

**In search of the absent voice:  
The status of indigenous languages in post-apartheid South Africa**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology**

in the subject

**Psychology**

at the

University of South Africa

Promoter: Professor Puleng Segalo

November 2015

### **Declaration**

I declare that **In search of the absent voice: The status of indigenous languages in post-apartheid South Africa** is my original work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

**Signature**

**Date**

**(Ms. Zethu Cakata)**

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Prof Puleng Segalo for her wisdom, efficiency, love and professionalism, all of which propelled me to completion. Thank you for ever suggesting that I consider changing my theoretical lens to decolonial thought. It became more than just a change of a theoretical approach.

A special thanks to my son, Sange Cakata whose age transcending wisdom birthed the idea for this project. I owe you tons of quality time for all the Saturdays I spent at the library and the evenings I was glued to my laptop.

To my mum and dad, Nozizwe and Mzimkhulu Cakata, thank you for loving me and nurturing my passion as a child. Thank you for filling our house with books and our spirit with uthando, ububele no buntu.

I also wish to thank the main drivers of this work- the study participants, for touching my heart, sharing their wisdom and adding their invaluable voices to the continuous work of crafting a country which truly belongs to all.

To Nobantu Mkhwanazi and Tsholo Mapontsho- you became my little sisters and made the data collection process go by with ease. Thank you for opening your home and lending your family to me. I remember a very wet and cold Saturday afternoon in June of 2015 when everyone at your house ran around ensuring the house was warm and there were refreshments not just for me but also for the participants. The shock your mother expressed upon learning that the university will cover the costs made me want to be a better person. In her own words- “You were my guests, child”.

I would not have done this without the financial support from NIHSS/ SAHUDA. I also wish to acknowledge financial contribution from Statistics South Africa, it made a world of difference.

To Dr Phakama Ntshongwana- thank you for editing this work. I would also like to thank my ‘PhD buddy’ Sibulelo Qhogwana for being an ear, a shoulder and a dear friend.

And most importantly- to uMvelinqangi, the God of our ancestors, thank you for starting with me and holding my hand through the finish line.

## **Dedication**

To us, children of Azania;

**We have been here before**

When the first sun rose

It found us awake and waiting

Long before others came to these hills

Our footsteps shaped the landscape

We tamed the buffalo and the gemsbok.

We rode the wind

We silenced the hurricane

Look at us, we have been here before

We hung on the horn of Africa

Walked through the red sands of Somalia

And from the purple hills and valleys of Gondar

In ancient Ethiopia our songs and supplications

Echoed across the perennial pyramids

Ah the pyramids! Those timeless glorious symbols of African civilization

These hands, our hands

Dark and lovely as the first night

Cut the stone that built the pyramid

We have been here before

By **Don Mattera** (Poem used with permission from the author)

## **Abstract**

Even though language formed part of the post-apartheid agenda which was set out to redress the ills of the pre-democratic South Africa, there are still concerns that the status of indigenous languages has not been elevated. Using decolonial work of Steve Biko, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon as theoretical lens, I aimed at exploring perceptions of key informants on post-apartheid language policies, young South Africans and parents /guardians toward indigenous languages. In-depth and narrative interviews were used to collect data from language policy key informants and young South Africans who started schooling after 1994 and focus group discussions with parents/guardians were held. Thematic, narrative and discourse analyses were used to analyse the data. Indigenous languages were perceived by participants as having an inferior status compared to languages of oppression and that was attributed to inferiority complex, lack of will from government to promote these languages and absent voice of indigenous language speakers in the fight for the status of indigenous languages. South Africa's language diversity was also perceived as a challenge believed to contribute toward the difficulty of properly implementing post-apartheid language policies. The study results suggest a need for a stronger civil society which would assist in the dismantling of categorising languages as superior and inferior. Furthermore, the results point to a need for a more humanising approach which treats indigenous languages with respect.

**Key words;** Indigenous languages, decolonial, diversity, post-apartheid, language policies.

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## Chapter 1

### Background and Introduction

History often depicts South Africa as a country which came into existence with the arrival of European settlers (Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2014). This, as the aforementioned authors assert, was deliberately crafted in this manner by Europeans to affirm their dominance in the land of their settlement. Dutch settlers were the first Europeans who appeared set to settle in South Africa in 1652 and were later joined by British settlers who were on a mission to extend their colonial rule in Africa. Both these European countries spent the most part of the colonial era battling for total control of South Africa. The British rule was formidable in the Cape Colony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century while the Dutch had control of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, according to Gough (u/d).

I understand colonialism to mean a European ideology whose aim was to invade foreign lands, enslave and/or exploit indigenous people and dispossess them of their wealth (killing many in the process). The African continent was hardest hit by this ideology. West European countries spread throughout the continent to invade as many African countries as possible. South Africa found itself under both the British and the Dutch rule. As Césaire (1972) explains, the relations between the coloniser and the colonised were never humane, but were based on the dichotomy of domination and submission. That had multi-fold implications for black South Africans and its remnants are still a lived reality even for the current generation. The colonial remnants I refer to include psycho-social and economic ills brought about by land dispossession. Crass inhumanity toward and the dismantling of the African value system suffered over centuries of settler domination left South Africa a troubled nation with economic inequality. The colonial manner which led to the dehumanisation of African people (and others) is captured well by Césaire (1972). He points us to a long trail of inhumane acts that Europe committed over centuries which left nations reeling and eternally battling to get back to their strength. Linguistic dispossession is among the consequences of dehumanising acts South Africa suffered. Languages of indigenous people were deemed insignificant and only the languages of the colonial nations held prominence.

That was when language in South Africa started to play a political function. Both British imperialism and the apartheid regime (led by Dutch settlers from 1948 to 1994) have played a

significant role on how language in contemporary South Africa is used. They both had language policies that helped in facilitating their divisive policies. Gough (u/d) states that, in the Cape Colony, the British introduced a language policy which declared English an official language. This language policy formed part of the bigger Anglicisation policy whose aim was to replace existing cultures in South Africa with British culture (Gough,u/d). This policy commenced in the Cape Colony in 1820. Education and business were conducted in English leading to resistance from the Dutch who felt that their language and dominance were under threat. This ignited the language tensions, first, between the British and the Dutch and later between Africans and the European settlers (both British and Dutch). The pivotal moment came in 1910 when Dutch and British colonials agreed to work together and formed the Union of South Africa which declared both English and Dutch official languages (Ramoupi, 2011). However, tensions persisted between these two colonial powers and in 1948 the Dutch gained total control of South Africa. It is during this time that the Dutch implemented the policy of apartheid which ensured that Afrikaans, which was the language that the Dutch later adopted, occupied high status. English and Afrikaans thus became two official languages as there were still pockets of the country that were predominantly English.

In their promotion of Afrikaans, the Dutch adopted abrasive measures such as enforcing Afrikaans on indigenous people. This was done through education policies which legislated that Afrikaans be made a medium of instruction. Language was further used by the apartheid regime to ensure disintegration of black solidarity. As such, through a strategy known as ‘divide and rule’, indigenous people were separated according to the languages they spoke and were restricted to certain areas of the country (Biko, 2004). With the support of the apartheid regimes Bantustans were created where different language groups were given certain portions of the country to live. The ‘divide and rule’ strategy was part of the apartheid regime’s separate development project where about 13% of South African land was forcefully allocated to nine language groups (Biko, 2004). This according to Biko (2004) constituted the poorest land with none of the riches found in parts that the Europeans invaded. The first Bantustan was established in 1962 and it was the Transkei. Other Bantustans were later established and those were the Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Lebowa, Kangwana, Gazankulu, Qwaqwa, KwaZulu and KwaNdebele (Khunou, 2009). The isiXhosa speaking people were allocated two Bantustans (Transkei and Ciskei) while other language groups were made to occupy one settlement each. The apartheid regime erected borders around all these Bantustans and the movement of people in and out of their designated settlements

was controlled (they needed passports to access any area outside the borders of their Bantustan). The ultimate aim of these separate settlements according to (Khunou, 2009) was to make South Africa safe for the white population and the apartheid regime hoped to achieve this by giving black South Africans citizenship of the Bantustans but denying them South African citizenship. This meant that South Africa essentially belonged to white people. This gave the regime better control over indigenous people as they could no longer come together to form a black solidarity movement against oppression (Biko, 2004). This served the apartheid regime's interests well as it allowed it to exert control over Africans who were no longer in a position to stand together. While the Bantustans were run on the pretext of self-determination, English and Afrikaans (not indigenous languages) were languages of business. Indigenous languages therefore occupied an inferior status under both British and Dutch rule. With this backdrop, my study intended to broadly look at how language struggles within South Africa are connected to pre-democracy policies.

After the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa adopted a newly formed constitution which clearly states that all languages should enjoy an equal status. The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) was established shortly after democracy was enacted and was tasked with the implementation of section 6 of the constitution- the language clause. In 1999, PanSALB acknowledged its responsibility as the facilitator of a receptive environment for the promotion of multilingualism. The board emphasised that the survival of any language lies on its wide usage within a society. It cautioned against only using English and Afrikaans for high status functions as that would slowly erode the status of indigenous languages as it happened with Khoi and San languages. In its 1999 board notice discussion paper, PanSALB suggested that a functional multilingualism approach be employed as a way of ensuring that languages coexist. This functional approach as explained by PanSALB means using an appropriate language for an appropriate audience. It has been 16 years since those acknowledgements and suggestions were made, yet South Africa still sits with the same concern of the gradual extinction of indigenous languages.

Anecdotal evidence points to the fact that in post-apartheid South Africa, the importance of indigenous languages is rapidly declining among indigenous people. This decline is believed to have been caused, among other things, by the negative attitude toward indigenous languages. They are seen as irrelevant especially by some black South Africans in the new South Africa where English is often considered the language of business. However many scholars (Gxilitsh, 2009;

Pandor, 1995; Prah, 2006) have pointed out that this decline has significant impact on the identity of black South Africans. In her doctoral thesis, Ballard (2012) clearly illustrates how languages are an integral part of culture and identity. When people lose their languages, they lose their ways of knowing and relating to self and the environment. For Ballard (2012) the loss of indigenous languages has been a result of external forces. Western nations have made indigenous people believe that their socio-economic deprivation emanates from their outdated cultural beliefs and this has caused them to distance themselves from their cultures and discourage their children from learning their indigenous languages. The modern world has forced people to live double lives where language and culture are separated. This presents a challenge well illustrated by wa Thiong'o (1986) when he points out that the direst form of colonial domination was the control of the mind of the colonised by the coloniser through culture and how people perceived themselves. For wa Thiong'o (1986) the deliberate elevation of the coloniser's language and the devaluing and the distortion of the colonised's cultures were instrumental in breaking the harmony that existed between language and culture in pre-colonial times. Such imposition forced people to perceive themselves from an external stance and destroyed their understanding of who they are. I would like to argue that the consequence of such exploitation was, in turn, internalized oppression which led to self-hatred and a fetish for everything foreign. Language is an integral part of culture and it pertains to one's identity. This separation has made the learning of culture difficult because from an early age children do not get a formidable grasp of their indigenous languages (Ballard, 2012).

The concerns that indigenous languages in South Africa are losing significance need to be taken seriously. As Gxilitshé (2009) asserts, once that happens, South Africa becomes an appendage of a cultural world whose language it has assimilated. That poses a danger which cannot be ignored as it has dire implications not just on culture and identity but also on South Africa's economic independence and/or sustainable development. The gradual erosion of indigenous languages has already led to the undermining of African medicine, science and local economics. These knowledge systems no longer hold prominence in society because the languages that carry them are ignored. Indigenous languages, as Hikwa (2012) argues, help people reveal and affirm indigenous knowledge by providing names for indigenous concepts and processes. For Hikwa (2012) and Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa (2014) indigenous languages and indigenous knowledge are inseparable as languages help in the transmission of these knowledge systems. It is therefore clear

that languages carry more than just a communication function. This has proven true not only for South Africa but also for many parts of the world that were affected by colonial invasion. In Canada, for example, the proponents of Aboriginal languages believe that indigenous languages govern relations between human beings and their spiritual relationship with the universe and plants. They carry traditional teachings which dictate how people should interact with the universe (Little Bear, 2009; Battiste, 2012). Battiste (2012) sees the role played by oral descriptions in passing traditions and customs from generation to generation as the central source for survival. The lives of indigenous people in various parts of the world before colonialism were based on the knowledge carried by indigenous languages. The suppression of these languages has cost indigenous people an understanding of their sense of being. The relationship between indigenous languages and indigenous medicine, science and economics is explained in the discussion below.

The role indigenous languages play in the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems is well illustrated by Sobiecki (2014). In his paper on the intersection of culture and science in traditional medicine in South Africa, Sobiecki (2014) argues that language is among the key factors that have prevented traditional medicine its due place in the sphere of science. The scientific world has battled to efficiently translate and interpret cultural concepts and language descriptions that African medicine carry. Traditional African medicine is often in metaphorical language that can easily be misinterpreted by those who have no grasp of the indigenous languages they are in. Sobiecki (2014) believes that within these metaphoric descriptions lie a wealth of clues about the psychological effects and pharmacological compositions of traditional medicine. In his investigation on the usage of medicinal plants such as *ubulawu* (cleansing the body), *umlomo mnandi* (sweet mouth) and *impepho* (incense) , by amaXhosa in South Africa, Sobiecki (2014) found that the names of these plants are descriptions of the psychological effects their usage bring due to psychoactive chemicals they carry. Such examples demonstrate the wide role indigenous languages play and how their suppression has robbed people from benefitting from the richness of indigenous knowledge systems.

Medical anthropology is one of the few fields which attempts to incorporate cultural systems in health and healthcare. As Nkosi (2012) states the discipline refers to forms of medicine that have been transferred only orally over centuries. However, Konadu (2008) cautions her audience to be critical of representations of African cultures in this field as they have, for a long

time, relied on an epistemology that serves the interest of western societies which are informed by imperialism. The use of such imperialistic epistemologies has led to a disconnect between science and the African traditional world which was facilitated by the colonial attitude and behaviour toward Africans. The disdain with which colonial rulers dealt with African beliefs systems meant that the Western scientific world did not even need to attempt to understand how African cultural practices operated (Sobiecki, 2014). With the marginalisation of indigenous languages, Sobiecki (2014) argues that the grasp of African tradition has deteriorated even among black people in South Africa.

Indigenous economics has also been affected in similar fashion by this marginalisation of indigenous languages. The economic concepts that defined the system which existed in the pre-colonial period had long been lost. Such concepts, as Ballard (2012) explains, ensured a more human-approach to wealth than what the Western world introduced. They gave more prominence to the meaning of working together and sharing than the individualistic consumption which characterises the market based system which the West imposed upon its colonies. This system, it might be argued, was designed to not only strip people of their economic independence but also to continue to prevent them from participating fully in the current market system. In South Africa, the majority of those who live in abject poverty are black South Africans and mainly those who do not have an education and thus unable to communicate in either English or Afrikaans. The exclusion of indigenous languages in the economic sphere is therefore a form of discrimination that should not be overlooked.

The systematic language inferiorisation highlighted in this chapter has had implications for black South Africans, generation after generation. As I highlighted earlier, the impact of oppressive practices that sought to undermine indigenous languages in particular and indigenous life in general is not only a reality for those who lived in the colonial era. Its impact is still evident in South Africa today with indigenous languages still operating from the sidelines. At the core of this study was the wish to explore how such an impact is lived out by various generations of black South Africans who are meant to make sense of a newly democratised country. The discursive intersection between black South African parents (a generation which has experienced apartheid rule) and young black South Africans who were born into democracy could help us understand the status indigenous languages currently occupy and the role they play in influencing their sense of

identity in post-apartheid period. These perceptions are important if indigenous language proponents are to truly problematize the role of colonialism and apartheid in using language to distort the black experience. Moreover if they are to properly make a decolonial turn.

The importance of indigenous languages is a dialogue that has been in the international sphere for a long time. The United Nations through its various departments has stressed the importance of indigenous languages. Declarations by the General Assembly (declaring 2008 as international year of languages) and the United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation-UNESCO (through various declarations-1960 Convention against discrimination in education, the Delhi Declaration and Framework adopted in 1993, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in 2001, the 2003 UNESCO Position Paper “Education in a Multilingual World” and the 2005 UNESCO Guidelines for inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All, to mention a few) have expressed, strongly, the importance of home language education and promotion of multilingual approaches. As I have depicted above, UNESCO’s calls for the recognition and respect for indigenous knowledge systems and the languages that help in their transmission spans decades. In a paper prepared for UNESCO, Nakashima (2010) warns that if existing local knowledge continues to be ignored in interventions such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such interventions will not reap the success intended. Languages are also addressed extensively by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through Convention 169 which focuses on the need to make indigenous languages, languages of education (Ballard, 2012).

Phillipson (1996) calls for African states to honour the United Nation’s declarations on the rights of indigenous people which state that indigenous people do not only have a right to learn in their home languages but also have a right to ensure that they are able to utilise their own education systems and institutions to ensure that home language education is consistent with their cultural methods. This is in line with Kaschula’s (2013) view that academic institutions need not only use indigenous languages as instruction media but to also allow students to learn from them. The usage of indigenous languages should lead to a deeper understanding of indigenous life and practices.

In the above background, I have pointed to the deliberate inferiorisation of indigenous languages by colonial powers and founders of apartheid and its impact on indigenous people. I have also highlighted some of the attempts made by the post-apartheid government to respond to the issue of indigenous languages and the apparent disconnect between these government efforts and the reality

displayed by the general South African population. Such tensions demonstrate that there is a need for research to be conducted in relation to indigenous languages in the post-apartheid era. In this vein, a description of the aim of the study and research questions thereof, follow.

### **1.1 Aims**

In this study, I aimed to explore how South Africa has emerged from the backdrop of British colonialism and apartheid system language policies. This was achieved by getting perceptions of key stakeholders on post-apartheid language policies and how they (these policies) have helped or hindered South Africa's languages advancement. As Prah (2006) argued, attitudes of indigenous languages speakers play a key role in the success or failure of language policies, I also explored perceptions of young South Africans and parents /guardians towards indigenous languages. Views from differently positioned participants gave an understanding of underlying factors to the current status of indigenous languages.

### **1.2 Research questions**

Research questions for this study were:

- 1.2.1 What are the perception of young South Africans and parents/guardians on the usage of indigenous languages in South Africa?
- 1.2.2 How have different language policies contributed to the current status of indigenous languages in post-Apartheid South Africa?
- 1.2.3 What are challenges faced by indigenous languages in post-Apartheid South Africa?

### **1.3 Justification**

It is my hope that this project will be a welcome contribution as South Africa attempts to reclaim some of its lost heritage. Celebration of diversity could only be meaningful if every strand sits equally on the social podium. To understand where South Africans position their indigenous languages and how they imagine their usefulness in the future could assist stakeholders to better plan and implement strategies to further ensure that language rights enshrined in South Africa's constitution materialise. I also believe that by engaging with issues of language, important dialogue about who South Africans are as a people might be elicited. The project of decolonisation requires that we take seriously and claim our indigenous languages as they encompass the core of our culture, identity and meaning.

Decolonisation becomes a preferable tool to confront the language debacle that South Africa is faced with as its very roots are in the interrogation of the colonial project.

Decolonisation, as it shall be demonstrated in this thesis, aims to create spaces to properly frame the ills of the colonised world, uncover their underlying cornerstones and re-imagine an alternative world where all humanity is acknowledged as worthy of self-definition.

#### **1.4 Operational definitions**

- 1.4.1 Apartheid- is the system of segregation and brutalization on the basis of race (which included economic and political discrimination) of African people which was led by Dutch settlers in South Africa.
- 1.4.2 Black South Africans- in this study, the term is used to refer only to black people of African descent whose home language is any of the indigenous languages. I could not use African because of the confusion it would cause between Africans from other parts of the African continent and Africans from South Africa.
- 1.4.3 Colonialism- In this study colonialism is used to refer to the period of European oppression in South Africa which was prior the advent of apartheid and was largely dominated by the British and to a lesser extent Dutch rule.
- 1.4.4 Coloniality- Concept is based on Grasfoguel's (2007) definition which sees coloniality as the neo-colonial period which is characterised by the absence of colonial administrators but the presence of colonial forms of being
- 1.4.5 Decolonisation- I worked with both Grasfoguel's (2007) and Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird' (2012) understanding of the concept to define decolonisation in this study as the process of interrogating and exposing various manifestations of colonialism, freeing self from them and carving new paths that allow for new definitions of self which have no colonial basis.
- 1.4.6 Home language- is the main language of communication within a household. In my literature review I have used it interchangeable with mother tongue when I am quoting work of authors who refer to it as such. I have however shied away from referring to it as mother tongue as it is my belief that the concept carries an assumption that only a mother should be a primary caregiver thus main communicator to the child.

