against the policy of multilingualism which 'have found their way into publications' as having been used 'to deflect government's responsibility regarding implementation' (Heugh, 2002a: 171). Mda (2004: 167) has also argued that the lack of political will by political leaders is one of the principal factors militating against successful implementation of policy (*cf*. Kamwangamalu, 2003b). Other factors include scarcity of resources; lack of knowledge of the language

[11] The names of the languages have been quoted as they appear in the Constitution.

policy; schools lack of experience and expertise in developing their own policies; attitudes towards English; staff language competencies; and the socio-economic needs of clients (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999; Mda, 2004).

Sarah Murray has argued that despite the progressiveness of its multilingual orientation, the Language-in-Education policy is difficult to achieve in practice, and may not be immediately realizable, due to the considerable human and material resources required to implement it. Murray (2002) doubts the availability of resources to appoint new teachers, purchase textbooks and library materials 'in the current economic climate of fiscal conservatism' (p. 445). Heugh (2002a), however, refutes the argument that bilingual/multilingual education is too expensive saying such an argument is 'weak' for teachers can be supplied to schools at little cost to the system since the majority of teachers are African and are first language speakers of African languages. However, Heugh oversimplifies the whole matter in conflating being an African teacher with the ability to teach through the medium of an African language or to teach an African language. She sees it as just a matter of re-deployment of teachers to schools in question and does not engage with questions of teacher training and retraining.

In evaluating the status of multilingualism in South Africa as it relates to the language competencies of different role players (e.g. teachers, administrators and learners) in desegregated schools, it is important to look at the profile of the teaching staff in these schools. Studies show that while there has been a considerable change in the learner profile in former white schools, this has not been followed by similar changes at the level of the teaching staff (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999; DoE, 2001; Soudien and Sayed, 2003; Soudien, 2004). Although many white teachers in desegregated schools are fluent in English and Afrikaans, many of them do not have competence in African languages. The mismatch between the linguistic profile of the teaching staff and the learner body does not only lead to a failure of realizing the goals of multilingualism, such as the promotion of African languages as envisaged by the Language-in-Education Policy, but could also have negative pedagogical consequences. Further, the individual attitudes of these 'mismatched' white teachers engendered by their role as gatekeepers of a more powerful discourse may be working to exclude other learners-especially those who do not conform to standards of the dominant language

(Vally and Dalamba, 1999). Research shows that teachers and principals, who are mostly white, in desegregated schools do not see African languages as important (Chick and McKay, 2001) (see 4.7) and often view those learners who speak English in school and have good competence in English to be intelligent and model students and those with a tendency of speaking African languages as disruptive (McKay and Chick, 2001).

An important aspect of multilingualism that scholars have pondered on is the role of code-switching. Arguments by a number of scholars (*cf.* Foley, 2001; 2002) suggest that manifestations of a multilingual/multicultural education must include code-switching and the use of African languages in the classroom. While code-switching could be used as a resource in certain situations of language learning (Ncoko *et al*, 2000), it is however, a simplification to regard code-switching as an ostensible end product of South Africa's multilingual policy. Further, as Murray (2002: 445) cautions, the noble goals of multilingualism could be reduced to the use of code-switching as an 'educational resource' and a number of language awareness activities, detracting from the important task of teaching all languages in South Africa properly.

The discussion of multilingualism is an important one for my study for it places the English language practices of learners in a desegregated school within the context of a multilingual environment where different languages exist side by side. It is also important as it foregrounds language practices such as code-switching and code-mixing which are part of the 'English language practices' my research aims to uncover.

2.11 'Investment' in English

Norton Pierce (1995) argues and demonstrates that under the concept of investment, the language learner cannot be considered as being 'ahistorical' and 'unidimensional', but 'as having a complex social history and multiple desires' (p. 9). Studies reveal a strong desire by African learners in South Africa to be proficient in English (Gaganakis, 1992; Kapp, 2000). Rochelle Kapp's (2000) study also shows a high tendency by learners to conflate knowing English to being educated. Studies have also shown that parents 'want' their children to be educated through the medium of

English (Gerda de Klerk, 1995; Murray, 2002; Vivian de Klerk, 2001; 2002a; 2002b). The decision by elite African and Afrikaans parents to send their children to English-medium schools, according to Vivian de Klerk (2001; 2002a:), is mainly as a result of political, economic and educational factors.