- 1.4.7 Indigenous knowledge refers to the ways of knowing that are based on traditional wisdom of native people that span generations and have evolved with time to reflect emerging knowledges.
- 1.4.8 Indigenous language- in this study indigenous languages refer to languages that originate from South Africa and do not carry an oppressive past (were not used as the tool to oppress the indigenous people of the country either during colonialism or apartheid). In some parts of the study I have used the concept interchangeably with African languages as some scholars refer to them as such. It is worth noting that unlike in the apartheid and colonial eras where categories of racialised identity were clear with African, European, Coloured and Asian forming the main categories- the new South Africa has brought a form of what I label as ‘identity confusion’ (a phenomenon requiring its own research). In South Africa today, every population group insists on identifying as African and this has made discussions about race and the address of past injustices become difficult. Even the issue of indigenous/African languages has become contested with speakers of the Afrikaans language demanding their language to be labelled as indigenous. Whether their demand is legitimate or not is a matter for another study, for the current study I elected to exclude Afrikaans in my definition. As the aim of this study and my theoretical lens are about dealing with oppressive forces that have led indigenous languages to occupy their current status, therefore including Afrikaans as both the problem and the victim would not have made sense.
- 1.4.9 Language development- is the process of ensuring that languages are made suitable for official use by formalizing them.
- 1.4.10 Language preservation refers to efforts put in place to protect languages and prevent them from going extinct.
- 1.4.11 Language promotion- to acknowledge the existence of languages and actively encourage their usage.
- 1.4.12 The word guardian in this study refers to adults who are taking care of children that are not biologically theirs.

1.5 The structure for the remainder of this thesis includes five chapters which are categorized in the following manner;

- 1.5.1 Chapter 2 is the review of literature relevant to the topic under study. I have evaluated papers and previous research that explore the issue of the status of indigenous languages in order for me to identify gaps and obtain direction that could lead to uncovering new ways of thinking about indigenous languages.
- 1.5.2 Chapter 3 is the discussion of the theoretical lens with which the study is gazed. It forms the basis on which the findings will be interrogated and conclusions drawn.
- 1.5.3 Chapter 4 is the presentation of the methodological framework and findings for the current study. It explains the design, sample, sample size, data collection methods and the results.
- 1.5.4 Chapter 5 is the discussion section of the study. This is where I engage with the findings in relation to both theory and literature and give my own understanding on what they mean about the status of indigenous languages.
- 1.5.5 Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of the study. In this chapter I give a statement on what I believe this study has achieved and could contribute. I also state what I see as the limitations and how future research in this field could be advanced.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

As demonstrated in the introduction chapter, language has always been a thorny issue in South Africa. Language debates could be traced to the Anglo-Boer tensions where Boers vehemently challenged the dominance of the English language and demanded the elevation of Afrikaans to an official language status (Prah, 2006). The latter was cemented with the advent of apartheid in 1948. During apartheid, Boers used language to further oppress South African indigenous people. Indigenous languages were used by the government as a tool to divide indigenous people and ensure they were apart from one another. As Webb (1999) points out, Afrikaans provides a perfect model of how languages should not be used for political agendas. The brutal manner in which the National Party exerted Afrikaans upon an unwilling South Africa remains a memory fresh in the country's psyche. However, Webb (1999) and de Kadt (2005) importantly advise that Afrikaans also provides a few lessons that could be used to tackle the current problems that have engulfed South African languages. The key lesson for de Kadt (2005) is that deliberate efforts were made to develop Afrikaans into a language of science and technology. I would like to draw from de Kadt's lesson and highlight the necessity for robust efforts that need to be taken into developing indigenous languages to languages of trade and academia. This, in part will ensure active economic participation by the majority of citizens in South Africa. Caution is made by indigenous languages proponents such as Alexander (2005) and Bamgbose (2011) that if there is no effort put to promote indigenous languages, the majority of black South Africans will never enjoy the benefits of economic development in their country. As things stand, South Africa's economic system largely accommodates those who are conversant in English and to a certain extent Afrikaans. It is for this reason that the development of indigenous languages becomes even more critical.

Another area that could be negatively impacted by the lack of robust action to promote indigenous languages will be South Africa's national identity. Every country has a way in which it perceives itself and reflects its people and language plays an important role in the manner in which countries reflect their identities. The lack of promotion of indigenous languages could mean that South Africa has not fully defined itself but has allowed colonial definitions of what the country and its people are to persist. This would defeat the gains made with the abolishment of apartheid and black South Africans will remain with no real access to the economic wealth of South Africa

and with a weak sense of who they are. For Afrikaans to develop into a formidable language which informed the identity of the Dutch as Boers or Afrikaners, it had to define every sphere of their existence. The advocates for Afrikaans took the fight for the recognition of their language to the fore and made it the centre of their scramble for the heart of South Africa (de Kadt, 2005). Post-apartheid South Africa has arrived at a point where it is forced to be equally decisive about indigenous languages. While I agree with de Kadt (2005) that Boers, in their fight for the development of Afrikaans did not have the multi-cultural complexities that the post-apartheid government is faced with, I, however, would like to argue that more than twenty years have passed since the current government has been in office and instead of seeing improvements in the many challenges faced by people, there are fears that it is pushing pertinent issues such as that of indigenous languages further into the margins in ways similar to what was done during the years of oppression. The complexities that de Kadt (2005) highlight form part of governance. Every sphere has to be equipped to deal with what stands as obstacles to good governance. South Africa's diversity has always been there since the country was born, South Africa is therefore not dealing with a new reality. Its people should allow themselves to dig deep to hidden knowledges that may provide solutions to the language problems before them.

Available literature on the status of indigenous languages in South Africa points to three key issues and those are; lack of post -apartheid language policy implementation, negative attitude displayed by some black South Africans towards indigenous languages and excuses to the promotion of multilingualism. These issues will be explored below and have helped shape the direction of the current study.

### **2.1 Lack of post-apartheid language policies implementation.**

Throughout post-colonial Africa, scholars have observed that indigenous languages often assume secondary status to languages of colonial powers and this has been attributed to the continued use of colonial language policies after independence (Bamgbose, 2011; Prah, 2006). Lack of political will to formulate and implement robust policies has been cited as one of the reasons. As Bamgbose (2011) notes, colonial powers set precedence in undermining African languages by imposing their languages upon a conquered people. When independence from colonial rule was regained, African countries were left reeling from implications of such negative perceptions. As a result, the language policies that were devised post-colonial rule were lenient toward the

former coloniser and parts of them that deal with addressing the issue of indigenous languages were often not decisively implemented. This, according to Bamgbose (2011) endangers ignored languages and when that happens, people lose their culture which is a sense of who they are. As emphasised in chapter one, the link between language and culture cannot be overstated.

Language is a tool through which culture and identity are communicated and passed on from generation to generation. When a people lose that tool, many aspects of who they are perish. As the chapter demonstrated, indigenous medicine and economics are among indigenous knowledge systems that were inferiorised by imperial powers, world over, with the advent of colonialism which rid people of their languages. The value of those key elements was undermined and people were left to rely on foreign concepts that they struggled to adapt to. This left them impoverished both economically and psychologically and the scars are still visible in today's society. The above background highlights some of the challenges and complexities surrounding indigenous languages in particular and indigenous knowledge systems in general. It is therefore pertinent to pay attention to and look for ways in which these issues could be tackled.

The case for the use of imported languages was made stronger by the view that in order for nations to advance economically and to participate in the global village they need to adopt an imported language. This according to Bamgbose (2011) did not take into cognizance the majority of people who are excluded from economic participation because they cannot use an imported language.

Lack of promotion of indigenous languages has resulted in the exclusion of the majority of people from actively participating in national life. If government business, the judiciary system, the economic system and the education system are all conducted in an imported language, millions are thus inactive citizens. As Bamgbose (2011) argues, citizens need to understand what government is saying and be able to voice their opinions. If policies are in a language they do not understand, they cannot fully participate. These assertions made the decision to interview policy stakeholders in the current study even more relevant. I was interested in getting an understanding of the perceptions of those who are put in position of power to address issues of language policy. Our understanding of why language policies are at their current state largely depends on what decision-makers at policy level perceive to be the cause and how they think we can shape a new direction. I was particularly interested in exploring if the view that an imported language such as English is necessary for

economic advancement is still shared by those in decision-making positions. As argued by Bamgbose (2011) such a view has ominous implications for indigenous people.

Even though scholars outside South Africa often cite the country among those with good policies that promote multilingualism, a general feeling among South African scholars like Mncwango (2012) is that South Africa is still lacking in the enforcement or implementation of those policies. The current language policy environment in South Africa, as highlighted by Ramoupi (2011), includes such policies as; Language in Education Policy of 1997, National Plan for Higher Education of 2001, the framework for Language Policy for Higher Education of 2002 and the National Language Policy Framework of 2003. The existing policy framework places the education sector at the centre of post-apartheid language policy implementation. The sector, however, has proven to be a good example of how multilingualism policies can be met with indifference. Despite the dismantling of apartheid segregation policies, the flourishing of multiracial and multicultural communities and schools, education in South Africa still operates according to apartheid policies which put English and Afrikaans as instruction media. The only key development as Mncwango (2012) observes, is that Afrikaans schools and higher learning institutions have added an English stream to their curricula. This lack of will to transform schools which Mncwango (2012) exposes could have a negative impact on the preservation of indigenous languages and on the academic performance of black South African children. I shall return to this point and develop it further in my discussion of the excuses to the promotion of multilingualism. The manner in which black South African school children have continuously battled with a school language system that is conducted in a language which is not their home language will be demonstrated. The above point shows that the opening of doors of previously whites-only spaces to black South Africans was not enough as the integration did not come with terms of engagement. The result was imposition of western ways of knowing and doing and black South Africans were left to assimilate rather than participate as equals in the sharing of experiences.

Education, as Mncwango (2012) notes, is not the only sector which has failed to fully implement language policies in South Africa, local government has also not shown success. Both section 6 of the South African constitution and the municipality Act of 2000 make provisions for the use of indigenous languages as professional languages but that has not been seen in practice. This evident lack of effort has hampered government efforts (Mncwango, 2012). Moodley (2009) concurs with Mncwango (2012) that on paper South Africa appears to have done an excellent job in the

promotion of indigenous languages yet the reality points to apartheid era practices. Kaschula (2013) identifies the lack of policy implementation plan and lack of policy monitoring strategies as main causes of the current disarray that faces language policy implementation. Those are key elements that ensure that policies do what they set out to do. If there is no proper planning and effective monitoring, policies become money and time gone to waste while the situation they were intending to remedy remains unchanged.

The positioning of indigenous languages as languages of education is critical in ensuring that these languages are used. According to de Kadt (2005) the political mobilisation around language which elevated Afrikaans through the National Party no longer exists. She suggests that state's effort be aided by commitments from cultural bodies and universities. She believes that universities could boost the chances of African languages being languages of business and technology. This has proven successful in the Caribbean island of St Lucia in its efforts to preserve the Creole language. Lubin and Serieux-Lubin (2011) report that through the use of cultural bodies concerted effort was made to ensure that arts and cultural symbols remained in the public sphere and were promoted. Media also played a positive role in the island's attempts to ensure that Creole does not go extinct. Radio, television and print media were active in producing material in Creole. This was coupled by a distinct internet and multimedia presence. Such efforts demonstrate that governments need to find creative ways to aid policy implementation. Ways that will help ensure that a variety of sectors are excited about the cause to be promoted and that they have bought into it. Commitment from a variety of sectors can play a key role in ensuring that indigenous languages remain relevant. Phillipson (1996) believes that policies on the promotion of African languages need to be accompanied by public campaigns because people need education and re-education about the importance of their languages. This call is also made by Ndamba (2008) who calls for active campaigns on attitude change that will aim at decolonising the minds of African people. His research was on the attitudes of both learners and parents in Zimbabwe. He decries the negative attitude they displayed toward their mother tongue languages and their preference for a second language. He urges the government to accord indigenous languages high status so that people can start taking them seriously. While attitude change is not an easy task as it involves deconstructing deep seated beliefs, the South African government needs to realize that it is its duty to ensure it provides favourable ground for such transformation to happen. Ndamba's (2008) diagnosis that these negative attitudes stem from colonial mentality need to be given cognisance as it could unlock

a central issue that has impacted on the current status of indigenous languages. Given the Psychological damage caused by both colonialism and apartheid, ingrained negative attitudes about African life are to be expected. It therefore becomes imperative for the government to ensure that the damage is addressed. Democratic governments are not just expected to consult their citizens on policy decisions; they also have a duty to create constructively challenging spaces that allow citizens to introspect and maybe reshape attitudes that damage the nation. To ingrain English as the language of class, prestige and of the globe, the British ensured that the ground was favourable by performing their cultures in an enticing manner using their language. If indigenous languages are shown to be languages of prestige by those in power, the citizens might start shifting their negative perceptions.

Prah (2006) views the decision by the post-apartheid government to accord official status to colonial languages as a costly compromise as it played a key role in the suppression of indigenous languages. As Alexander (2005) notes, even more worrying is the absent revolt from indigenous people. There are more Afrikaans than indigenous people's voices in the language debate in South Africa. The Afrikaans community has been vocal in efforts to preserve their language and the voice of indigenous language speakers has been mute. This lack of activism from black South Africans has perpetuated the continued domination of black South Africans where only those who have properly acquired English and/or Afrikaans stand a good chance to find their place in the professional world. Those form only the minority of black South Africans. This situation still serves the white community well as it still produces few elite blacks to compete with them in the professional world hence there are still cries in South Africa that decision making positions are still occupied by white people. This will remain this way for as long as the professional world is in white people's languages. This is worrying from a country which is known and lauded for waging formidable resistance against British and Dutch rule.

For de Kadt (2005) the promotion of indigenous languages is not reaping success because the survival of the government does not rely upon it. The key lesson that can be drawn from the development of Afrikaans as seen by de Kadt (2005) is that a language has to be a part of the political structure. Language development gets taken seriously once it is made politically important.

While scholars such as Prah (2006) argue that the post-apartheid government needs to follow the path Boers took in making Afrikaans a language of business and education, de Kadt (2005)

identifies two factors that have made the promotion of African languages even less achievable in the post-Apartheid era. Firstly, for de Kadt (2005), the usage of ethnic identity by apartheid government to segregate Africans makes the post-Apartheid government weary of using ethnicity to legitimately reclaim African identity. This view is also shared by Phillipson (1996). In his analysis of the Nigerian language situation he states that scholars in Nigeria often attribute the usage of English as Nigeria's way of devising a sense of nationhood which is not based on ethnicity. Njoroge & Gathigi (2011) also observed that people often equate national unity to monolingualism. These two scholars, however, dispute that viewpoint together with the belief that the usage of several African languages might lead to ethnic conflict. While fears of ethnic conflict are understandable, I am of the opinion that African nations are capable of finding ways of ensuring that ethnicity is used to unite rather than divide people. If the government is deliberate in its unifying strategies, it is most likely to succeed.

Secondly, for de Kadt (2005), the fact that there are multiple ethnic groups in South Africa has made the task of the post-apartheid government even harder because unlike with the development of Afrikaans, the current government is faced with promoting and preserving nine instead of just one language. While de Kadt (2005) raises valid points, it is important for South Africa not to rest on them as an excuse not to promote indigenous languages but to use them to devise solutions in tackling the problem. As the government correctly identified, right from the beginning, local government institutions need to play a key role in ensuring the utilization of indigenous languages especially for high level functions. It is in these local settings that we are most likely to find less language diversity ( and at least one dominant African language).Such institutions could help manage the crisis of having to promote nine languages as each province would have specific languages to focus on. de Kadt (2005) believes that the two governments (Apartheid and post-apartheid) are different in their commitment to prioritise language. It is my argument that it is not enough for the post-apartheid government to be lauded for designing the best policies to deal with the language issue. Indigenous languages need to be a national priority. As it was demonstrated above this will ease the country of its numerous ills. For example, the education system might begin to thrive as language barriers will be removed, economic participation by the majority of South Africans might also improve. All of these have a direct impact on the alleviation of poverty which the country has long battled.

Asiegbu (as cited in Odimeggbu, 2007) disputes the notion that African languages are inadequate for abstract thought and cannot be developed into philosophical and scientific concepts. He believes that such an argument is an ideological propaganda constructed to maintain the dominance of European languages. This concurs with Prah's (2006) call for a need to deconstruct excuses that put English as the language of business. As shown in countries like China and Russia, among others, where there is a will to transform the society, barriers are easily broken. To enforce Christianity upon Africans, for example, the Bible was translated into all African languages. As Prah (2006) points out, Afrikaans, French and Russian are good examples of achieving good results through strong home language education. Kaschula (2013) agrees that South Africa cannot work if ran in languages that many do not speak. He believes that the time has come to build South Africa through effective communication. Finlayson and Madiba (2002) see colonial based policies as standing in the way of a smooth intellectualization of indigenous languages. While I stated that South Africa is lauded for good policies, I also note that areas of most policies are still lenient to colonial languages. Bunyi (1999) agrees with the sentiments that the English language has stunted the development of African languages into languages of academia. Using her experiences in Kenya, she believes that the multi-languages of Kenya are capable of standing their ground as academic languages and that African people are by nature multilingual and therefore there is no reason not to develop them into languages of business. This is a view shared by Bodo (1996) when he argues for a language system that takes into account Ghana's multilingualism when dealing with issues of economic development. Just like many African countries, Ghana has many indigenous languages yet its formal business is conducted in English (Bodo, 1996). Bodo (1996) advocates for a system which puts Ghana's indigenous languages before English. He believes that Ghana can work on fully developing multilingual policies and only utilise English as the official language while the development is still taking place. Once it has been, however, completed, there should be no need for a colonial language as a business language. This would be a perfect model of decisive policy implementation and it is what is lacking across the African continent. Indigenous languages have not been given an opportunity to stand on their own as academic and business languages. They have always been appended to colonial languages and have assumed secondary status.

The development of indigenous languages is often considered by unwilling segments as a project which is very expensive to undertake. However, Bunyi (1999) believes that the utilization of

communities as knowledge producers would be cost effective. Communities have these knowledge systems in their possession and if they are roped into the process, a lot of money will be saved and they will embrace the project even more. This is in line with Stroud's (1999) linguistic citizenship proposal which canvases for the utilisation of grassroots voices for language development. In this manner communities will be granted an opportunity to choose their own languages for education and business and the development of those will be in their hands. This is well illustrated by the fight the San and Khoi took to the post-apartheid government to demand the recognition of their languages. This demand was linked to their demand for the return of their land and thus their economic independence (Heugh, 1999). Allowing communities a voice in the debate about languages is a critical step towards undoing the damage inflicted by colonial and apartheid laws.

Colonial administrators had a clear plan to push African languages to the margins and promote their own languages. African leaders who took over post-colonial Africa did not change the status quo, foreign languages continued to enjoy a superior status. AsiegbuI, (as cited in Odimegwu, 2007) exposes three forms of linguistics policies that characterize Africa. Amodal form is largely practiced in Portuguese and Francophone African countries. A colonial language is granted superior status and undermines indigenous languages. This is characterized by the need for Africans in these countries to speak, live and do everything like the coloniser. They are preoccupied with the need to appear as 'Westernized French Africans'. This is in line with Fanon's (1986) and Biko's (2004) observations in the 1950s and 1970s respectively. They both expose the inferiority complex black people have demonstrated and the need to always look at themselves through a white person's eye and measure their behaviour using a yardstick of the white society. The problem with this, as described by these two authors, is that their efforts are never appreciated by the people they are trying to mimic, leaving them with an identity crisis as they are not considered as either Western or African. The multimodal policies acknowledge at least more than one indigenous language but it never assumes equal status to the colonial language. This is commonly found in former English colonies such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana. The unimodal policy gives importance to one indigenous language like Swahili but uses other languages for certain functions. It is this constant need for African governments to accommodate their former colonisers that has cost indigenous languages their standing and has made the socio-economic life of Africans an eternal struggle.

## **2.2 Negative attitude toward indigenous languages.**

### ***2.2.1 Language and the colonial influence.***

Prah (2006), Bamgbose (2011) and Mncwango (20012) argue that black people contribute in the diminishing status of their own languages in post-apartheid South Africa. Parents cause their children to look down at their own languages in the same manner the colonialists did. Anecdotal evidence show that middle and some working class children are unable to even construct sentences in their home languages. There have been conflicting views as to why this is the case. On one hand it is believed that the honour and prestige which the English language has been positioned to carry has caused English culture and language to become what people aspire to acquire (Bamgbose, 2011; AsiegbuI, as cited in Odimegwu, 2007). Colonial powers managed to produce an African elite which spoke the imported language with authority (Bamgbose, 2011). This elite has ascribed a certain meaning to being educated and that has caused many people to look down on their own languages and to ensure that their children do not even learn them.

Generally, fluency in colonial languages to Africans in most parts of Africa means superiority and civilization. As AsiegbuI, (as cited in Odimegwu, 2007) observes, some Africans go in so far as mimicking the accents of the coloniser to make it clear they are not speaking African variations of European languages but the original languages (e.g. English or French). All these efforts to suppress an African identity and embrace a European one point to the success of the colonial project. The observations Asiegbul (as cited in Odimeggwu, 2007) make resonate with what Fanon (1986) calls ‘cultural dispossession’. To Fanon (1986), those who adopt a new language are dislocated, and by adopting a new language they are alienating themselves from their cultural roots. Fanon (1986) further argues that the middle class are usually the victims of the cultural dispossession mentioned earlier. This is the point Biko (2004) also makes about the ability of colonialism to remove the African content from the brains of the oppressed and making them perceive the world of the oppressor with envy and glee causing them to mimic and idolize its symbols. This reality has remained unchanged in South Africa even decades after Biko (2004) first made that assertion.

### ***2.2.2 Language and economic participation.***

On the other hand, the indigenous people's reluctance to use their home languages is borne out of the non-existent opportunities these languages carry according to scholars such as de Kadt (2005) and Slabbert, van der Berg and Finlayson (2007). A study by Slabbert, van der Berg and Finlayson (2007) reported that black South African middle class parents expressed pride in their culture and identity but because of the lack of opportunities associated with indigenous languages, these parents often demand that their children are taught in English. Similar findings were shown by a different study on South African national symbols and nation building in post-apartheid South Africa by Bornman (2006) where black South Africans demonstrated good knowledge and attached more meaning to national symbols compared to other population groups which took part in the study. These findings are an indication that lack of promotion of indigenous languages force people into desperate choices where they have to rob their children of learning their home languages.

Both the viewpoints addressed above are valid in explaining the evasiveness of black South African parents toward indigenous languages and both have dire implications on the status of indigenous languages. If these languages are rejected by the people who are supposed to be embracing them, the fears of their extinction become even more real. These viewpoints also expose two distinct set of meanings Africans ascribe to the acquisition of colonial languages. On one hand there is a group of Africans which attaches a demigod status to English. To this group English is seen as a symbol of class, intelligence and sophistication. It often regards anyone who lacks proficiency in this language as less intelligent and unsophisticated. To the second group on the other hand, English does not overwrite the group's identity. This group views English as a mere vehicle to economic participation and an escape from poverty. To the former, African languages are often associated with low status and symbolize lack of civilization and class whereas the latter only embraces colonial languages for the economic benefits they still carry. For the latter group, indigenous languages still form a critical part of their identity and they still embrace their cultural roots and heritage, because indigenous languages have no usefulness in academia or business, they feel compelled to choose English as a language of education and economics.

### ***2.2.3 Language use in schools.***

Black South African parents according to Prah (2006) often adhere to school language policies that promote English and Afrikaans even in situations where their children constitute the majority. In instances where they have to choose an additional subject they opt for Afrikaans instead of an indigenous language (Mncwango, 2012). Increasingly, parents in African countries as observed by Bamgbose (2011) choose schools with a medium of instruction which is an imported language because they see no value in their native languages.

Because of the reasons mentioned earlier parents do not even appear bothered by the absence of indigenous languages in the school curriculum. This has led commentators like De Vos (2008) to call on speakers of indigenous languages to stand up for the implementation of the constitutional provisions on languages in the land of their birth. Schools, courtrooms and the professional world use English and sometimes Afrikaans as languages of communication despite the provision on section 6 of the constitution which demands the country to recognize “the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must make practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages” (p.5). De Vos (2008) decries the silence of black South Africans on the evident lack of respect displayed toward their languages. This silence can be interpreted as permission by indigenous people to continue to be defined by colonial and apartheid era ideals that saw them as sub-humans. The cries of De Vos (2008) are not surprising given that language formed a prominent part of South Africa’s struggle for autonomy from European rule. The 1976 battle over the entrenchment of the oppressive Afrikaans policies in the education system features prominently in South Africa’s resistance narrative. It carried an expectation that post-apartheid, ordinary black South Africans will embrace their languages with the kind of pride they were denied for centuries.

I am in agreement with de Kadt’s (2005) view that the black South African elite could play a critical role in changing the status of indigenous languages. She insists that South Africa needs to remember that it was the commitment of elites to the promotion of Afrikaans that aided the government’s goals to making it a legitimate and recognised language. The government ensured that it promoted opportunities for its speakers. Present day South Africa needs to be cognisant of this matter.

As demonstrated above, the elite black South African middle class contributes a great deal to the continuous usage of English as the language of business. Alexander (2005) believes that the middle class needs to shift its thinking toward its own languages. Once they start embracing them and ensuring their usage in business settings, change could be seen.

### **2.3 Excuses to promotion of multilingualism.**

Drawing from the works of Alexander (2005), Bamgbose (2011) and Prah (2006), for the purpose of this study multilingualism is defined as the recognition by the government and non-governmental sectors that in a diverse country the various languages that people use should be given their due status through utilization in both official business and casual life. This is done in order to ensure the inclusion of everybody especially in government business. However, post-independence, many countries in Africa, including South Africa, did not display commitment toward language policies that aim at restoring indigenous languages. Colonial policies still shape the post-colonial Africa. Multilingualism has been met with negative perceptions in Africa where in some spheres, it is viewed as a divisive rather than a unifying tool. Bamgbose (2011) disputes the notion that multilingualism is exclusionary arguing that what excludes masses of people is a language spoken by a few. He notes that the status of indigenous languages is fast diminishing while imported official languages continue to enjoy dominance. He blames this on, among other factors, colonial legacy and negative perceptions toward multilingualism.

South Africa is among only a handful of nations that recognise more than three languages as official languages yet in reality only imported languages serve as official languages. Efforts to promote multilingualism are continuously undermined especially by the West which continues to superimpose its way of life upon nations it once colonised. The African elite have been key in promoting the view that African languages are inferior to colonial languages. The society puts no value on people who are multilingual yet accord high status to natives who have mastered a colonial language (Bamgbose, 2011). As alluded to earlier, this inferiorisation of indigenous languages has had negative impact on various spheres. In this section, I elected to discuss two of those spheres and they are education and media.

### **2.3.1 Multilingualism in education.**

Literature measuring attitudes of South Africans toward multilingualism policies is scant and largely quantitative. It barely exposes the depth of perceptions in society thus making minimal contribution to the understanding of the issue. A quantitative study (on the implementation of the University of Kwa Zulu Natal's bilingual policy which was introduced in 2006 and entailed using isiZulu as the university's second official language, alongside English) by Moodley (2009) is evidence to the fact that more explorative qualitative research would be beneficial in the enhancement of our understanding of perceptions of black South Africans toward indigenous languages. The findings show that while the majority of both staff and students believe that all languages have an equal status and that all South Africans must know at least one indigenous language, they still did not believe that isiZulu should be made part of pedagogy. A lack of explorative information limits our understanding underlying such firm and somewhat contradictory beliefs. The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal is commended for taking a bold step but smooth implementation, as the findings of Moodley (2009) study suggest, will require active involvement of the people which the policy is intended for. The staff and the students of the university felt that they were not properly consulted and not even well resourced to carry out the policy. The majority of staff members reported that they lacked proficiency in isiZulu and those who can speak isiZulu did not have the ability to conduct business in it as it was not a part of their training. Challenges like these will require additional means to ensure the equipment of everyone who is expected to embrace the policy.

This study's shortfall is that the views on the lack of training in conducting business in isiZulu and the reluctance to make isiZulu an additional language of business were not weaved together. It becomes unclear therefore if participants did not think isiZulu should be used because they were not equipped to do so or there were other reasons. A similar study conducted at Wits University by Conduah (2003) found that an overwhelming majority of staff members (69%) were opposed to the use of both English and an indigenous language while 64% of third year students who participated in the survey welcomed the idea. The third year students believed that an introduction of an indigenous language would lead to effective learning and bolster the chances of academic excellence for black South African students. What seemed to unsettle students most was the choice

of an indigenous language to be made a language of learning and teaching. They believe that this could lead to feelings of discrimination among the groups whose languages are not chosen.

However, Conduah (2003) together with other indigenous languages proponents (Ramoupi, 2011; Prah, 2006) believe that harmonisation of indigenous languages into a few major groups would allay those fears. The function of harmonisation is to ensure that languages that are similar are combined and developed as languages of business as single units. If done correctly, this will ease the task of having to develop nine languages that de Kadt (2005) earlier identified as the major challenge facing the development of indigenous languages in South Africa. However, it should be noted with caution that the idea will introduce a new set of challenges for South Africa. Proper dialogue with all language users might be necessary to explore all possible solutions. This is not to argue that the fears of the students who participated in the above study are not justified. They, instead expose an interesting dimension in the debate on indigenous languages that indigenous people never question the challenges brought about by the usage of the English language for higher level functions, yet, they are quick to point out the difficulties of transforming acts. These attitudes could be seen as embedded in colonial ways of thinking and perceived social reality. Essentially, it states that South Africa is better off with a colonial system than to find ways of asserting a system that is defined indigenously. This is one of the ways in which black South Africans have contributed to the violence perpetuated against their languages. The gradual extinction of indigenous languages is an act of violence with its roots deeply entrenched in the era of oppression.

The colonial attitudes mentioned above are well demonstrated by a survey conducted by Dyers (1997) where a majority of black South African first year English literacy students preferred to learn in English instead of their home language. These were students who had obtained 50% or less in their matric results and performed poorly in English. What this survey also found was that these students over-estimated their proficiency in English with many indicating that their English was good to excellent despite a poor display of English language skills. Just like the findings of Dyers (1997), the attitudes of first year students towards the introduction of an African language in Conduah's (2003) study were negative with 42% of the participants opposed to the idea and only 34% in favour. The remaining 24% maintained a neutral stance.

Interestingly, Dyers' (1997) findings show that students who had good English proficiency preferred to be taught in their mother tongue instead of English. These attitudes are a reflection of

the legacy of colonialism and apartheid which caused English to be seen by black South Africans as a language of prestige, Afrikaans as a language of oppression and indigenous languages as low status languages with no societal value (De Klerk, 2009). However, what the findings of De Klerk, (2009) and Conduah, (2003) show is that not all students were opposed to the usage of indigenous languages at universities. Some students displayed ambivalent feelings about having to choose between English and an indigenous language. On one hand, they felt that there are business pressures that force them to want to have English. There was a strong belief among the students that without English they cannot enter the commercial world. On the other hand they felt that there is a need for their cultures to be fully developed and have a standing in the global scale and that could only be done through indigenous languages (Conduah, 2003; De Klerk, 2009).

The dominant feature in all these attitudes surveys on languages is the acceptance by participants that English has superior status and should not be challenged. In De Klerk (2009) and Conduah (2003) studies, there seemed to be an acceptance by participants that English is a neutral language, it was seen as a language that everybody should be proficient in and using it is not to undermine anybody's language rights. Some staff members in Conduah's (2003) study even expressed a view that adding an indigenous language will make students lazy to learn English. De Klerk (2009) findings among isiXhosa speaking students at Fort Hare University indicate that English was viewed as a marker of status and an indication of higher education attainment. Students even possessed the general misconception that isiXhosa is adding little value to their education stating that English should be introduced early in primary school. There was a belief that home language instruction prevents learners from acquiring English language skills. This belief is however disputed by many scholars. As argued by Ndamba (2008) the acquisition of a home language facilitates easier learning of a second language. Njoroge & Gathigia's (2011) findings also show that teachers are in agreement with indigenous languages proponents that learning in a home language prepares children to achieve better academic results and home language foundations boosts literacy later in their educational lives. They argue for a child-centred approach to teaching, where children's needs and capabilities are put first. Children are often found in classrooms where business is run in English which they are not proficient in. Teachers, they believe, should instead be trained to conduct their lessons in home languages for the benefit of the children.

Participants in De Klerk's (2009) study believed that isiXhosa as a medium of instruction could only work in certain fields of study (Arts and Agriculture) at university but not others (Commercial and Technological). This is a dangerous view according to De Klerk (2009) as it will only ensure that indigenous languages speakers' exclusion from the highly empowered fields is continued. De Klerk's (2009) interpretation is valid as the need to attract indigenous people to Science, Mathematics and Technology is necessary for the development of the country. However the participant's association of indigenous languages with Arts and Agriculture strengthens the belief that those fields of study have little value to add as sciences that can contribute to the empowerment of the people. The association perpetuates a stereotype that certain fields of study are more important than others and those that are viewed as less important could be taught in indigenous languages. This, again, exposes a line of thought that is embedded in coloniality where the value of indigenous languages is limited only to fields that are viewed with less regard.

There has been a drive by government in recent years to include and promote indigenous languages in South African higher education institutions. The Humanities and Social Sciences catalytic project on concept formation in indigenous languages which came into effect in 2012 stresses that higher education needs to diversify its role when it comes to indigenous languages pedagogy (Kaschula, 2013). For Kaschula (2013), indigenous languages need not be seen only in their purest linguistic forms but institutions should be willing to learn from and in them thus giving them their heritage rooted relevance. The fundamental function of education for Bunyi (1999) is its role as the transmitter of culture. She echoes calls made by other African languages scholars that education in Africa needs to reflect indigenous knowledges and experiences of Africans because languages are a symbol of their native speakers' culture. Denying African children education in their languages is to prevent them from learning about their culture. It is in fact allowing them to assimilate Euro-American values instead of their own. Thondhlana (2002) agrees that indigenous languages carry more than a communication function. They instill the native speaker's pride in their culture and identity.

Incorporating indigenous knowledges into the education system will not only help students who come from indigenous backgrounds see their place in the academic world but will also enhance the knowledge of people from other backgrounds and equip them to embrace diversity with honesty. The production of honest scholarship is something that South African universities should not be

apologetic about. Ramoupi (2011) speaks emphatically of the need to insert African knowledges into the current education system. In this way South Africa will produce scholars that are not foreign to African thought and ways of living. For Ramoupi (2011) the current policies on multilingualism do not carry any expectations from English or Afrikaans speakers. Even under the new dispensation, speakers of these languages are still not expected to acquire any indigenous knowledge. This prevents them from learning anything about the continent of their settlement and to fully embrace it is a part of their identity.

Kaschula (2013) lists a number of institutions across the country that have heeded the call to support strategies that aim at promoting multilingualism in South Africa. Rhodes University, University of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Stellenbosch and the University of Limpopo are among the institutions that have embarked on various projects that incorporate indigenous languages in their teaching and learning. These efforts should be lauded as important first steps towards realizing that indigenous languages should have prominent place in academia.

Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in its inception in 1999 noted that people are powerless if they do not have access to the language used by those in power. While many defend the usage of English and Afrikaans as a form of empowerment, scholars such as Ramoupi (2011) see it as the disempowerment of African people. He questions the fact that only black South Africans can and are expected to communicate in European languages while White, Coloured and Indian people who have been in South Africa for centuries do not and are not expected to know any of the indigenous languages. Ramoupi (2011) believes that the impact of colonial and apartheid policies which elevated English and Afrikaans to official language status and Indigenous languages to insignificance have disempowered indigenous people. Being forced to conduct your formal (school and work) life in a language which is not your own is disempowering and has ominous Psychological effects. It leaves one with deep feelings of inadequacy and forever looking at self through other people's eyes. Ramoupi (2011) also decries the obvious lack of implementation of post-apartheid policies despite the constitutional emphasis on elevating the status of indigenous languages. If current language policies were implemented effectively, indigenous people would be empowered to participate in public life without any hindrances (Ramoupi, 2011).

The disempowering effect the exclusion of indigenous languages brings about is best articulated by Alexander (2005) when he argues that the direst of all spheres is the economic. The ultimate goal of apartheid was to ensure that black people are prevented from participating fully in the economy of South Africa. In order to undo the economic injustices of the past it was important for the post-Apartheid government to create an economic system that includes those who were previously excluded. However, the majority of South Africans are still not able to participate in mainstream economy. There have been attempts to ensure that localised business is conducted in indigenous languages but Alexander (2005) insists that South Africa requires a strong will to transform mainstream businesses so that they reflect the demographics of the country. If that does not happen, Alexander (2005) warns that South Africa will continue to be a reflection of a country it was during both Apartheid and colonial eras. As Alexander (2005) suggests, South Africa needs to build on the little it has achieved. For example, he mentions that the banking sector is among a few sectors that has included indigenous languages in their service systems. The national broadcaster also took initiatives to include a number of indigenous languages in their programmes. Such efforts need to be applauded and other sectors should be persuaded to acknowledge that the majority of the South African population is not English or Afrikaans speakers and for them to fully participate in various spheres of the society, their languages need to be included.

The disempowerment highlighted above is even more pronounced in the education system. A comparative study which explored language policies and practices between Tanzania and South Africa found that children performed better when taught in their mother tongue (Brock-Utme & Holmarsdottir, 2004). The drive to make English the medium of instruction leaves children whose first language is not English disempowered and creates a lot of work for content subject teachers as they have to deal with language issues first before explaining the content. Brock-Utme and Holmarsdottir (2004) believe that there has been a misconception in Africa that to learn English, it has to be made a medium of instruction. As the findings of their study show, English has proven to be a barrier toward learning when made a medium of instruction. This was also observed by Alexander (2005). For Alexander (2005) English and Afrikaans speakers are taught and examined in their mother tongues while African language speakers maybe taught in their mother tongue but continue to be examined in a foreign language. This puts them at a disadvantage as shown by a study one of his students conducted in Cape Town where English and Afrikaans speakers performed exceedingly well compared to isiXhosa speakers while isiXhosa speakers did better than

English and Afrikaans speakers when results of their mother tongue papers were compared. The above illustrates that English as a medium of instruction puts black South African children in a foreign world while children from other population groups do not need to make major transitions from home to school because the home language is the same as the language of instruction at school. A study by Heugh (1999) found that the continuous use of English as medium of instruction has resulted in massive dropout rates especially when English is introduced early. High drop-out rate due to difficulty to comprehend English was also reported in a study by Njoroge & Gathigia (2011) which was conducted among Kenyan teachers where learners left school before completion because the usage of English as medium of instruction made them feel academically inadequate.

The above studies highlight one of the ways in which issues of language entangle with broader socio-economic issues. School dropout rates in a country like South Africa where even university graduates reportedly battle to find employment paint a bleak picture. It could mean that those who drop out of school face difficulties to compete even for lower wage employment and are likely to be left destitute. The implications of dropping out of school vary between boys and girls and they are a cause for concern. As literature has shown, out of school young males are more likely to engage in criminal activities while their female counterparts tend to be highly likely to be involved in risky sexual relationships mainly with older men for financial support (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin and Palma, 2009). The role language plays is often overlooked when matters of poverty and unemployment are analysed. While dropout rates and school completion rates are well documented there is minimal literature on reasons for dropping out of school making it hard for government to properly address the matter. Heugh's (1999) findings aided my investigation in that they allowed me to broaden the lens and ask deeper questions about the implications the lack of language policy implementation have on learners. These findings have also been useful in depicting the crude manner in which lack of implementation contributes to the disempowerment of young black South Africans. As I demonstrated above, the consequences of school dropouts do not affect only the individual but the society at large as out of school youth threaten the social health and stability of both the self and the society.

de Kadt (2005) also identified similar barriers. In her paper, she states that the education system is faced with the challenge of teachers and learners who are forced to teach and learn in languages they are not proficient in. This impacts negatively as they do not get properly equipped to face the

competitive professional world. The implications are most ominous for those who come from under-privileged backgrounds. There is an obvious lack of commitment which is evidenced by the exclusion of language in talks about curriculum reform. Both government and parents have an active role to play in the language promotion debate/conversation. As de Kadt (2005) points out, parents have a critical role on how education is conducted. With the development of Afrikaans, schools were given permission to use Afrikaans if parents demanded it. This is a matter that Woldemariam (2007) found in Ethiopia. In its battles with the effective implementation of multilingualism policies, Ethiopia resolved that schools and parents need to work together and play an active role in shaping language policies. Woldemariam (2007) also found that it is important that policy implementers and communities carry the same understanding of language policies to ensure smooth implementation. For a language to be declared a medium of instruction both parents and teachers should agree. As it has been argued throughout this chapter, active involvement of indigenous languages speakers is critical in ensuring that multilingual policies are effectively implemented. This would happen if the attitude toward these languages has evolved from oppressive perceptions that were imposed by the colonial and apartheid rule. As shown with the development of Afrikaans, it is important for parents to identify strongly with the language in order for them to fight for its rightful place in society. Such positive identification was absent in a study by De Klerk (2002). Her findings show that in a small Eastern Cape township parents were not bothered by the fact that their children were assimilating English values at school instead of their own. They saw isiXhosa as a language which has no value and that is bound to be extinct. The non-usage of indigenous languages beyond lower primary school has according to Ndamba (2008) contributed to negative attitudes displayed toward them. These are worrying attitudes as parents are often the ones who impart a value system to their children. Finlayson and Madiba (2002) believe that such negative attitude speakers of indigenous languages have are a stumbling block toward successfully intellectualizing indigenous languages. For these two authors, such attitudes emanate from colonial mentality. People still attach to their own languages the meaning which the colonial rulers imposed upon them. While I find it important to acknowledge and accept that the task to unlearn colonial teachings that were exerted over centuries through brutal strategies and distortion of indigenous ways of life could not be easy, I however, argue that concerted effort to create public spaces that allow citizens to reflect consciously on matters of mental enslavement should be encouraged. Many scholars (Gxilitshhe, 2009; Prah 2006; Pandor, 1995) have pointed out that

although the matter of indigenous languages is an active dialogue amongst academics it is often missing the voices of ordinary citizens. Ordinary citizens are often left out of such discussions and reflections hence the call for efforts to bring the dialogue to the public. Even though attitude change is ultimately the task of individuals, the lessons I have drawn from the colonial period indicate that the attitude of those in power often mirrors the type of society they envision. The government therefore might need to lead the way by displaying an attitude that embraces indigenous languages within its own spheres first and foremost if it hopes to impart change in the attitudes of indigenous language speakers. Vizconde (2006) advises that attitudes of language users be given cognisance by policy makers as they determine how policies on languages fair. As shown by her study among Philippine teachers, English is viewed as the language of prestige and colonial reinforcement. The value and the importance of the English language is still instilled in people's minds and this impacts negatively on progressive language policies that seek to promote native languages. Vizconde's (2006) study together with a study among Lebanese students by Diab (2009) show that the notion that Western languages are necessary for global participation transcend African boundaries. As shown by Diab (2009), in Lebanon, French and English are still preferred as media of instruction at educational institutions and are held in high regard by students. This shows that language was a critical aspect to the colonial project. It served as a key marker of colonial domination. Language dispossession was used by colonial powers to rid nations of their value system and impose a colonial one.