Although some African parents have continued to send their children to formerly white English speaking schools, there are fears that learning English might lead to 'loss' of 'identity', language 'loss' and considerable social isolation of their children (Vivian de Klerk, 2002a; Murray, 2002). Makoni (1994), however, as cited by Murray (2002) explains the pragmatism with which Africans accept the role of English in education. He argues that:

> in Africa multilingualism is the norm and different languages are used alongside each other to fulfil different roles; in such a situation second-language learning is seen as one of the functions of education (Murray, 2002:439).

Makoni has further questioned the adequacy of concepts such as additive and subtractive bilingualism to the South African situation. Additive bilingualism[12], that the Language-in-Education policy favours, entails the commencement of learning in the child's primary language/mother-tongue with an additional language added without replacing the primary language. In subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, 'a second language is learned at the expense of the first language, which it gradually replaces' (Luckett, 1992: 46-7) (*cf.* Luckett, 1995). Makoni argues that these concepts fail to capture the complexities of the multilingual setting as they originate in 'western societies where language loss occurs in the face of the dominant languages' (Murray, 2002:439). Contrary to suggestions by mother-tongue activists, the use of English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in South Africa, in most cases, does not cause replacement of any language given the widespread nature of the straight for English approach. Neither is there any convincing evidence that use of English as LOLT leads to a 'loss' of language. In most instances in suburban schools first language speakers of African languages are being taught in English from the moment they start school and in most cases continue

[12] Douglas Young has argued that '[h]owever intuitively appealing and pragmatically sound it might seem as a theory, there is little evidence in South Africa of the successful application of the additive bilingual learning theories…' (2001: 253).

speaking their first languages/mother-tongues at home; hence the question of any language being replaced does not arise. While some studies (e.g. Vivian de Klerk, 2001: 2002a) have shown patterns of language shift to English in some elite families, this does not merit a generalization of a replacement or indeed 'loss' of language by learners occasioned by the use of English as Language of Learning and Teaching.

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined how I draw on post-structuralist thinking in understanding the relationship between language and identity. Significant for my study in post-structuralist thinking as I argued is the constitutive role of language in identity construction and the fluid nature of identity construction. I have also engaged with key ideas in post-structuralist thinking on identity and difference such as hybridity and positioning. The notion of hybridity is relevant in discussing processes of cultural contestation and appropriation. Drawing on post-structuralist theory, I also discussed the notion of positioning in explaining ways in which individuals create images of themselves and others through language. Further, I also draw on Norton Pierce (1995)'s notion of investment in thinking about the way that the learners' relationship to language is socially and historically constructed.

I have also argued that Pierre Bourdieu's theorising of the notions of capital and symbolic power is critical in understanding the way language practices are shaped by the forms of power and inequality in society. In relating the language practices of learners and the way they position themselves and others as language users to the global social, cultural, economic and historical contexts, I discuss the politics of English as a global language and language of power. Here I outline Robert Phillipson's notion of linguistic imperialism and Alistair Pennycook's notion of the worldliness of English. Significant in Phillipson and Pennycook's discussion is their argument that the spread of English is not natural, neutral or beneficial.

Following Kachru (1986), I stated that the power of English lies in the domains of its use, in the roles its users can play and most importantly, echoing Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, in the way people view its importance. Important too in this chapter, is the injunction by Granville *et al* (1998) that while policy in South Africa

must guarantee access to English, it must be accompanied by a critical view by learners about the importance of English as well as their own languages for education. Further, of significance in this chapter was recognition by scholars such as Ndebele (1986), Crystal (1987) and Norton (1997) that English does not only belong to those who speak it as their first language, but to all who use it.