Heugh (1999) believes that the imposed colonial value system continues to put pressure on indigenous parents to want their children to acquire English. She highlights an important factor that parents often fail to realize that the sense of power that English is believed to carry in most cases benefits only a few. This point is also emphasised by Bunyi (1999) who argues that English medium based education is the perpetuation of socio-economic inequalities. This type of an education system only produces a small percentage of the elite and leaves the majority of citizens not properly equipped to enter the market. This causes social class divisions that are not easy to erase. Such divisions are evident in South Africa today with only a few black South Africans managing to break through the middle class ranks while the majority is left in destitution.

Scholars such as Bunyi (1999) are of the view that a combination of forces is responsible for the current state of indigenous languages in the African continent. It will therefore not be enough to

look only at African governments. Bunyi (1999) believes that for Africa to successfully implement its language policies there is a need for a careful examination of both internal and external forces that shape the linguistic landscape of the continent. The West, according to Stroud (2001) is the central external force that has contributed to marginalization of indigenous languages across Africa. Through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, it has not only exerted economic dependency on Africa but a cultural one too. Colonial cultures continue to be ingrained into the minds of African children through imported education. Bunyi (1999) is in agreement with Stroud (2001) that neo colonial forces, through the United Nations organs have major influence on how education is conducted in Africa. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, through neo-colonial programmes in Africa, have for many decades stood in the way of African language policies that seek to put indigenous languages in the centre. This is a critical point as it exposes that the United Nations could be engaging in double speak where on one hand UNESCO is championing the rights of indigenous knowledges (as I outlined in chapter one) while on the other hand some organs are working against those efforts. This, in my view, is where the calls for a formidable African governments' leadership become more relevant to better assert the struggles of African countries on international stages. The role of the UN cannot be overlooked as it has impacted on the manner in which many African countries crafted their identity after retaining independence from colonial rule. African countries have continued to maintain a power-imbalanced relationship with Western nations and that has affected language usage in African countries.

Parmegiani (2008) is among a few scholars that call for the acceptance of English ownership by sections of the black population in South Africa. Her view however lacks a critical lens through which language ownership can be viewed. Her call is one sided as she seems to only expect black South Africans to be allowed to take ownership of the English language and says nothing about English and Afrikaans speakers who have made a home in South Africa centuries ago yet have no knowledge let alone attachment to indigenous languages. Her theoretical proposition of English ownership does not attempt to challenge the position of English as a powerful language whose stripes were earned through brutal colonial practices. She does not acknowledge the fact that the coloniality in which the English language is positioned is at the core of why some students, parents and even teachers would want to claim English as their own. The colonial powers created linguistic hierarchies which were racially organized and that ensured that indigenous languages are at the bottom.

Evidence shows that indigenous languages status is a matter that concerns not just South Africa but the entire African continent. Brock-Utne (2001) demonstrates the varying language struggles different African countries face. She puts South Africa in the same category as Namibia, and Uganda as good examples of countries that have policies that are in favour of indigenous languages but are not implemented. Thondhlana (2002) believes that Zimbabwe forms part of such countries too. In Zimbabwe, according to Thondhlana (2002), English is the dominant language of business and the recognition of indigenous languages as official languages is only realized on paper. Zambia, according to Kavwaya (2009), presents an interesting case where, under colonial rule, home languages in schools were used as media of instruction but, with independence, came policies that replaced mother tongues with English in lower grades. Kavwaya (2009) found that both parents and teachers were opposed to these post-colonial changes and preferred the usage of their mother tongue languages especially in the first years of primary school.

Despite these struggles, Brock-Utne (2001) is encouraged by efforts from different African states to reintroduce the African languages debate. Languages need to top the African agenda once more. Africa needs to go back to a period when the use and status of African languages was the continent's concern. As highlighted by Phillipson (1996) the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union) as far back as 1986 prepared a language plan for Africa to enforce the promotion of indigenous languages by member states. They made undertakings that have led me to believe that had they been implemented, the African continent would not be sitting with the current language problem.

### **2.3.2 Multilingualism in media.**

Media as Prah (2006) observed, has also served as a vehicle to further marginalize African languages here in South Africa. Print media is 90% English and Afrikaans in a country where the majority of people are indigenous language speakers. Print remains a strong arm of media which is still largely not transformed. In South Africa today there are even fewer respectable newspapers in indigenous languages than there were before the dawn of democracy in 1994. The existing ones have not even made it to the mainstream. They remain localized in tiny corners of the country. The *Isolesizwe* in Kwa Zulu Natal remains the lone success and a good example that information can be disseminated in indigenous languages.

Media is therefore largely dominated by the concerns, the preoccupations and the interests of the minority (Prah, 2006). The aim of the media is to inform citizens about what is going on in their country. If the information is delivered in a language the majority is not proficient in, it can be concluded that only the minority needs to know about what is happening in the country. In the media, language policy only entered the discourse several years into democracy. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), for example, started implementing language policies in year 2000. Slabbert, van der Berg and Finlayson (2007) believe that the national broadcaster needs to be lauded for its efforts, however late because through its language sensitive programmes, the SABC has managed to adhere with policy requirements.

Small strides have also been taken by the free to air television channel, etv through the introduction of the African language news slot in their channels. Subscription television channel, DSTV has also made steps towards the inclusion of African languages through the recent addition of several channels that air soap operas, game shows and short films in various African languages.

For de Kadt (2005) the main problem for the post-apartheid government is not that it is not able to deal with language issues but it has not prioritized them. Phillipson (1996) shares de Kadt's (2005) view that Africa does not treat language problems with the urgency they deserve.

This is a point with which Professor Mmusi of Limpopo University agrees. Speaking at the international conference of African languages and literature held in Botswana in August 2014, Professor Mmusi stated that the media could be useful in ensuring that African languages are promoted and preserved if the government, media industry and society in general would take the task seriously. For Professor Mmusi, the relaxed attitude on the usage of African languages in mass media has sustained media houses that are not committed to change. She emphasised the need for the media to start taking indigenous languages seriously and one way of doing that would be introducing them to media studies curricula. This, in my view, is an important suggestion that should not only be applied to media studies but transcend to other fields.

## **Conclusion.**

What one draws from literature on the status of indigenous languages in post-Apartheid South Africa is that evidence which demonstrates that the country has moved away from pre-democratisation policies is mainly realized on paper. Language policy efforts by the post-Apartheid government have shown to be lacking will and decisive strategies for implementation. As depicted in this chapter, government commitment to promote the use of indigenous languages is of outmost importance. It has proven successful in the apartheid era with the development of Afrikaans and important lessons can be drawn from that. Cooperation between various sectors of the society has been seen as critical in ensuring that language policies are properly implemented.

Available literature on the status of indigenous languages has largely been based on quantitative research, desktop studies and scholarly papers with no in-depth focus on the perceptions of people who are directly affected by post-apartheid era policies on indigenous languages. While these studies are useful in shaping our understanding of the current status of indigenous languages, the knowledge body could benefit from qualitative explorative work which is inclusive of a variety of voices from a multicultural context which might provide alternative views and perceptions on the state on indigenous languages within South African. One of the few qualitative studies available is that of Brock-Utme & Holmarsdottir (2004) who conducted an observation study of classroom challenges in multicultural school contexts. The limitation of this study was its lack of perceptions of those who were observed about their experiences of having to conduct their lessons or being taught in English instead of their mother tongues.

Most of the studies reviewed in this chapter provide clear insights about situations where languages are neatly grouped but do not speak much to situations where communities have more than one dominant indigenous language. This is what gives the current study a unique angle. Its focus on the Gauteng province which, is a cultural melting pot of South Africa allows us an in-depth look at the complex language dynamics South Africa presents. As the chapter has shown, there had been some inroads with language policy implementation in provinces such as Kwa-Zulu Natal where only one dominant indigenous language had to be developed into a language of business, but there are no studies about provinces where a multiple of indigenous languages are prevalent.

There is also scant literature on perceptions of those in key policy decision-making positions and those are critical in our quest to understand the current status of indigenous languages. There is only one study which incorporated views of parents, students and policy implementers and it was in Ethiopia. It is against this background that I deemed this current study as crucial as it gives voice not only to the recipients of policy decisions but also to those who play a key role in making those decisions here in South Africa.

### Chapter 3

#### Theoretical Underpinnings

As depicted in preceding chapters, the current positioning of indigenous languages is rooted in oppressive practices that were brought to South Africa by colonialism and apartheid and it therefore requires to be gazed through theories that challenge the colonial standpoint. As such, I elected to use decolonial thought as a theoretical framework and a lens through which I approached this study. Decolonial thought urges scholars to challenge colonial thinking in scholarship and devise new ways of constructing perceptions of humanity and social realities that are devoid of Eurocentric perspectives through a process called decolonisation (Grosfoguel, 2007). Yellow Bird (as cited in Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2012, p. 3) defines decolonisation as “*the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands*”. Scholars of decolonial thought argue that the democratisation of former colonies ushered in the neo-colonial period which is characterised by the absence of colonial administrators but the presence of colonial forms of being. They label this period as coloniality and advocate for it to be interrogated for its continuation of dehumanising practices inherited from the colonial times (Grosfoguel, 2007; Nyoni, 2013). In South Africa, the continuation of Eurocentric systems (coloniality) has often gone unchallenged, with spheres such as education, commerce, law and medicine (among others) still operating as they did before democratisation. Evident to this is the continuous usage of colonial languages as official languages in those spheres.

Mignolo's (2011) conceptualisation of decolonisation introduces us, students of decoloniality, to the concept of de-linking which I interpreted to mean dissociating from neocolonial thinking which, for so many years, has aided the colonial project. Mignolo (2011) regards decoloniality as an option which de-links from colonial and neocolonial perceptions of reality. According to Mignolo (2011), colonialism disqualified indigenous life and thought and this started by excluding languages that were not from the leading colonial countries. These languages were considered inferior and not apt for rational thought. They were only seen as exposing the inferiority of their speakers. People who therefore did not belong to the languages of rational thinking and enlightenment were left to accept their inferiority by assimilating colonial cultures. Assimilation as seen by Mignolo (2011) draws a person into playing a game that is imposed upon him/her. It is an imposed game in the sense that the inferiorised, once they have assimilated the dominant culture, become who that culture dictates them to be. Mignolo (2011) suggests that the

inferiorised should not only change what this game is about but also how it is played. By that he means an ontological and epistemic shift has to take place for decoloniality to be fully achieved. How reality is perceived and related to has to change drastically to include a variety of lenses. For Mignolo, (2011) non-European languages together with many other knowledge systems that are not European were made ontologically inferior through an epistemology that is imperialistic which constructed inferiority and superiority categories. He perceives these categories as lies that should be uncovered. Mignolo (2011) believes that people who are perceived as inferior need to refuse to live according to these established categories and by doing so they would have performed what he coined as de-linking, which means a rejection of the imposed notions. To de-link is to show that another option is available. He calls it an option because he believes that there could be other means to challenge colonialism and decolonisation is just one of them. It is an option which challenges ontologic and epistemic racism that declare non-western realities inferior. Mignolo (2011) also urges the marginalised to perform epistemic disobedience (reject the inferiority positioning the west has bestowed and with which it continues to relate to those it perceives inferior). This positioning has been made possible by, as Nyamnjoh (2013) argues, the manner in which knowledge in Africa is produced which is still characterised by inequalities in what is produced as knowledge, its dissemination and how that knowledge is consumed. Knowledge for Nyamnjoh (2013) is often reported as a product of researchers who know very little about the experiences of the people they are writing about, it involves no proper communication with the Africans who are subjects of the process. He suggests epistemological conviviality which he describes as an openness to various forms of knowledges. Epistemic disobedience and conviviality are similar concepts with the sole aim of rejecting the colonial reality imposed by the western world. By applying these concepts, the inferiorised would be challenging regional beliefs (where the region is Europe) that have been deceitfully coined universal and have operated to undermine other existing knowledges (Mignolo, 2011).

Nsamenang (2007) has been among formidable voices emerging from Africa to question coloniality in knowledge systems and especially in the field of education and psychology. Nsamenang (2007) writes critically of Western interventions in Africa that continue to dehumanise the peoples of the continent by disregarding their knowledge systems that are imbedded in their cultures. For Nsamenang (2007), early childhood education in Africa, which is the critical stage of language acquisition is prescribed by Western countries. An African child, therefore, is transported

to a foreign environment when taken to school which bears no resemblance to his or her life at home. For Nsamenang (2007), an imported education system contributes to the destruction of indigenous knowledge systems and denies African children a right to their heritage. It devalues children's individual and cultural identity by disposing them of their linguistic rights.

This disposition of linguistic rights could be better understood through Gordon's (2007) lens. Gordon (2007) speaks of the concept of invisibility and appearance of colonised bodies. That black lives are virtually invisible in the public domain, their experiences, contributions, and their knowledges are not reflected. He believes an answer to that is a difficult process of making an appearance. It is difficult in the sense they would need to determine who or what they appear as (they would need to find a way to assert their presence). The issue of indigenous languages forms part of the invisibility Gordon (2007) highlights. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, indigenous languages are absent in a variety of spheres and that has been instrumental in making black South Africans invisible. For, if they do not have their languages, they do not have a voice. Gordon (2007) suggests that the colonised emerge or appear and by that he means they should appear violently (not in the literal sense). In the context of this study, the demands for indigenous languages to be recognized and used could be seen as a way of appearing and taking an uncompromising stance in making such demands could be labeled as violently appearing. Once indigenous people gain language, they would gain a voice and visibility in the world. For Manganyi (1981) black people who are absorbed by the new (colonial) language are alienated from their blackness. To therefore regain your language is to bring yourself back to your identity. Manganyi (1981) believes that what happened to South African languages was a result of the negative development of culture which was facilitated by the oppressive white regimes. He also sees language as the powerful instrument which was used to make sure that the psycho-social domination of Africans by Europeans was possible and therefore should be the tool that liberates black people from such domination.

The work of Stephen Bantu Biko, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Frantz Fanon has helped me explore the issue of the dominance of colonial languages in an era which is supposedly postcolonial. These authors' work on blackness and decolonisation provide useful insights into the phenomena of languages in the colonised world. They all speak extensively about the Psychological impact of

colonial rule upon the colonised people and their observations remain relevant in post-colonial Africa.

Fanon (1986) makes an important contribution to this study as his work provides the roots of the language struggles many former European colonies face today, years after they regained their independence. Fanon's thoughts are based on his experience in the Caribbean island of Martinique (which was once a French colony) but I have made them to be even more relevant to the reality of the African continent by using them in conjunction with Biko and wa Thiong'o's decolonial work. wa Thiong'o (1986) believes that the decision which was taken in Berlin (Germany) in 1884 by European powers, to divide Africa into colonies of various countries of Europe was the root cause of language problems the continent is grappling with today. It is continuously re-fashioned and over the years has taken varying forms whose sole aim is still the same- to have a strangle hold over Africa. For wa Thiong'o (1986) imperialism both in its colonial and neo-colonial phases is continuously forcing African countries to view the world as prescribed by the West. It continues to control every sphere of African life (politics, economy and cultures among others).

When the colonisers came into contact with the colonised, they imposed themselves as superior and that was accomplished through the use of language and violence (Biko, 2004; Fanon, 1986; wa Thiong'o, 1986). Violence as Fanon (1986) notes, characterised the very first encounter between Europeans and peoples of the colonised lands. The invasion of land and enslavement of people according to Fanon (1986) was made possible by massive use of physical violence. Once the land was conquered psychological violence (which relied on language) was introduced to further entrench colonial ideals. This does not mean that the coloniser abandoned physical violence. Physical violence continued to be an option where psychological violence encountered resistance. It was institutionalised and became a normalised response to resistance by the colonised (Fanon, 1986). How both language and violence worked in harmony to destroy the dignity of the colonised is best illustrated by wa Thiong'o (1986, p.9) when he states that "Berlin 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet but the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and blackboard- the physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom". In explaining his illustration of the dichotomy of the physical and psychological violence he borrows from Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *Ambiguous adventure* (published in 1961) where colonialism is seen as being about "knowing how to kill with efficiency

and heal with the same art”. For wa Thiong’o (1986, p. 9) “physical violence made the conquest permanent and the school fascinated the soul”. Language was a critical instrument used to fascinate and imprison the soul and wa Thiong’o (1986, p.9) sees it as a “means to spiritual subjugation”. The fascination of the soul refers to the way in which European cultures were made to find comfortable space in the minds of African children. This was ensured, as Biko (2004) states, by the manner in which European cultures were introduced which gave the colonised no option to reject them. They were introduced as universal and that made certain that African cultures existed as mere appendages to dominant European cultures. South Africa, thus, became something which looked like a province or an island of Europe. Biko (2004) is critical of this notion of universal western cultures as it served to inferiorise African cultures. It was sold to Africans by colonisers as a form of cultural evolution. Biko (2004) perceives that as misleading because only European aspects were prominent in the newly introduced ways of being. The languages of Europe, for example took centre stage and African languages became only relevant in confined spaces such as family. This has been linked by some scholars to the disruption of the real cultural evolution. For example, Waziyatawin (as cited in Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005) states that language evolution (which is an integral part of cultural evolution) is a natural process which happens when people find words for new things they encounter in their environments such as new technological inventions. However, Waziyawatin (as cited in Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005) believes that language evolution came into a halt in most colonised countries when people stopped formulating their own vocabulary but relied on colonial languages to describe the changing world. This has contributed to the death of many indigenous languages in various parts of the colonised world as these languages could no longer expand.

Colonial languages were used by the coloniser to introduce the colonial world/culture to the colonised. With the introduction of Western education in the colonised world, schools according to Biko (2004), Fanon, (1986) and wa Thiong’o (1986) became a tool to introduce, entrench and normalize European cultures. Among other functions, schools were designed to define and describe the world. Through Western education the world got only to be defined and described by the coloniser because they used the colonisers’ language. When the colonised entered the school system they acquired a new culture and returned home no longer themselves but dislocated and separated from their origins (Fanon, 1986; Biko, 2004). wa Thiong’o (1986) refers to this sense of separation as the “colonial alienation”, where African children disassociated from their natural and

social environments. This caused learning for the colonial child to become separate from his or her home life. There was no synergy between the child's academic world and the world of his or her upbringing because schools ingrained the opposite of what was taught and practiced at home. Because culture is a product of history, an African child got to learn only about the history of a foreign world. Schools, according to Fanon (1986), did not only serve as sites where European cultures were made superior, they were also used by colonials as avenues where the cultures of the colonised were demonised and inferiorised. Biko (2004) agrees that imperialism cleansed black people's brains of all forms of substance by destroying and distorting their past thus ridding them of a cultural point of reference which helps to keep a people alive. African cultures were declared barbarism, religion and customs dubbed superstition and history misrepresented (Biko, 2004).

Nyamnjoh (2012) agrees with assertions made above that colonisation emphasised imitation of western ways rather than a celebration of the multiplicity of human reality. According to Nyamnjoh, (2012) Africans have been conquered in every area of their being by the West and their epistemologies have been replaced by the western single dimensional epistemology which has served to oppress the African child. The inability of the Western epistemology to compromise and co-exist with other epistemologies has caused the West to want to convert everything which bears no resemblance to it and to resort to violence if such conversion fails (Nyamnjoh, 2012). Violence, as Fanon (1986) points out, has for centuries helped to maintain the power imbalances between the coloniser and the colonised.

The imposed presence of white people on black people meant that the black reality is constantly challenged, distorted and the end result, as diagnosed by Fanon (1986), is inferiority complex. The inferiority complex forces black people to need to bring themselves one step closer to whiteness/white world/ white reality (Fanon, 1986; Biko, 2004). Fanon is among the first authors to examine the psychological impact of colonialism and the damage it has caused the colonised people through an array of colonising strategies such as imposing a Western reality as the only meaningful reality and the crafting of internalised inferiority which led to the assimilation of the coloniser's world by the colonised. Here, in South Africa, such work was taken up by Biko (2004, p.74) who famously stated that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" in an effort to bring forth the importance of freeing the mind from the psychological oppression bestowed by the colonials. Since the colonial era, the colonised has felt compelled to do

everything in his/her power to disassociate with his/her culture/roots/, the inferior world (dislocates and separates) and assimilate the world of the coloniser. However, Fanon believes that assimilation is futile as black people soon experience a rejection by a world whose civilization they have assimilated. wa Thiong'o (1986) agrees and questions the obsession of African writers to continue to steal from their languages to enrich foreign languages by telling African stories in colonial languages. wa Thiong'o (1986) exposes that such theft is never rewarded by the colonial world, as they never consider the work of African writers as valuable contribution to their languages- it will never be good English or French. These writers ought to draw new paths for African languages yet they too are defined and define themselves in languages of the coloniser (wa Thiong'o, 1986). They are still of the belief that the renaissance of African cultures lies in colonial languages. As Fanon (1986) indicates, it does not matter how well a black person masters the white world, he/she will never be fully accepted by the white society and at the same time he/she will be rejected by the black world he/she had opted to dislocate or separate from.

The above could be better understood through Fanon's (1986) notion of two zones - the zone of being and the zone of non-being which sees the world as divided into two. As shown above, the coloniser divided the world as being composed of the superior and the inferior zones. For Fanon, (1986) the zone of being comprised by the superior race and the zone of non-being is made up of the inferior (as seen by the Westernised eye). These two zones are separated by the human line where those dubbed superior are found above the line with their humanity unquestioned and accepted in all spheres of life. Those considered inferior are found below the human line and are looked down upon as sub-humans. Within these two zones lie intricacies important not to overlook if we are to properly understand how Fanon (1986) saw racism operate. We need to understand that within each zone there are hierarchies of inferiority and superiority but the human line determines how they operate. In the zone of inferiority (non-being) the hierarchies are arranged in such a way that your humanity will always be perceived as inferior, you will never be above the human line. This, I have demonstrated above when I pointed to how the assimilation of Western cultures does not yield to the acceptance of the colonised people into the coloniser's world. While the superior will always be above the human line, enjoying the privileges their race affords them whether they are viewed superior or inferior within their group.

Decolonial theory calls upon people who are interested in decolonial work to use the suppressed knowledges to reclaim lost freedoms and indigenous languages can play an instrumental role in such a project. The critical issue for Fanon is for black people to understand that they are responsible for their freedoms. It will be ineffectual to try to prove to the white world that black people are not the labels they put on them hence the need to focus on knowing who they are for themselves is key. Biko also proposes a similar liberating tool which he calls ‘inward looking’. Biko (2004) believes that the usage of colonial languages instills feelings of inadequacy among Africans, especially in institutions of learning, thus acting as the key ingredient for the inferiority complex. Part of inward looking, therefore, is about black people acknowledging that they can never be as good as colonial language speakers in colonial languages and start looking into embracing their indigenous languages. Manganyi (1973) perceives inward looking as fashioning of a new way of being a black person in the world. He believes that this will facilitate change in the way in which black South Africans relate to their black bodies and community and move away from what was prescribed by the white world. wa Thiong’o (1986) believes that looking inwardly involves not only a mere embrace of languages but using them to deal with the struggles faced by peoples of the African continent. These languages must be used to fight imperialism and neo-colonial systems that keep alive dehumanising practices of the colonial era (which include the disregard of indigenous languages). The essence of wa Thiong’o (1986), Biko’s (2004), and Fanon’s (1986) thoughts is that decolonisation involves turning the imperial system up-side-down to unlearn the distortions about what it means to be African and fashion an era of African children who have pride in who they are and at the centre of that, is the usage of indigenous languages. Mental liberation is one important tool for these three authors as the colonial project used the mind to entrench colonial ideals. They believe it is necessary to free the mind of colonial content and replace it with self-affirming messages that are in line with the restoration of African dignity.

Decolonial theory has helped me understand that the neo-colonial era which South Africa entered when apartheid was abolished has been fertile ground on which colonial practices continued in a manner which is covert yet very dangerous. Based on the absence of indigenous languages in the professional sphere, it can be argued that for as old as South Africa’s democracy is, it has operated on the pretext of liberation while colonial teachings remained ingrained. Decolonial theory demands that marginalised people deal with those ingrained teachings that make them stall in realizing that a truly liberated South Africa needs its indigenous languages. As it shall

be demonstrated in the next chapter, the findings of this study point to calls by participants to take the fight for the proper recognition of indigenous languages to the forefront and it is my aim to make sure that those voices are not lost. I aim to ensure that the dissemination of the knowledge gained from this study reaches platforms that will make the voices of the participants heard, not only by government, but by other fellow South Africans who have a role to play in restoring the status of indigenous languages in South Africa.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **4.1 Methodology.**

In this study I employed qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is a wing of Social Science research which is concerned with textual descriptions of a phenomenon. It helps researchers understand how human beings perceive their social realities by asking in-depth questions about their perspectives and experiences (Bernard, 1995). Qualitative methodology is not concerned about generalizing its findings to a larger population but with understanding a particular group of people. I elected to use qualitative research methodology in this study because the aim was to explore experiences and perceptions of selected government departments, youth and parents/guardians on the status of indigenous languages.

#### **4.2 Sampling Technique**

I used purposive sampling method to recruit participants to the study. As purposive sampling requires, according to Wilson and McLean (2011), I used the knowledge, judgment and human resources available to me as a researcher to get people to participate in the study. I selected Gauteng province for its cultural diversity and availability of people with different home languages. Purposive sampling was complemented by snowball technique where through the people who were selected purposefully more people could be identified (Wilson & McLean, 2011). This was useful in recruiting participants for narrative interviews. I employed two research assistants to assist with the recruitment of focus group participants, they also helped in recruiting two of the five township youth participants who took part in narrative interviews.

Their service was only limited to recruitment, organizing venues, standing by as translators during interviews and focus group discussions, translating informed consent forms and assisting with transcribing recorded interviews. Participants were asked beforehand the preferred language for interviews, I therefore knew prior to the interview if it was going to be necessary to have an assistant in the interview room. It was only during the township focus group discussion that a research assistant had to sit in because interviewees indicated that they spoke multiple languages. Prior to the commencement of the recruitment of participants and data collection, I had meetings with the two research assistants where we ran through what I expected of them during the process and ensured they understood everything about the study. The learning during these meetings was reciprocal as

they also taught me about the socio-political landscape of different Gauteng communities which became useful during the interviews. I consider myself an outsider in Gauteng despite the 10 years I have spent as a resident in one of the suburban areas and as a professional. My understanding of the province was superficial as it was based on limited interactions with the people close to me. I therefore appreciated the education the research assistants provided and it helped me collect quality data.

#### **4.3 Sample size.**

##### ***4.3.1 Narrative interviews.***

The sample for this study comprised narratives from 10 youth who started their primary school education post 1994. There was only one participant whose schooling commenced four years prior to 1994. I was not clear about his age until the day of the interview. I decided to go ahead with the interview since he had spent most of his schooling years under the democratic government. The youth narrative sample therefore comprised of young people aged between 19 and 32 years. Five of these young people are currently residing in suburban areas of the Gauteng province and the other five reside in townships, also in Gauteng province.

##### ***4.3.2 Focus group discussions.***

In addition to narrative interviews, two focus group discussions with parents/guardians from selected sub-urban and township communities in Gauteng Province were conducted to explore thoughts of South African parents/guardians about the status of indigenous languages. A total of eight participants comprised each focus group. I aimed for equal sex representation but it became difficult to recruit male participants. Some of them pulled out on the last minute due to personal commitments. The research assistants suspected that the fact that the focus groups were scheduled on a weekend had an impact. In the end there were seven females and one male in each focus group discussion.

##### ***4.3.3 In-depth interviews with stakeholders.***

I also conducted five in-depth interviews with key policy informants who are tasked with the implementation of the post-apartheid language policies. They were asked questions relating to the efforts made to implement post-apartheid language policies. I intended to explore their perceptions of success, what they perceive as challenges standing in the way of implementing set policies and their

views on what needs to happen to fully realize the promises enshrined in section 6 of the South African constitution.

I had hoped that the mixed methods approach I used in this study would allow me to generate a distinctly different set of perspectives that would shed some insight on aspects of the languages discourse in South Africa. However as the results reveal, the different methods elicited similar themes which located South Africa's language issues as stemming from oppression, the impact of which is the devaluation of not just languages but cultures as well, demanding action be taken by all those affected by the current positioning of indigenous languages. This, I considered a powerful message about indigenous languages that it does not matter which angle you explore it from, the challenges point to the same factors with the core issue being coloniality.

#### **4.4 Sample characteristics.**

In this section I describe the composition of the sample, focusing on the characteristics of the participants. Such characteristics include their demographic information (age, sex, level of education and employment status). Youth and parents/guardians' characteristics are categorized according to geographic area.

##### ***4.4.1. Youth from suburban areas.***

Five black South African youth from two suburban areas (Arcadia and Centurion) in Pretoria participated in the first set individual narrative interviews. I conducted the interviews in the language of their preference (three interviews were conducted in a combination of isiXhosa/isiZulu and English while the other two were in English only). The participants were between ages 24 to 32 and there were two males and three females. The demographic information of the participants is illustrated in table 1 below.

**Table. 1. Demographic information**

<b>Age in years</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Home language</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Participant pseudonym</b>
32	Male	Xhosa	Matric	Employed	Government	Xola
24	Female	Xhosa	Matric +post matric certificate	Working student	Retail	Nozipho
28	Female	Xhosa	National Diploma	Employed	Finance	Xolelwa
26	Male	Zulu	Masters Degree	Employed	Government	Ntando
27	Female	Pedi	Matric	Employed	Retail	Dikeledi

#### ***4.4.2 Youth from townships.***

Five young people who reside in various townships of Gauteng province (Soweto, Soshanguve, Atteridgeville) formed the second part of narrative interviews. Four interviews were conducted in English and one was in isiZulu and English. As it was the case with the first set of interviews, the languages used were based on the participants' preference. The participants were between ages 19 to 26 years. There were three males and two females and table 2 depicts further demographic details.

**Table. 2. Demographic information**

<b>Age in years</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Home language</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Participant pseudonym</b>
19	Male	Sepedi	Grade 12	Student	N/A	MJ
25	Male	Seshangane	Grade 11	Self Employed	Entertainment (Dancer)	Kleva
25	Male	TshiTsonga	1st year university	Student	N/A	Mbuzani
21	Female	Zonga(Mozambican-South African)	1st year university	Student	N/A	Gugu
21	Female	Isindebele	Grade 12	Employed	Retail	Boity

**4.4.3 Focus group discussions with parents/guardians.**

As indicated earlier two focus group discussions were conducted in addition to narrative interviews. The first focus group was composed of parents/guardians who reside in suburban areas (Centurion and Midrand) and the participants in the second focus group discussion were township residents (Soweto). As indicated earlier, participants in both focus group discussions came from multilingual backgrounds and were encouraged to use a language of their preference during the discussion. The suburban discussion was mainly in English while Sesotho, isiZulu and English were the main languages of communication during the township discussion. A research assistant helped with the translation of Sesotho as my understanding of the language is still elementary. I was the only person who required translation, the participants displayed a perfect grasp of all the languages used. The composition of both focus group discussions is illustrated in table 3 and 4 below.

**Table 3. Township focus group**

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Participant pseudonym</b>
50-59	F	MA	Employed	Nomzamo
20-29	M	Grade 11	Employed	Thabanyane
50-59	F	Matric	Retired	Sisipho
50-59	F	Matric	Unemployed	Dudu
30-39	F	Matric	Employed	Nomonde
30-39	F	B degree	Student	Nomhle
40-49	F	Matric	Unemployed	Zipho
30-39	F	Matric	Employed	Notash

**Table 4. Suburban focus group**

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Employment status</b>	<b>Participant pseudonym</b>
40-49	F	B degree	Employed	Ntombi
40-49	M	B degree	Employed	Themba
30-39	F	Honours degree	Employed	Linda
40-49	F	Not stated	Employed	Xoliswa
40-49	F	Honours degree	Employed	Makosha
30-39	F	B degree	Unemployed	Thando
30-39	F	Honours degree	Employed	Nostah
40-49	F	Matric	Unemployed	Nolitha

#### *4.4.4 In-depth interviews with key policy stakeholders*

The key policy informants who participated in in-depth interviews included;

4.4.4.1 One participant from the language policy section of the Department of Basic Education

4.4.4.2 One participant from the Centre for Higher Education

4.4.4.3 One participant from the Cultural Religious and Linguistics rights commission.

4.4.4.4 One participant from the Department of Arts and culture

4.4.4.5 One participant who works for a national organization which cannot be divulged (due to inability to obtain consent from the head of the organisation). The participant spoke to me on her capacity as a language scholar/expert on the issue of indigenous languages in South Africa.

#### **4.5 Data collection**

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Narratives aimed at gathering individual language journeys of young people that were independent of one another and located in specific social contexts. The aim was to explore the interplay of having grown up in a newly acquired democracy but raised by parents who spent their formidable years under oppression and how that impacts on young people's language acquisition and usage. These stories helped in mapping out the narrative of indigenous languages and its evolution over the years.

Focus group discussions were chosen because they do not just provide descriptive accounts of how a phenomenon is experienced but also allow participants to critically engage not only with their own but also with fellow group members' experiences thus construct or deconstruct discourses. I designed the focus group discussion guide which comprised questions that channeled the group discussion to produce discourses of parents/guardians about indigenous languages. All questions were open-ended and allowed me to probe and direct the discussion to various angles, deepening the conversation with different topics and sub-topics.

In-depth interviews from various stakeholders added insight into the successes and challenges that have impacted the implementation of post-apartheid language policies in various departments and constitutional bodies that are tasked with safeguarding the linguistic rights of every citizen in the

country. The fact that the interviews were in-depth allowed for a deeper interrogation of language policies and their contribution to the current status of indigenous languages.

Interview schedules were designed to collect data from youth and key policy national stakeholders of language policy implementation. The individual interviews were useful since the aim was to gather personal journeys (in the case of narrative interviews) and experiences specific to departments or constitutional bodies (in the case of in-depth interviews). This would have been impossible through focus group discussions, as the aim was to get detailed information about the phenomenon. Focus group discussion would not have allowed me to pay individual attention to each participant. The interview schedules were semi-structured with open ended questions. The structure of the interview varied between interviews depending on how the interview commenced. Participants were not restricted to respond only to posed questions. They were given liberty to raise matters they thought were important for the topic.

The interviews and the focus group discussions were voice recorded, transcribed and translated in a two-fold process. In the first instance, I transcribed and translated all data that was in English, isiXhosa and isiZulu and then gave the recorder to the research assistants to repeat the same procedure. This, I did as a way of assuring quality of the data. The focus group discussion recording which was conducted in a mixture of English, Sesotho and isiZulu was given to research assistants first for translation and transcribing because I do not have full grasp of Sesotho. I then re-listened to the recording, comparing it to the transcript to ensure that everything was captured accurately. In parts where I did not understand, I sought clarity from the assistants.

#### **4.6 Epistemic relationship**

I chose this topic because of the emotions I went through after I consciously thought about my son's language narrative. This topic is close to my heart as I am a mother who is raising a child who attends an English medium school. I spend my days having to ensure that he has as good a grasp of his home language as he has of the English language. Throughout the research process I was mindful of my fears and my emotional investment to the topic. I exercised extra caution when I dealt with participants who held different opinions to mine and made sure that everyone was allowed equal opportunity to express their opinion without hindrance. And the information they provided is interpreted as a reflection of their thoughts, perspectives and feelings.

I considered my participants as very important role players in this study. The knowledge that will be the end result of this study will emanate largely on what I gained from engaging with them. I was aware of the power I possessed as the researcher and how unequal my position was in relation to the participants. I was made acutely aware of this, especially, during the interviews, once I started probing. I could sense that some participants felt I was critically analysing their responses and they would counter that by modifying the ensuing answers. I curbed this by probing only when I felt it was necessary and occasionally accompanying follow-up questions with assurances that I was only asking because I needed a better understanding of the view presented earlier. These appeared to be useful techniques that I took to each interview.

I approached this topic with an understanding that there were a multiplicity of answers to the questions I had, and an acknowledgement that I too possessed my own assumptions about the topic I am researching. This awareness helped me receive every perceptive from participants with an open mind. I was also privy to the fact that the experiences of participants would vary and I needed to accept that and not expect uniformity which is something that is easy to do especially when the methods one use require that one extracts themes from the data. In very subtle ways methodologies can play a role in channeling the way researchers conduct data collection. During the first two interviews, I found myself aware of how a certain method requires its data to be analysed. I had to remind myself that such thoughts would impact the kind of information I gather and structure the process in a way that defeats the ends of qualitative research. With such thoughts, a researcher could blindly steer data collection to a direction which might suit the method instead of allowing the process to flow in a near -natural form. In ensuing interviews, I was mindful of the fact that the voice of the participant needs to occupy the central place and that the interview should mainly be directed by the responses provided by participants. Ignoring such facts would have impacted negatively on the knowledge production process.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics are key to Social Sciences research as human beings often form part of data collection hence ethical approval to conduct this study was sought and obtained from the University of South Africa (see attached ethical clearance in appendix B). Issues pertaining to respect of participants and the social groups they come from were observed and taken very seriously for the duration of this study. The initial plan was to seek permission to speak with the participants from their community leaders (in the case of narratives and focus group discussions). However, I realized during the data

collection process that such a plan was going to be a futile exercise as participants came from various communities and each community had its own leader. I however ensured that I spoke to community members in the neighbourhood where the interviews were conducted to introduce the study and explain my presence. This only applied to visits that were made to the townships as there were always people outside, looking with interest at my presence. They responded positively and gave words of encouragement. Three of the five participants from the township were referred to me by their friends and were interviewed during lunch hour at my workplace, there were therefore no visits made to their communities. In the suburban areas, the streets were always quiet and nobody looked at who was coming in or out. I sought informed consent from selected participants, I have attached the informed consent form as appendix A. The study did not involve anybody who is younger than 18 years of age and for that reason there was no need to seek parental consent. For in-depth interviews, I sought permission from the head of each organisation or governmental department that was selected to take part in the study. Informed consent was sought from selected participants in each organisation. The identity of participants will remain confidential and the views shared during the process will not be divulged to anyone who was not part of my doctoral process. As mentioned above, all interviews were captured in a voice recorder and permission to use recorders during the interview was sought from each participant.

#### **4.8 Results**

The results presented in this section were categorized into themes emanating from questions presented in table 5 below. The first column consists of questions posed to key policy informants while the second and third columns have questions for youth and parents/guardians respectively. As the table illustrates, even though there were slight similarities in places, the questions posed largely differed.

**Table. 5: Interview schedules and focus group guides**

<b>In-depth Interviews</b>	<b>Narrative Interviews</b>	<b>Focus group guide</b>
How would you rate the success of language policies that were implemented by the first government of the democratic South Africa?	Please tell me, what your home language is?	Please tell me, what your home language is?
What in your opinion were obstacles that affected the implementation of those policies?	I would like you to think back to when you were a child (6-10 years), how important did you think your home language was?	What is the main language of communication in your household? (Probe if this language is the home language and why is the said language mainly used?)
As your department was among those chosen to implement post-apartheid language policies, how would you describe the role you have played?	Was your home language the only language spoken at home? (probe, how did that influence the attitude towards it)	What are your thoughts on the status of indigenous languages in South Africa?
Today, 21 years after the first democratic elections, what in your opinion is the status of Indigenous languages?	What language do you speak most of the time?	Do you think the status of indigenous language has changed since 1994? (Probe based on the response).
What are you currently doing to ensure that section 6 of South African constitution is put to practice?	What makes this language the most spoken?	What do you tell your children about indigenous language languages?
Is the general public a part of any initiatives you embark on to ensure the advancement of indigenous languages?	What are your thoughts about the importance of your home language? (probe based on response)	Did language play a role in your choice of school for the child/children under your care? What role, if any?
Are there measures in place that monitor whether or not you have implemented the mandate on advancement of South Indigenous languages?	Is the government doing enough to make sure that indigenous languages are given the official language status?	Has the government contributed in the way you view indigenous languages?
What do you think needs to be done to ensure that indigenous languages enjoy the same status as English and Afrikaans?	What do your friends think about their home languages?	

#### **4.8.1 Language narratives of youth.**

I asked the 10 young adults who participated in narrative interviews to provide narrative accounts of their language journeys. Narrative approaches in qualitative research entail telling of stories where participants act as story tellers or narrators and the researcher interprets the stories (Sandelowski, 1991). Sandelowski (1991) describes narratives as a list of occurrences or accounts where researchers are expected to draw meaning from such accounts. For the current study participants were asked to give explorative accounts of their language experience in South Africa. The meaning they attach to their acquisition of language or languages, the key players in their language journey and their perceptions on the future of languages were at the centre of their stories. The most critical aspect that I trod carefully on, is my role in the process of both collecting stories and drawing meaning from each story. The aim was to ensure that I am aware of my own preoccupations with the subject as I attempted to draw meaning from each story. This study took the explorative narrative approach because it sought to explore individual narratives and how they relate to one another.

#### **4.8.2 Suburban youth.**

The narratives of young people from suburban areas consisted of three participants who came to Gauteng in their late teens and early twenties. Of those, two (Xola and Xolelwa) were raised in the Eastern Cape where the majority of people speak isiXhosa while one (Ntando) grew up in Kwa Zulu Natal where isiZulu is the dominant language. The narratives of these three participants comprised various commonalities which included their perceptions of the role of home language in identity formation, the link between language and culture and the impact of social environment on home language usage. As revealed by their stories, they grew up with a strong sense of attachment to their home languages. On one hand, to Xolelwa, this sense was instilled by her mother. She grew up in a community that spoke isiXhosa, Sesotho and what is regarded in her community as a dialect of isiXhosa known as isiHlubi. Her mother discouraged her and her sisters from using the dialect fearing that they will lose the command of isiXhosa. Ntando and Xola, on the other hand, reported that the sense of attachment was shaped by their social environment. They were never exposed to other languages until they were older. Xola indicated that there was isiMpondo dialect in one of the villages he briefly lived in but that never impacted on his command of isiXhosa as his community did not regard it as the main language. Even its speakers identified as amaXhosa. Ntando is from KwaZulu Natal (KZN). He never knew that other

indigenous languages existed until he left KZN for Pretoria in 2014. He was only properly introduced to English at university. This, it could be argued, illustrates a variety of factors and among them is the fact that people are capable of functioning perfectly with only their home languages. Another factor is that when a language is embraced in a social context, it instills a sense of pride and attachment to its speakers. This is what the introduction of foreign languages through the schooling system robs black South African children of, an opportunity to identify positively with their languages.

The other two participants (Nozipho and Dikeledi), who have lived in Gauteng Province longer than those discussed above, expressed a detachment from their home languages. Dikeledi, who was born in a Pretoria township, reported an inability to converse in her home language, Sepedi, because it was never spoken neither at home nor in her community. People in her township communicate in slang known in Pretoria as isiPitori (loosely translated as Pretorian). In her household, only her grandfather spoke Sepedi properly and never put pressure on them to speak like him. Nozipho is also a female in her early twenties whose home language is isiXhosa. She reportedly lost the grasp of her home language when she moved to Gauteng as a child (before her fifth birthday). Nozipho revealed that her mother was not strict about the usage of the home language in their household and that resulted in the dominant usage of the English language. She also attributes her relaxed attitude toward the usage of her mother tongue to her godparents who only spoke English to her and encouraged the acquisition of Dutch. Even though Nozipho's grasp of her home language was poor, she reported a good grasp of other indigenous languages such as isiZulu and Sesotho which she learnt in Soweto where they first resided upon their arrival in Gauteng province. Irrespective of their reported poor command of their home languages, Dikeledi and Nozipho felt that home languages are important and were saddened that they seem to be fading.

#### 4.8.3 Language and identity.

Concepts such as identity, tradition, culture and originality were common in narratives of participants who indicated that they still speak their home language. For example, when explaining why his home language is important Ntando stated:

*“Your originality goes with your language, how can I put it, amasiko like traditionally, like if I am among people who speak English, I’ll develop a sense that I am more like those people. If they do not do cultural related things, I’ll also abandon my culture because I’ve adopted their ways. I may start thinking it is also best for me to turn my back on these cultural related things forgetting that it’s my originality. Because I use their language, I’ll start thinking I am like those people. And turn my back on my culture and all that”.*

Ntando is lucid in showing that language, history, culture and identity are interrelated concepts and that language is the main facilitator of such linkage. As Ntando states language carries its speakers’ culture. When a person acquires a language, therefore, they will unavoidably assimilate the culture of such a language.

Nozipho and Dikeledi who indicated a poor grasp of home languages, tended to use phrases like “who you are” and “where you come from” when talking about the importance of their home language. They were not as expressive as Xolelwa, Ntando or Xola. The latter tended to use a formidable vocabulary such as identity (instead of who you are), origins/originality (instead of where you come from) and the concept of culture and tradition were prominent in their narratives compared to Nozipho and Dikeledi. Nozipho and Dikeledi’s narrative were, however, not entirely identical. For example Nozipho displayed an attachment to the English language which was absent in Dikeledi’s story. Dikeledi stated that she only speaks English when she felt it was necessary, for example, when she is at work and is dealing with people who do not understand Setswana (isiPitori). On the contrary, Nozipho indicated that at home she uses a combination of English and isiXhosa and with her friends she mainly speaks English. She also mentioned that her thoughts are in English and that she finds English not as complicated as isiXhosa.

#### **4.8.4 Gauteng- one mouth, many tongues!**

The three participants who demonstrated an attachment to their home language did not see a need to speak English with other black people. Xolelwa indicated that she is fluent in Sesotho which is similar to Setswana which is the dominant language in Pretoria and she is also learning Sepedi. She reported that she prefers to communicate with people in their home languages. Ntando, who comes from kwa Zulu-Natal stated that he is learning Setswana and speaks it a lot with his friends. His eagerness to learn local languages was prompted by his need for a sense of safety and security. This feeling arose a few days after he arrived in Pretoria when he was mistaken for a Nigerian man because he could not speak Setswana. That pressurized him to learn local languages because he thought about the ill-treatment foreigners undergo in Kwa-Zulu Natal and feared to be subjected to such. Another reason he is learning local languages, as he reported, was the inferiority complex he developed due to his inability to speak Setswana. It affected his social life as it caused him contribute less in conversations.

On the contrary, Xola reported that he did not see a need to speak local languages despite understanding them perfectly and being able to speak them minimally. He indicated that in conversation, if someone speaks to him in any of the indigenous languages, he responds in his home language isiXhosa and allows the person to use his/her own language. He reported that this approach has worked for him and made him realize that there are more similarities than differences in indigenous languages.

Four of the five participants believed it was an excuse to use diversity as the reason why people should use English as the main language. The excerpt, below, from Xolelwa's narrative captures the sentiment shared by other participants;

*".....Nooooo. It doesn't. How is it divisive? Everyone is free to speak their language. If we find it divisive it would be because we think that one language is more important than the other. I think that idea comes from the belief that foreign languages are more important than ours. Like for example it is because people with such a belief think that the languages that you really need to know are English and Afrikaans. So. They are not divisive at all. So..."*

Language diversity was generally seen as something positive. According to the participants, it allowed people to connect with and learn from one another. All participants indicated either knowing

or understanding one or more indigenous language/languages other than their home language. They all reported friendships outside of their ethnic groups and believe that those relations have aided the acquisition or understanding of other indigenous languages. Diversity was however seen as a challenge when it comes to implementing strategies that seek to promote indigenous languages. Most participants (three out of five suburban participants) indicated that such a project is easier in provinces where there is only one dominant language. Xola for example stated:

*“Eish, that is where the problem is. No one originates from Gauteng. Everyone who is here, even the great grandparents came here to work. So when it comes to a province such as this one, it’s going to be difficult. Like when you go to Soweto, Soweto is big, it has various sections, one for Vendas, one for Shangaans, etc. I went to school in Orlando and most people there speak isiZulu. So addressing issues in isiZulu for example will be a problem. But I think other provinces do not have a problem. (Zethu: You mean they can use their own languages) Yes, they can use their languages. And use a language that will help them understand things better. But the Gauteng matter will be really difficult to deal with”.*

Narratives from suburban youth also indicated a subtle acceptance that English is the language of business. As Dikeledi stated:

*“Probably yeah. Because the business world is English. I think it’s gonna be hard if your child is working and is unable to express themselves. Writing and speaking. It’s gonna be hard. Let me say you get a job and you get to go to an interview and they ask you questions and you can’t even respond. And you don’t even know what they are asking”.*

*Zethu: “What if they just say “I prefer to use a different language”*

*Dikeledi: “ I think , if you say that you prefer a different language, if the interview and the interviewer agree , it doesn’t matter but let’s say you get the job. And when you get the job they tell you you gonna speak in English coz the clientele is mostly white people. You gonna struggle. You can do an interview in the language of your choice but when you start to work with people from different backgrounds who don’t even understand what you say I think it’s gonna be hard”.*

Even though Dikeledi had indicated that, in conversations with her black colleagues she uses her home language and they respond in theirs, the above excerpt suggests that she does not apply the same principle to white people. From the above account, it may be assumed that for Dikeledi, white

people are not expected to speak indigenous languages. This was evident in other participants' accounts where they reported using English when communicating with white people. They did not apply the same principle of speaking their own language and the person spoken to responds in his or hers. As Xola related:

*“What can I say, how can I put it. At work I work with white people and coloured people. A Zulu person that is there I regard as Xhosa because he is married to one so he understands me when I speak isiXhosa. So you find that we speak English most of the time because we have Indians and others. I only speak isiXhosa to this one person and maybe mix it with a little Zulu but he does speak isiXhosa. I do not speak any other language. I ignore them if they speak Afrikaans. They can speak to themselves, I do not have a problem with that”.*

Nozipho was the only participant who reported communicating in English even to fellow black people. She indicated that the diversity among her black colleagues makes them to communicate in English and that it would be challenging to introduce an African language because some people at work are not from South Africa. When asked how they deal with clients that do not speak local languages she mentioned that they know the basics of local languages.

#### **4.8.5 Conducive family and social environment.**

Participants who demonstrated an attachment to their home language indicated either a direct or indirect influence of their families in instilling pride in their languages. For example, Ntando summarized the indirect influence of his parents in the following manner:

*“Errr. I can say what I have learnt from my parents about my language..err, I am not sure if it's the right answer (Zethu: there is no right or wrong, remember) Err from them I learnt that there was a time when they were forced to learn Afrikaans. Like they were only allowed to attend school to a certain grade, I think it was standard 2. Once you reach standard 2 they would be taken out of school, be made to work in the fields. As soon as they mastered the writing of their names they were forced to work in the fields. So even though they were under oppression, working under white people but they still maintained their home language. So if you really think about it they could have easily adopted Afrikaans and make their children speak only Afrikaans because they spoke Afrikaans all the time, they had white employers who were Afrikaans speaking. So everything was done in Afrikaans, where they worked they spoke Afrikaans all the time but that did not influence them to pass that on to*

*their children. Like I grew up speaking isiZulu because my parents speak isiZulu, they never felt a need for us to speak the other language despite the fact that they were under oppression. That has taught me that it does not matter what difficult situation you are in, you should not forget your Zulu, yeah, your originality”.*

In the above excerpt Ntando introduces some of the ways that aided the oppressive regime’s strategy to erode indigenous cultures and experience. The enslavement of people meant that they had to leave their true identities and assume that of the slave master. Central to that was the enforced usage of the master’s language. This caused many African people to lose touch with their languages and thus their cultures. Ntando, however, has shown that there were those who resisted and kept their languages and heritage.

The perception that languages form an integral part of a person’s roots is further captured by Xolelwa’s words as she states:

*“I think, umama, didn’t want us to lose our roots she wanted us to know that we are Xhosas not Hlubis, just because we were surrounded by the Hlubis. She didn’t want us to lose the real us as amaXhosa, I think. Anyway she helped us because nasesikolweni (at school) when we would do Xhosa phrases and idioms you would not find Hlubi words, it was always Xhosa”.*

The participants who indicated a detachment from their home language revealed that their families were never concerned about whether or not they spoke their home languages. This lax attitude appeared to have impacted on the manner in which Nozipho perceives the importance of her home language:

*“My fear is going overseas. Which is the plan for.... Everyone would like to go overseas. Whether to stay there forever or just a visit. Your home language is irrelevant when you go to Italy for example”.*

When probed further about why South Africa should not do what the Italians are doing about their language she responded:

*“We should. But where do we start. It is a very long process. It’s a huge process. Where do we start? First of all, we are very diverse. 11 official languages is a lot. Some of them unofficial. Urm, if*

*you add that Slopedi then we are on 12, if we add Tsotsi taal, which is very common, then you are on 13 languages. So?”*

Nozipho believes that her home language's relevance is limited to family. It is not really spoken outside of family especially in Johannesburg. She displayed concern over this situation because it might result in the extinction of the language.

It was also evident that it is not only the family which is responsible for shaping young people's perceptions of their home languages. As these findings indicate, the community too has a contribution. Ntando, for example, stated that knowing his language has given him a sense of belonging and losing it would result in him being treated like an outcast by his community. If he were to, one day, return to his community communicating in a different language community members would assume he thinks he is better than them and would distance themselves from him. Apart from fears of rejection the participant also revealed that people who acquire a foreign language reject their communities in turn. He indicated that he had witnessed a few children in the community who attend multiracial schools assuming a distance from their communities and referring to community members as “they”. That made him to conclude that losing one's home language results in one's identity loss.

The findings also depict that communities could have an opposite influence to that highlighted above. Nozipho spoke about how the multi-cultural environment of Soweto led to the dilution of her home language. The scarcity of isiXhosa speaking people made her acquire other languages at the expense of hers. In agreement with Nozipho's assertion, Dikeledi attributes her inability to speak her home language to the fact that in her community no one speaks a ‘proper’ home language.

There was condescending element towards minority languages by participants who grew up in communities where there was an additional dialect to the dominant language. Xolelwa for example labeled the isiHlubi vocabulary as funny:

*“it's..... err, I can say other words of isiHlubi are different from isiXhosa for example ukugwencela (to climb) in Xhosa is called ukugwebherela. They use funny words. ukurhawuzelela (to scratch an itch) is to ukugrwabhija. Words like that (laughs)”.*

#### 4.8.6 We have a role to play.

Parents/guardians and schools were seen by all participants as having a critical role to play in ensuring that children learn and use their home languages. Even participants who indicated a poor comprehension of their own home languages stated that they would love for their children to learn an African language. Dikeledi, for example, intimated:

*“Like if I were to have a child, I know that my child is going to struggle. Because me, myself I don’t even know it that much. I think I would love it if my child would know the language. I do not think at a very young age I would want my child to like know English only. I would want my child to speak a home language but I don’t know how. Coz they don’t do it in schools. Even the crèches around where we live do not have vernacular. Only English or Afrikaans, so it’s gonna be hard”.*

Xolelwa is of the firm belief that parents need to take charge in ensuring that their children learn their home languages. This was influenced by her observation of the manner in which her sister raises her children. Her sister’s principle that her children are allowed to only communicate in their home language at home helped in ensuring that her children are fluent in their home language. She believes that it is an approach that could work for many parents/guardians. Xolelwa believes that the usage of the English language instead of home languages in black South African households contributes to the erosion of home languages.

The responsibility to impart home languages was not seen as limited to parents. Xola believes strongly that using home language as medium of instruction will yield excellent school results among black South African children, especially among those residing in rural areas. In his own words he argued:

*“When it comes to rural children, I believe that is where the problem is. It is not that they are stupid. They are not stupid. It’s just that they are using a language that they do not understand which is English. When we explain to them we should explain thinking that these people from grade 1 they were taught in isiXhosa, even English was taught in isiXhosa. Everything had been direct translation. Now when it comes to matric, they are required to express themselves with understanding”. And emphasised “I think they would understand it better. It’s not like white children are clever or those whose home language is Afrikaans. It’s only because they grow up speaking Afrikaans, at home they speak Afrikaans, until they finish university, and they study in Afrikaans.*

*They understand the language better but now you take a child from a rural area, with matric, s/he doesn't even have a good grasp of English. S/he has good matric results and has passed with an exemption, you push the child to do Engineering and the child fails because she doesn't understand the language of instruction. But put it in Xhosa and see how the child will perform".*

Most participants reported that schools in parts of Pretoria do not offer indigenous languages as subjects. Indigenous languages are reportedly offered only in township schools. This was perceived as the contributing factor to children not being able to communicate in their home languages. As Nozipho noted:

*"Schools should introduce a home language, especially public schools because public schools do not do anything but Afrikaans. So they should introduce a home language. But then you will have a problem with learning 11 different languages. I think we should find the most dominant language in the whole of South Africa that we should all learn. I think it is very important".*

The above accounts show that young people are concerned about the diminishing status of indigenous languages they are witnessing in their homes, communities and schools. Dikeledi captures the essence of what all the participants have perceived as the current status of indigenous languages when she says:

*"Err I think languages are very important and I think this generation now, we are like losing our languages, it's losing its touch, you know. Coz you can see now, people, it's all English, English this, English that. Kids growing up now, they go to crèches that are either English or Afrikaans. They don't even hear their home languages. Not even a hello, in their home language. They don't even understand. So I think, we losing touch. Me included".*

#### **4.8.7 Absence of indigenous languages in the public domain.**

Indigenous languages were seen as absent from the public domain with schools in suburban areas, libraries and even media paying little or no attention to them. How the absence of indigenous languages in the public domain has led to a subtle erasure of those languages in the minds of black children is well illustrated by Xolelwa's assertion below:

*" Err.... like I have said, maybe the government can do something. Maybe build libraries in the suburbs and have an Indigenous languages library. Like, our local library currently only has English*

*and Afrikaans. Even if it's just a small section. What if I feel like reading a Zakes Mda book that's in isiXhosa? I can't cause there is no Xhosa section. So they need to encourage things like that". "...it is exactly one of the reasons why children think English is more important than other languages, than their home language. They do not see books in their home language so they start believing that other languages, the ones they see displayed, are the most important".*

In this excerpt, Xolelwa reveals subtle but powerful ways that instill the notion that only oppressors' languages are suitable for official use and academia. The absence of material in indigenous languages in public spaces, she believes, reinforces that message perfectly. That indigenous languages have no value in the society, they belong in the sidelines. This according to Xolelwa has psychological implications as children grow up believing that colonial languages are the only important languages.

Schools and the media were also cited by participants as spaces that do not make the visibility of indigenous languages a priority. Children's programmes on television, for example, were criticised for being only in English and that was seen as a form of erasure of African identity in the minds of black South African children.

In this section, I have presented themes emanating from suburban youth narratives. One of the key observations from the above results is that all the participants from the Pretoria suburban areas have their roots somewhere else and that impacted on how they perceive indigenous languages. These perceptions will be weaved together with what emanated from narratives of township youth whose results are presented below.

#### **4.9 Five youth narratives from three Gauteng townships**

The narratives from the townships comprised three young people from Pretoria and two from Soweto. To better understand the stories of these young people, I believe it is necessary to briefly narrate their family backgrounds. The first participant, Gugu identifies as both South African and Mozambican. She was born in Soweto to Mozambican parents. She occasionally visits Mozambique but her life is in South Africa and she has a South African identity document. She is a second year university student. Boity spent her formidable years in Pretoria central business district (CBD), in a flat that her mother rented. She indicated that they were among the first black people to live in the block of flats which was dominated by Afrikaans speaking white people. She barely spoke her home language while growing up as her interactions were limited to white people and a few blacks who

mainly spoke IsiPitori, Afrikaans and occasionally English. Mbuzani grew up in a multicultural Mpumalanga township. He moved to Soshanguve to pursue his higher education at a local university in 2014. There were two participants from Soweto who formed part of the sample. Participant MJ moved to Soweto in early 2015, he previously resided in a suburban area around Johannesburg. His family experienced difficulties that forced his mother to find a new home in Soweto. Participant Kleva was born in Soweto. He identifies as Shangaan and speaks isiShangane at home. His main language of communication outside of home is isiZulu because it is the dominant language in Soweto. He shared that his father originates from Giyani, Limpopo but his grandmother relocated to Mpumalanga where his father often took them for visits when he was young. He therefore considers Mpumalanga his ancestral home not Giyani.

What was common in the stories of these five young people from various townships were their multicultural backgrounds. They all grew up in communities where more than one indigenous language was spoken. This had varying influence on their perceptions of indigenous languages. The implications of growing up in multicultural communities as perceived by the participants included; the loss of home language grasp for Mbuzani, no home language acquisition for Boity, and the acquisition of more than one indigenous languages for Gugu, MJ and Kleva. Mbuzani blamed the diversity of his Mpumalanga province for his poor command of his home language, Tshitsonga. He described the command of his home language as diluted and he did not view Tshitsonga as important. When asked why he felt that way, he responded:

*“I think I am in a time when you have to speak this. (Zethu: what is this?) English, you know. Where you have to work on your English. You have to work on your English and you have to speak Afrikaans. So those were the only primary languages that were important, you know. They still are but I think I grew up with that instilled in me, you know from people that I grew up around, like we had to speak.... So we kind of shied away from our home languages. Which is why I struggle with my home language. Like we have to do our home language [currently at university] and I struggle”.*

#### **4.9.1 Family and community influence.**

Boity indicated that she spoke Afrikaans and English most of her childhood. Her mother is a fluent speaker of Afrikaans and that had an influence in her acquisition of the Afrikaans language. According to Boity, her mother does not speak her traditional Sepedi when talking with her and her siblings, she uses isiPitori. She grew up in a block of flats dominated by white people who spoke Afrikaans. She

only got exposure to other languages when black people started to move into the block of flats but could speak neither of the indigenous languages except for isiPitori which she found easy because it only involves mixing different languages. She moved to Atteriedgeville when she was 15 years old, when the block of flats she lived in was shut down. In the township she found that isiPitori was even deeper than isiPitori she spoke. She is therefore without a language she can call her own. Contrary to that, MJ who recently moved to Soweto indicated that he can speak his home language. He grew up in the suburbs and attended multiracial schools but his parents ensured that he did not forget his home language. In Soweto, most people speak isiZulu and he believes that has not caused anyone to lose their home language. Kleva who also resides in Soweto stated that he speaks isiZulu in the community but his first language is isiShangane and he speaks it fluently. He said he would not speak isiShangane in the community because:

*“You know we are not alike as people; we live with different people, like how can I put it? here in Soweto, so when I grew up, I grew up speaking, because I am Shangaan, so for the sake of being able to accommodate everybody and integrate in the community, we leave that Shangaan language and speak IsiZulu, because everybody is raised with this mentality that when you know IsiZulu you are (\*Kleva) smart/streetwise, when you can speak IsiZulu you are from Soweto, so I am Shangaan but I can speak IsiZulu , Sesotho, you see all of these languages , I am even learning how to Speak Tshivenda”.*

His parents were strict about speaking their home language within their household, as a result it is still the only language spoken at home. He also revealed that Shangaan people are subjected to ill-treatment by virtue of their ethnic group and that discourages him from speaking isiShangane:

*“Like everybody, when you arrive speaking isiZulu, will understand you .When you come speaking Sesotho, it’s like ‘okay where is this one from’, you see? Or when you come speaking Shangaan it’s like ‘oh this one is a (\*kwerekwere) foreigner’ but when you come speaking Zulu, it’s like ‘this one is from around here” (Zethu: So IsiZulu is the dominant language?) Yes here in Soweto, if you come speaking another language people will be like ‘this (\*bari) idiot/ country bumpkin”.*

MJ also attested to the derogatory treatment amaShangane are subjected to in Soweto stating that there are even unpalatable sayings that have been constructed by communities across Soweto, depicting their perceptions of amaShangane.

Mbuzani grew up in a culturally diverse province of Mpumalanga. He has always loved English and Afrikaans. His grandmother played a role on how he perceives languages. She worked as a domestic worker for white people and Mbuzani indicated that:

*“Emmm, as a domestic worker you spend time nurturing white kids you know. You end up taking all these things from their white employers to instill in their white children and you apply them on your own children as well. So I, thinking about it now. Like, it’s kinda like, itsa.... She took those values and applied them on us. She took those values that her employers wanted her to use on their children and applied them on her children. I guess she wanted us to be like those since they were like being raised well. So I guess she just took whatever she learnt from them and used it on us. Of which isn’t really a bad thing. She raised me and I turned out okay”.*

In contrast, Gugu appeared to be mourning the loss of her indigenous language which began when her grandmother started to work as a domestic worker for white people in Mozambique where her parents come from. Her grandmother started learning Portuguese and when she returned to the village she taught people Portuguese. That is how indigenous languages started to disappear. As more and more people started to go to the cities in search of a better life they returned to the village not speaking their home language.

At the beginning of the interview, Gugu spoke of the need to embrace English when asked about the importance of languages in her life. She felt that post-apartheid government is taking us back to apartheid by promoting indigenous languages. She believes such will segregate people on linguistic basis. Midway through the interview, however, she spoke differently about the importance of indigenous languages. The change was noticeable when she started talking about language loss in her native Mozambique. She expressed hurt that in Mozambique indigenous languages have died:

*“Considering home, I would say they are not considered. I don’t know how to put it. I would say, they are still regarded as those languages you know, that are not important. Because in Mozambique, I’ve noticed. Which is more similar to South Africa, they have indigenous and then they have the main one which is English. They also have Portuguese as the main but each and every province has an indigenous. I have checked now, every time, I try to do research and speak to people and find out. So I have noticed that every time, they kinda discarded those other languages and all of them are kinda focusing on Portuguese, if it’s not portuguese it’s French. It’s kinda of the in thing. But then those parents, some grandparents know those languages but they didn’t teach us. And we*

*have experienced language dearth. And I am like why are you guys doing this and I haven't found answers for that. Because even in rural places, if I can, maybe I come from South Africa. Then I have to greet someone in their indigenous, then they see it as weird. Like why aren't you talking Portuguese, you from the cities. I'm like hey. You talk this, why can't you communicate in that. Only old people communicate in those language".*

#### **4.9.2. We have ourselves to blame.**

Gugu and Boity were the only participants who spoke critically about the role black people play in diminishing the status of their own languages. Gugu shared this concern:

*"I think South Africa is gonna be doomed in 20 years to come. Is gonna be covered by these European languages because some are having fun learning Frenches and German, which is not a bad thing. But actually forgetting that they have indigenous languages and not focusing on those. It's gonna be quite a problem and a challenge to actually teach those who are coming after us, our indigenous languages. As I'm also experiencing like my grandparents can't tell me a single thing. In a few years to come it's gonna be one, .... I don't know. We gonna be a country with no origins or culture to fall back on. (Zethu: Then what will that mean?) Eyyy... (sighs) it will be like back to apartheid. Not in a bad way because we would have forced ourselves there. But then it would be like that. Majority will be ruling but then it will be English. And that will do us no good. Even though for job, maybe for jobs and interaction with other people it's easy but then at the end of the day we must know where we come from and actually why we do things the way we do. What I have noticed with whites is that they do not discard their culture, they like it so much and when they are here they want to enforce it on us you know. But then we can't do that. We see ourselves inferior to other countries out there".*

Boity shared similar sentiments that:

*"It's not embraced but then it boils back. It has nothing to do, I don't think it has, we we shouldn't be blaming the government. Like, it's always said that charity begins at home. The other day it was announced that kids from grade one are gonna start to learn in their home language languages. Many of us black people are complaining 'no this shouldn't be done, if we wanna do venec language you must do it on your own, it should not be forced on our kids' It's because of like many of us in the black communities lost ourselves and we have been heavily influenced by the Western Culture. It's*

*like, I always tell people, just because someone speaks English, it doesn't mean they are smart. It doesn't mean they are going to be successful. I know ample people, they are doing so well and they are so well in their career. But then because us, black people we are so influenced by the Western culture that we almost want to lose our own roots in order to embrace the new culture that is ingrained in our society. I feel like it's not embraced at all. It's not promoted enough. It's not embraced enough, it's almost like people are not even proud to be African because it's not something that is put on the pedestal and embraced and celebr, it's not celebrated enough".*

The two young women believe that black South Africans are contributing in diminishing the status of their languages by embracing foreign languages and regarding their indigenous languages as less important. They argue that this will cause indigenous people to lose a sense of their identity.

#### **4.9.3 Language, identity and culture.**

Language was seen by four out of five participants as being an important role player in one's culture. They believe that a person will not be able to perform certain rituals if she or he does not know her or his home language. Even Mbuzani who had indicated that he does not see his home language as important acknowledged the role of language in cultural practice, stating:

*"since you are black. And we blacks have cultures, you can't be going to the graves and be kneeling there in English, you know. So you need to speak your home language you know. When you speak to your ancestors you need to speak your home language. You can't say "oh , hey yeah" you know, I don't know like the protocol and the register used in the interaction between you and your ancestors. So knowing that language puts you at a closer range with your ancestors. So yeah, it does play a role, it does. So I have learnt that. That I need to be speaking in that form of register in this form of language for me, you know to address the ancestors. I don't do it but should I find myself in the situation that I have to. I'll find myself in a better position to communicate with them using my home language. So. It does come in and help with that".*

Mbuzani also linked language to identity and spoke of his identity as something he cannot run away from when he stated:

*"The importance of my home language is that as much as I don't speak it most of the time, hate it or love it, I am still black. So I.... errr. Meaning that I still need to actually show children you know. I think my home language plays a role in my identity. I know my identity, I'm black. Tsonga you know.*

*My name is Sibusiso you know, even though it's not Tsonga, I'm still black you know. I still act black. So my home language help you know with identifying my identity, you know. Coz as great and as impeccable my English is, if I went to the UK, they'll be seeing a black man from Africa. They'll be asking who are you, you know. And obviously I'm gonna have to talk about myself you know. That I'm this. You know. My ancestors are these. So I think my home language plays a role in that. In my African identity".*

Kleva, however, did not see the relevance of culture in Soweto and did not see any link between language and culture. In contrast, Boity who resides in Atteriedgeville, felt robbed that she does not practise her culture. She believes that it gives one a sense of belonging. In her own words she said:

*"Cause people, when, when, when you have like your own language. Like you Xhosa, you automatically have like your own culture, your own customs understand. You have people that you relate to. You know. It's almost like you have a sense of belonging you know. It's like town, it doesn't necessarily offer you anything, a sense of belonging, you are from the chao.... the chaotic part of the world, that's how I feel. (Zethu: Mhmm. You said culture and sense of belonging are important..... ) They are. Cause sometimes people like, especially now when you grow up and people tell you that 'oh I'm going home, this is what's to be practiced' people like believe. Like they have things they believe in. The only religion I was ever taught at home is God. It is a nice thing and I'm totally for it but sometimes people, like when they've got achievements like they wanna go home and they have certain rituals they wanna do. But just because I don't understand them it doesn't make it bad but it always like for me, it always like there is a sense of belonging like I said. They know like what to do, do you understand, like. It's almost like you know where to lead on, they always go back, it's like they feel protected. Even more protected. I always feel like God protects me but because of their culture, their religion and their customs you know, like, like they really have a sense of belonging. They know where they come from. Like it's always said once you know where you come from, who you are, you know your roots you always know where you going. You always know what you wanting and you can always have a sense of the person that you are. That is for me culture".*

Four participants from the township believed that language and culture cannot be separated. Boity clearly illustrated the connection between the two concepts when she stated:

*"I think going back to the drawing board. Like I said start at home. I would very much appreciate if I instilled that to my kids. No matter what part of the world you go to I want you to know that ubulela*

*Sesotho, (you speak Sesotho) you are African. I want you to embrace that. Instead of going out there learning other languages, it's fine, it's ok. It's a good thing to do but how about teaching people your language. I think charity should really begin at home and parents should instill the fact that it's okay to embrace new cultures, to- to- to welcome, and compromise when people speak English but then, know who you are. Don't forget your culture. Don't forget where you come from. I think forgetting your culture stems from forgetting your language. Then you lose your culture, that's where it starts. Yeah, I think they go hand in hand. Mina (me) once you, like I said right now, it's very difficult for me right now to be like I'm gonna go do research with amaNdebele when I don't even know isiNdebele. It's very difficult, it's overly difficult. I won't even know where to start. So like if you don't even know like your own language, you can't express yourself in your own language, it's gonna be very difficult for you to understand the customs and the traditions that come with your culture. Because you don't even know how to express yourself in that culture (Zethu: mhmm) yeah".*

This was in line with MJ thoughts that language is an integral part of an individual's identity. In the following excerpt he asked *"My home language is my culture, it is my identity. If it can be taken away from me then what am I? Like really. There are things we do in the yard. Like to connect with the ancestors and those things can only be done in Sepedi. So if I do not know who I am I won't be able to connect with my ancestors".*

#### **4.9.4 The undermining of less dominant languages.**

Negative perceptions toward less dominant languages by fellow indigenous people was also evident among township youth. Kleva's narrative, for example, demonstrates that he has bought into the belief that amaShangane are a less people. He sees himself as different from amaShangane from Giyani :

*"There is a difference, I can see it and the people that live around here, the Shangaans from here, they can see that there's a difference. I wouldn't go and hang out with them/party with them (Zethu: Why?) No! \*exclaims loudly\*, no even they, themselves have that mentality of 'what are you doing here?' Because they know themselves and us...I just don't understand how I can put it, like they have their thing, this 'Shangaan' thing, so they will be asking me 'where at home are you from?' and I don't know those things"*

He too seems to share some of the beliefs held by his community about amaShangane. He feels he is a different umShangane from those who come from Limpopo. The way he speaks and dresses is different from the way they do, he highlighted.

There was also a mention of looking down on people from other provinces who speak their home languages fluently by people who were born and raised in Gauteng. Boity stated that Pretorians call people who come from outside “*amagoduka*” which can be loosely translated as ‘*the ones who will return home*’ (*migrants*) and are not even interested in accommodating their languages. Kleva, in his own narrative, cites this negative attitude toward people who belong to certain indigenous language groups as the reason he does not speak isiShangane in his community.

#### **4.9.5 Language diversity in Gauteng province.**

Despite concerns highlighted by participants from suburban areas that language diversity in Gauteng would make it difficult to introduce indigenous languages as true official languages, participants from the townships highlighted that there were languages that were more dominant than others in Gauteng. Participants from Soweto, for example, indicated that isiZulu is the most dominant language in Johannesburg. People from different language groups, especially in the townships communicate in isiZulu. This was embraced by some but criticised by other participants. Gugu, for example, argued that this is taking the country back to apartheid. She made this assertion while making a case for minority languages such as Kelobedu to be recognized and not just be swallowed by dominant languages. Mbuzani shared a similar sentiment that small languages such as isiPulane (which is spoken in Mpumalanga), isiNdebele and isiSwati do not get as much recognition as isiZulu. About isiZulu and its speakers he had this to say:

*“..... Something that I’ve noticed at university, other cultural groups look down on others. Like Zulus for instance. Zulus do not learn any language you know. Whenever they say “siyanibonani” I’m like why the hell do you think I understand that? You know. Why would you think I understand isiZulu? I could be Tswana, I could be, you know. But it’s like, you know most of them, the country, the government and everything you know having printed material in isiZulu more than any other languages give them an idea you know that they are the most important people. I was actually speaking to a classmate of mine today, you know. And that issue came up you know that Zulus actually regard themselves as human beings and the rest of us as additional members you know I once heard this good joke, you know, a friend of mine said that, you know you Tsongas, if you went to KZN and you were in an accident and there were Zulus in that car, and then they were asked how many people got hurt. They would be like ‘okay, abantu abambalwa abalimele, namaShangane, namaTsonga’ (few people were injured and some Tsongas and amaShangane) actually that*

*perpetuates the stereotype that we are nothing and they are worthy of being called human beings. You know, so hence I'm saying, you know, should South Africa want to nationalize or whatever or say we going one national language or we going vernacular, Zulu should take the cup. Because statistically so, if my memory serves me right Zulus have the highest rate of speakers. I don't know if I'm right, am I wrong?"*

There was also consensus that Setswana was the dominant language in Pretoria. Between these two cities, therefore, Setswana (in Pretoria) and isiZulu (Johannesburg) were seen as languages that most people communicate in, that could be used as main languages but not without caution

Language diversity was viewed by Kleva as something that could heal a people. He appreciated the use of indigenous languages by various artists in media to help end the xenophobic attacks that erupted in South Africa in May 2015. He believes that it showed Africans that we are all human, we can all have different languages but we are still the same.

#### **4.9.6 English as a language of business.**

As it was the case with suburban narratives, township youth also displayed subtle acceptance that English is a language of business. Participants did not see its dominance or its wide usage as a problem. Like participants MJ, Boity and Gugu, even though they felt the need to embrace indigenous languages, they still believed that it is important to know English. Mbuzane cannot be described as someone who only thought English is important to know, he appeared to have a closest bond with both English and Afrikaans. He expressed strongly how displeased he was by the dominance of isiZulu but he did not seem to see the dominance of the English language in the same light. He labeled it as 'universal', 'polite and not harsh to be rude in' he also called it 'his bread and butter' as he bids for a career in editing. He saw the usage of English as a solution to the challenge of multilingual South Africa- "for me speak English till you turn blue"

Narratives did not show significant distinctions when grouped according to place of residence (township/suburb). Differences and similarities were observed when childhood background was considered. Participants who grew up in Pretoria reported a total loss of the grasp of their home language. While, those raised in Soweto reported having acquired more than one language and the majority of those who reported being raised in provinces outside Gauteng province but moved to Gauteng at a later stage in their lives showed an attachment to home language and found it easier to acquire other languages.

#### **4.10 Focus group discussion results**

In addition to individual narratives, focus group discussions were conducted. Discourse analysis was employed in order to deconstruct and shed light on emerging themes. Discourse analysis enabled me to explore, critically, perceptions emanating from the focus group discussions while taking into consideration political linkages and structures of power that are embedded within the stories. Discourse analysis insists that what people, say and how they say it is largely influenced by the social positions they hold in the society (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Imperative to discourse analysis as stated by Gubrium and Holstein (2000) are issues of context in text production. The socio-political context shapes people's thoughts and speech whether cognisant of it or not. When employing discourse analysis, we are therefore analysing how language is used to construct realities and expose the underlying power structures that influence the constructions. I organized data into thematic areas so that I could be able to easily perform discourse analysis. The themes emanating from the focus group data are presented below.

#### **4.10 Suburban focus group discussion results**

The findings emanating from a focus group discussion held with Gauteng suburban parents/guardian are presented in this section. Emerging themes from these findings centre on perceptions about usage, importance and preservation of indigenous languages.

##### **4.10.1 Language used at home.**

Most participants indicated using an indigenous language when speaking to their children and a few stated that they use both English and a home language. For example, Ntombi who reported to be married to a Tswana speaking man indicated that at her home they mainly speak English and isiZulu (which is her home language). The dominant use of mainly the home language at home in the suburban areas could be attributed to the fact that people in suburban areas usually originate from provinces outside Gauteng where languages are spoken in their purest form. Even though suburban participants widely reported using their home languages in the household, some expressed fear that the minimal usage of these languages in their social environment could result in their extinction. Themba argued that this could be prevented by exposing children to rural life where these languages are still spoken in their original forms.

#### **4.10.2 Pride in one's home language.**

Participants in the suburban focus group discussion expressed pride in their own languages. One of the participants, Themba, had this to say about isiXhosa:

*“.....I think if people of other languages can take time to understand IsiXhosa to me it's one of the rich languages by the way, IsiXhosa is the only African language that uses all the letters of the alphabet. So you can see the richness of the language, if you use all those letters of the alphabet that means that it is rich in terms of how it is constructed, yeah that's what I can say about my mother-tongue”*

Ntombi harbours complex feelings about her indigenous language, isiZulu. She expressed a sense of pride and, at the same time, is hurt by the fact that her children are not fluent in it. She attributes this to the environment they are growing up in, isiZulu is not a dominant language in Pretoria and at school children do not learn an indigenous language. She stated that she admires the fact that provinces outside of Gauteng have maintained their languages and are utilising them. She misses being in her province of origin, KZN, where isiZulu is spoken properly.

#### **4.10.3 Language and culture.**

Talking about culture to most participants introduces language discussion. When she speaks about being Pedi with her children, Makosha indicated that she finds herself also teaching them what is expected of them as Pedi people. Even though she instills the culture to her children, Makosha indicates that there are aspects of her culture she is not comfortable with, like traditional circumcision. She has chosen not to allow her son to undergo the practice. She, instead, opted for the surgical version which is performed in medical facilities. -

Themba feels that single parents who are raising boys in the suburb tend to be skeptical about traditional practices and do not expose their boy children to tradition. He does not understand if they have fear of them adopting ways of life that are not accepted in the ‘suburbs’ or they perceive traditional practices as harsh. Themba feels that such parents need to expose them to rural life so that they get to experience ‘being boys’ in a traditional sense

Ntombi captures the fact that language and culture are inseparable and it is not something one can consciously teach in the excerpt below:

*“I think to me your question is linked to what she said, the language is not so much about like now let’s talk about the culture, it’s in your the behaviour , in how you act and also you can’t divorce language from culture, so in my case, I do try to, make my kids aware about African culture or certain things that Zulus do and also I think it’s about exposing them as well like when there’s a funeral or wedding , you explain to them why this is happening then it’s part of the culture, so speak a bit about the language”.*

Some participants reported using creative and artistic forms as a way of instilling the grasp of indigenous languages in their children. Xoliswa and Themba for example, indicated that they use figurative language to enhance their children’s acquisition of their home language. Xoliswa also mentioned that she utilises storytelling, she tells them folk tales and tales from her childhood and she also introduces them to traditional food:

*“I think what I did, and I am proud of myself , when they were still little, I reinforced IsiXhosa in the house, but not to force them, because once you force them they will rebel and then you teach them expressions in Xhosa and you even do intsomi and then they become interested and you tell them about your background, you know that we grew up eating \*umphokoqo and those things you introduce to them and you take them to the village, I am a village girl, and then I have a sister who speaks IsiXhosa, so when she comes to visit, even today we speak IsiXhosa, so they have that interest because when we talk there are certain things that you talk about with your sister and then you find that you laugh out loud and you see their interest peaking and they open their eyes wide and it’s like oh okay that’s how you get them interested and I told myself that there is no way that they won’t be able to speak English because the environment is allowing them and at school, but you don’t say to them ‘Okay we are speaking IsiXhosa now!’ with aggression , they will never speak it. But you speak it and you use words that were used at home in the olden days. Like my child, we went to a party and we had this thing that when something is small she calls it \*Nopotjie \*\*laughter\*\* so they use those silly words. That cake \*Nopotjie meaning that it’s too small it’s not gonna be enough for all of us and when we went to that party, she was like ah Mama, look this is Nopotjie”*

#### **4.10.4 Linguistic coloniality.**

Despite the political gains of 1994, Ntombi sees black people in South Africa as still powerless. Government has not allocated resources to elevate the status of indigenous languages. Especially in Gauteng schools where private and former model C schools still show big disparities in the manner in

which languages are treated. Xoliswa sees it as a lack of love among black people and speaks critically of the way in which people are looked down upon when they use their home languages in public domains. She reported rebelling against this by ensuring that she speaks her home language especially in the presence of white people. In agreement, Themba states that:

*“Yeah I agree with that, I also think that we are so prepared to embrace languages that are not ours, you find that for example, which I always find it strange, not to single out any group or anything, there is a trend of people from Limpopo using English names and yet they’ve got names in their own languages and they don’t use them and I wonder ‘what’s happening here?’, you find that the person has a ‘Mary’ then another name which is African but the name that is known is ‘Mary’ and you never know, you never get to know the African name, now today it’s more about, when I asked I asked some of them, ‘But why don’t you use such a nice name? no but see people see my name and they find it very difficult to pronounce?’, now to me that says you are saying your language is not suitable, therefore you use English for you to be able to express yourself and be received by other people, so we also do, you know, the harm to our languages by not speaking and making sure that they are used wherever we can use them. I think there is that element that we sort of debate and bending backwards than admit that our languages are really not that important”.*

Ntombi emphasised that the remnants of colonisation are still evident in the way South Africans perceive themselves and argued that black South Africans require decolonising of the mind:

*“I think for me, this is, we might have political power, but I think when it comes to other things, black people we are still very powerless and its reflected as well in the languages because the, and unfortunately for the languages to be taught, to receive the same kind of attention as English and Afrikaans, government needs to allocate sufficient resources. I know in KZN they’ve done that but I’m not sure in Gauteng, especially at model C schools and private schools there is still a big gap, but I think to me what is happening to our languages it reflects the fact that we don’t have the full power, but yeah its tied to resources, because you need resources to pump into the culture and mix languages”.*

Makosha agreed that the colonial past plays a huge role on how language is used. She recalled the way in which Christianity entrenched coloniality by refusing to baptise black South African children who did not have English names because African names were not religiously recognised and were considered heathen names.

Themba believes that people should not use others' inability to pronounce African names as an excuse to use English names. They should, instead, use the opportunity to teach them African pronunciations. He challenged other respondents' view that they preferred to use English names rather than tolerate the mispronunciation of their indigenous names.

The dominant perception (in the focus groups) that fluency in the English language embodies success is a depiction of linguistic coloniality. Participants argued such a perception is the cause of parents/guardians' reluctance to take initiative and teach their children their home language. Ntombi articulates:

*“But when you listen to the radio, some of the things we do as parents, black people saying ‘what is my child going to do with isiZulu, where are they gonna go with isiZulu, and for me that’s just an indication, it goes back to, because if, I mean the reality is that as black people some of us are still, we still feel inferior as black people, our language, we tend to think that everything that is white is best, so you tend to find that those people who talk like that, are those people who feel that blackness is bad and anything white is good”.*

#### **4.10.5 Linguistic hierarchies.**

Suburban focus group participants alluded to the existence of linguistic hierarchies among indigenous language groups. As Makosha, who originates from Limpopo explained:

*“Okay, can I start? My mother-tongue is Sepedi according to your research topic here, before or prior the democratic elections in 1994, most of the Pedis were shying away to expose themselves especially when they were in mixed cultures, they would in some cases forced themselves to speak IsiZulu or Xhosa or Tswana, but not trying to show people that they are Pedis yes, so only after these languages were getting exposed and all that is when they felt free to can speak their languages.”*

This was something which some isiXhosa speaking participants observed in Gauteng province where amaXhosa would speak isiZulu because there are negative perceptions about Xhosa speaking people in Gauteng. They are generally perceived as domineering and are often chastised, according to some participants. This cautions proponents of indigenous languages as they attempt to preserve these languages to be privy to tensions and stereotypes that exist within different indigenous groups.

#### **4.10.6 It's a shared responsibility.**

Participants believe that the promotion of indigenous languages is a collective responsibility. Government needs support from other facets of society. Xoliswa iterated that parents have the power to challenge the system and impact changes in schools however, they do not exercise it. Yet they complain when schools make decisions contrary to their wishes. In defending the argument that black South Africans have taken an idle stance about the inclusion of indigenous languages, Linda stated:

*"...if we, as parents were doing so, the schools would be offering at least one African language, actually they should introduce African language throughout South Africa. If our children can be able to do Afrikaans as a second language, they should also be doing one vernacular language , for the mere fact that our schools, I mean schools that we take our children to, especially in the suburbs, if they are not offering even one African language, they haven't done anything really".*

Parents/guardians are perceived as having power to challenge colonial practices that are entrenched in the education system. Participants did not perceive themselves as helpless victims. They believe that there is an active role they ought to play. They also believe that white children should be subjected to the same treatment of having to learn a language which is not theirs.

Themba believes that the lack of agency is not only evident in schools, but at the workplace as well. He argued that, black South Africans do not demand their languages to be used and therefore employers assume that they are comfortable with English and Afrikaans. Participants agreed that there is no activism on the part of black South Africans to have their languages treated as official. They argued that a general inferiority complex has led black South Africans to treat everything that comes from outside South Africa with honour whilst undermining all things South African. Participants were critical of government's announcement that Mandarin will be introduced in schools. To them, it feels like another form of colonial domination because a foreign country does not only bring its language but its culture as well.

#### **4.10.7 Perceived role of schools in the development and promotion of indigenous languages.**

Participants expressed that schools do not offer indigenous languages as main languages instead, they are given as additional subjects. They saw this as contributing to children's lack of home language acquisition. However, Makosha disagreed stating that:

*“Yes, I do align myself with participant 5 but regarding the environment it’s true that they are exposed to English and Afrikaans and as well as indigenous languages that they come across, but in my case I make it a point that once they set foot in my house they must speak their mother-tongue, so we don’t talk, ons praat nie (we don’t speak Afrikaans), ra bolela (we speak Sepedi), when they arrive at home we speak Sepedi and they are so much conversant with English, they are fluent but it has always been my norm that they are going to speak Sepedi, yes, although they do mix with some words here and there but even if she can say I don’t know what this is in Sepedi, I just tell her ‘this is booka [book]’”.*

To which Ntombi responded:

*“I think I hear you, and that’s why it pains me because I have tried that, because it has number of factors as well, um, their father speaks Setswana and it depends on the kind of support you have .Like, I mean I even went to the extent of getting a domestic helper from KZN but still, but yeah you can never give up. The young one I bought IsiZulu books for grade 0 to grade 2 and I try to teach her, yeah so, you can never give up”*

Makosha as shown above supports the idea of making sure that at home they only use their home language. She perceives parents/guardians as having power to instill home languages in their children and monitoring their language use at home. Ntombi still expressed a feeling of helplessness.

Some participants believe that there has been a change in some schools around Gauteng where children are being offered an indigenous language and Xoliswa, who is a school teacher, reported that in her school she has witnessed a number of children communicating in their own languages. In her classes she sometimes addresses black South African children in their home languages. Thando indicated that her children were given a survey asking them to choose an indigenous language they would prefer to have added to the curriculum. However, there were participants who indicated that at the schools where their children are enrolled, indigenous languages are not in the curriculum. As such, schools do not offer parents/guardians an opportunity to choose an indigenous language, the only choice is between English and Afrikaans. Respondents argued that schools are not prioritising the introduction of indigenous languages but are already working on introducing Mandarin. Some were despondent as they had not received any feedback in relation to the indigenous language preference surveys they completed.

It also emerged from the focus group discussion that it is not only the Department of Basic Education which is taking an initiative to promote indigenous languages but that of Higher Education as well. Makosha indicated that Tshwane University of Technology has opened a school of languages and she was hopeful that the development might make a difference.

When some participants indicated that parents choose schools that are predominantly white over those in townships which are black, others disagreed. In trying to explain that resources not prestige, drive black South African parents/guardians to take their children to certain schools and not others, Linda stated:

*“Even in an area, let’s say a village or a small town, if there is one school, that is good, which is resourced with disciplined teachers and so on, you find that that school is overcrowded with children, parents always want to take their children to a good school, not because it is white or it is black, if there were, I think there are actually in Mamelodi and places like that, schools that are well resourced with good teachers and everything, that parents are taking their children to it’s not always about white black thing, not trusting, you see?”*

In asserting that black South African children are on the receiving end of all the factors that contribute to undermining their academic progress (such as the slow transformation process, inferiority complex, negative attitude displayed toward indigenous languages) Themba asserted:

*“Yeah it’s a typical thing, in the whole education system there is a lot of suffering on the child’s side, because you see that situation where the child is exposed to racism at Curro, the same situation can be found in with a child who is learning under a tree. So for a while, until government sorts out the infrastructure issue, that child will learn under a tree, and also here where there is racism and yet there’s no alternative, there’s no , unfortunately how many are going to face the same thing*

*somehow I think generally in our education system. Government and the community, it’s an unfortunate situation where as community and government we have failed our children”.*

Themba sees the government and the community as equally to blame for the implications the lack of promotion of indigenous languages have on the black child. According to Themba being racially discriminated and having no infrastructure at school have the same implications to the black child and they emanate from the lack of action from those who have power to effect changes.

Participants indicated that they have heard from two language proponents on the radio advocating for the enforcement of indigenous languages on white students. If black children are forced to learn English and Afrikaans, then schools should also introduce indigenous languages and put them at the same level as English and Afrikaans. Such proponents come from the Afrikaans and English communities. Participants were encouraged by this. They quoted an English professor who also had a radio interview as saying that learning in the home language makes academic learning of other subjects easier. Linda felt it was necessary for parents/guardians to heed such calls:

*“I am saying, we as parents, that unless we get up and say, okay our children are doing Afrikaans, like that lady was telling me that, our children are doing Afrikaans they do not have a choice from grade 1, let them [white children] also do our languages, those teachers can, that woman was even saying, they are underestimating this thing, there are a lot of white people who are doing these indigenous languages. If sort of they want their children to be taught by their own skin -coloured people, they are there, it’s not like they are not there to teach them the language as that third language, we can go and teach them these languages, unless we as parents, as South Africans, we say, enough is enough, each and every school here in South Africa is going to offer English, Afrikaans and one African language”.*

Linda also acknowledged that some schools have started with such a project:

*“Another thing, when sort of, a race dominates there will sometimes be racism, KZN you will find that Indians, for example, as you know, people want to take their children to Indian schools, they always look down on the black children, they , some of them are even dark like us \*\*someone laughs\*\* but just because they are Indian, they will think that they are better, it’s also about you thinking that you are better than the other person, because, you will find that, I’m not saying it’s in Eastern Cape just because I am from there, but I know for a fact that some of the schools there, they offer isiXhosa as a second and a third language, for white children they do IsiXhosa as a third language and for some of our black children they do IsiXhosa as a second language and stuff like that. I know in that part of South Africa there are schools, whereas here in Pretoria, maybe it’s because it is Afrikaans dominated, our area where we are in Pretoria, is Afrikaans dominated and we know how they think, whereas English people and Indian people because in KZN they do offer IsiZulu in their schools and stuff like that, but here maybe, you know, it’s the way they are. Because I can say for Eastern Cape they do offer IsiXhosa at schools even if schools are multiracial”.*

#### **4.10.8 Media.**

Themba believes that radio has taken an effort to promote indigenous languages. He mentions that radio stations are in all indigenous languages but complains that the same cannot be said for television:

*“To be honest I think it’s pathetic because that’s where our children spend most of their time, watching TV, what do they watch? How do you say, Hanna Montana? \*\*laughter\*\* I think television has not really embraced our indigenous languages as much as radio broadcasting has done, and the also print media, I think it’s disappeared, our indigenous languages do not all have a newspaper which you can pick up anywhere and read, the newspaper is in English... and then in KZN, Isolomzi”* (\*meaning isolezwe)

Media was also seen as operating from a colonial template; as further noted by Themba:

*“I think to me, like my point earlier, you cannot separate language, culture and the politics because remember, TV is western influence, even people who write our production..... they write them in the structure that they’ve been taught in school that for it to be drama there must be violence, you know if it’s just a story then it’s boring, that’s what we are told, so as much as we do have dramas in our languages but they are written and the acting is in the western culture and it’s because we lost the power. So if one day, maybe two hundred, three hundred years from now, we can then own our culture, but I just think”.*

#### **4.11 Township focus group results**

##### **4.11.1 Home Languages in the township**

Factors such as migration, intermarriage and the type of school children attend influence acquisition of languages especially amongst a diverse community such as that of Soweto. The focus group's view was that people from Soweto have their own identity in terms of languages as they live among people who have different home languages and get married to people who speak different languages. In a lot of households there are different home languages because of parents/guardians who come from different backgrounds. It becomes difficult for one, at times, to say what their home tongue is. Children speak languages they are comfortable with to different people within one household and it is acceptable. Parents were concerned that children are fluent in English more than their home languages. They can hardly express themselves fluently in their home languages.

This is due to factors such as schooling that make it easy for children to communicate fluently in English. Government's move to implement indigenous languages to be taught in school was perceived as a good move but parents/guardians feel it is not enough.

#### **4.11.2 This is our Zulu!**

Dominance of the English language was challenged during the focus group discussion which took place in Soweto. Participants called for an embrace of the language they speak in Soweto as diluted as it is, they felt they should claim ownership of it. Nomonde also agrees that people need to take pride in their languages and utilise them. She acknowledged that the language used in Soweto is not the same as isiZulu spoken in Kwa-Zulu Natal but that should not deter people from taking pride in their languages: *"There is a Soweto Zulu. It is different from the Zulu-Natal Zulu but it's Sowetan and we should be proud of it"*.

#### **4.11.3 Sowetan and proud.**

There was no direct question posed to participants about the link between language and identity. In all the interviews the relationship between the two concepts emerged organically. For this focus group discussion, however, participants did not make any link between language and identity in their discourse on the status of indigenous languages. The only form of identity that was alluded to was the Sowetan identity and they spoke of it proudly.

#### **4.11.4 Embedded colonialism**

Nomhle believes that South Africa has not achieved true liberation and that has compromised the status of indigenous languages:

*"The system is against black people and we need to fight to change it. To put our languages as official. We are made to depend on English because the Economy is in English"*.

On the other hand, Nomzamo believes that children need English because it becomes a challenge when they sit in job interviews and struggle to express themselves, but Nomonde disagreed by highlighting that people should not be judged by whether or not they are fluent in English, as it is not synonymous with intelligence:

*“But mme I think I disagree with that, I believe we need to stop thinking that if a person speaks good English they are smart. Even in those interviews, we should let them know that English does not mean I am intelligent, it’s mental slavery. We need to remove that thinking from our minds”*

The African National Congress (ANC) which is the governing political party in South Africa was criticised for not taking indigenous languages seriously enough within its own ranks. However some participants felt that they are trying their best because in parliament there is a system which translates speeches to all official languages. The sentiment, nevertheless, remained strong that the party needs to ensure that is done in all public domains. *“Gwede Mantashe would come and address a Soweto crowd in English. Why not in any indigenous language because Sowetans are multilingual”*. That is what Nomonde said in expressing her displeasure at the ruling party’s attitude toward indigenous languages.

Another aspect that came out is that the agency of a child in terms of choosing the language they identify with most should not be underestimated. One participant mentioned that her children tended to gravitate towards English and IsiZulu at different degrees. In families that have multiple children the younger ones tend to acquire English before they are in school because of their older siblings influence. Participants reported that English is viewed as superior in the black community, where, if a person is eloquent in English and articulates himself or herself well he or she is viewed as clever.

#### **4.11.5 We are all responsible.**

Parents/guardians were seen as possessing power to preserve indigenous languages by imparting them on their children. Parents/guardians in Soweto believe that indigenous languages will only die because parents allowed them to.

The government was viewed by participants as having a huge role to play in the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages.

Participants from Soweto did not mention anything about the existence of hierarchies within indigenous language groups. They spoke of embracing multilingualism and being used to interacting with various people and conversing in different languages.

#### **4.11.6 Schools and language promotion.**

Participants agreed that the government is not prioritizing the promotion of indigenous languages especially in schools. They believe that both public and private schools should have indigenous languages. Nomhle argued:

*“The government is not serious about promoting indigenous languages like private schools can be forced to do them like they did with BEE on private sector companies. Government has power to implement language changes. If they can impose BEE on private sector companies, they should be capable of imposing indigenous languages”.*

Schools’ pass rate was seen as the factor that is considered by parents/guardians when choosing schools for their children. As Nomhle indicated:

*“I do not only look at the medium of instruction, I also check the development side. I remember I once took my child to an English medium crèche but his intellectual development was lower when I compared him to his peers who attended crèches where the medium was vernac. So I learnt to check what is it that the school offers on the development side”*

Where language was considered before choosing a school for a child it was because parents/guardians wanted the children to attend a school which uses their home language. They perceived it to be easier to take a child to a school that uses a language that parents understands so that they can be able to help them with homework. It is possible to do that in Soweto since the apartheid government segregated the township according to ethnic groups. That structure still exists in the post- apartheid era.

Parents/guardians who have enrolled their children in multiracial schools stated that they do so for convenience. Usually the schools are close to where the parents/guardians work therefore it would be less of a hustle to collect them after work.

#### **4.11.7 Status of indigenous languages.**

Participants felt that indigenous languages will soon fade. Expressing her horror Refilwe stated *“Do not even say in 10 years. In five years. Our languages are disappearing”*. The participants from the focus group conducted in the township shared the same fear as those in the suburban areas that indigenous languages are fading. They predicted that in a few years to come, indigenous languages would have disappeared.

What seems clear from both these focus groups is the fact that parents/guardians perceived indigenous languages as diminishing in status and largely put the blame on the lack of commitment on the part of government. It is this perceived responsibility of the government that led to my decision to include perceptions from people who are most familiar with post-apartheid government efforts to elevate indigenous languages. Those perceptions are illustrated in the section below.

#### **4.12 Policy Informants' in-depth interview results**

The data from the in-depth interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, a method of qualitative data analysis whereby a researcher identifies themes from the data and interprets them. The interpretation of themes involves more than descriptive work according to Braun and Clarke (2006). It includes rigorous analysis where the researcher is supposed to relate formulated themes to the study's research question and help to explain various aspects of the study.

Five policy key informants participated in this study and in this section I present the themes emanating from their in-depth interviews.

This section comprised the results from Ndivhuwo who represented the Department of Basic Education, Tumi from Cultural, Religious and Linguistic rights commission (a constitutional body which ensures that people's rights to culture, religion and language are respected in all spheres), Tshwane who works for the Centre for Higher Education but spoke to me in his capacity as a language scholar and activist, Lingomso who works for a national language board which cannot be named (because consent from her superiors could not be obtained after the organization underwent structural changes) who spoke to me in her personal capacity as someone who is familiar with South African language policies and Zoya who represented the Department of Arts and Culture. I allocated pseudonyms to participants to maintain their confidentiality.

##### **4.12.1 Language- our experience, our culture.**

Tshwane believes that there needs to be an incorporation of indigenous knowledges in the school curriculum:

*"I am saying that the curriculum in South Africa has not changed from pre-1994. The issues that we are talking about should be part of the curriculum and they are not. They are not teaching them about African consciousness you know. I mean if any school talks about Mandela from that global perspective, it's not.... it's helping the European mindset, it's helping the white consciousness, it is*

*not helping us you know. But if they go to that. To circumcision, we gonna have progress. They have removed us from who we are. It's like we are just floating, we do not have the roots".*

Tshwane further points to how wa Thiong'o and Biko explain the issue of the importance of the indigenous languages for African people. That African life and experience cannot be captured in a language that is not African:

*"To answer that with a question – why is it that the language, the epistemology that Steve Biko brought, why is it that it is so marginalized in SA? It's because Steve Biko is talking about that. He is answering that question that you are asking that Ngugi is talking about, that we really need to return to our languages, we really need to return to our culture, to understand other people. You cannot, Ngugi talks about... How can an African experience be expressed in a language that is not of that experience? You cannot really. You cannot. What my work is about is to say that- wherever you are, whether you are in Sandton or in mahlabathini or in Ngcobo, we need to start with who we are and move to the outside. Steve Biko is saying that, what colonialism and apartheid have done to the people, we need to ..... errr.. if this is us (gesturing) and this is apartheid and colonialism , we need to explode. That thing, whatever that is covering us, we need to come out of it and from there you can be whatever you want to be".*

Tshwane believes that the government did not need to reform apartheid policies but discard them and start from the beginning. *"And looked at Ghana, 58 or 57 and I looked at Tanzania, what 60? (Zethu: 63? Somewhere there) yeah 63. They didn't say we want to reform. They started from scratch. That this is not us. We need to..... that example of Biko.. We need to remove all those things. And that's what they have done. Even wherever you go there are those people. Like our neighbours here, like the Zimbabweans, they also decided that they need to do something with their education. In South Africa in 1994 we did not do that. We were trying to reform it. We were trying to reform this beast. Like when you replace a white minister with a black minister and the system is still the same, you are not changing anything. So if we need to change anything we need to over- ??? What's the word. We need to break everything and start from scratch"*

#### **4.12.2 African knowledges only get recognition once approved by Europeans.**

African cultural practices, according to Tshwane, have been distorted and bits of it represented to African people in forms that bear no resemblance to their origin. He argued as a way of example that

circumcision has been removed from its indigenous context and been made about only the foreskin and the media has been instrumental in marketing it as such not as an educational African practice:

*“For me by using Mandela for example, I was trying to say that let’s go back to the core of who we are. And by doing that we will understand why these languages are important. You know. Also Ngugi, I use Ngugi and Steve Biko because they talk about culture. Steve Biko talks about what the Europeans did, what the natives did that they emptied the natives, the form and content and the content and form is that circumcision, what it is. Like it’s not removing the foreskin, it’s not that. But when it comes to the advert it’s that. African practices are misrepresented It is about this knowledge that Mandela talks about, it is a school, how do we make sure that that school becomes part of the curriculum. So that when you see Mandela there becoming that person that he is, you do not isolate him from his culture. Because he is because of that culture, he is not Mandela because he went to Wits you know. He went to prison. It is that, those values. Yes he comes from somewhere. I mean the issues of language, African culture, they are not very easy to deal with because, it’s like in education and in knowledge in South Africa, those are the things that the system is trying to push them, to marginalize them. And when you tell people that you are looking at this, it’s like what is it really that you want to say. I’m saying culture”*

Zoya was the only participant who believes that English is the language in which the country’s business is conducted and therefore no language could be expected to be equal to it.

#### **4.12.3 Introduction of Mandarin in school: Selling ourselves to the highest dollar!**

Tshwane expressed displeasure at the introduction of Mandarin in schools in a country that has its own language policy implementation issues. *“Angie Motshega was talking about a Mandarin, really?! How do we talk about that when we have these other language policies that we have not implemented. And they say that the Chinese we need them more than they need us. So that’s why we need to do that language. So ..... (silence) yeah. We continue to sell ourselves to the highest dollar”.*

#### **4.12.4 Negative attitude toward indigenous languages.**

Policy implementation according to Tshwane has failed the promotion of indigenous languages.

*“You know Zethu, our policies are so good but we do not implement them. You know from 1994 to 2014 I was looking at these policies and these policies are perfect. Are perfect in the sense that they*

*haven't been implemented. They become imperfect when we start to implement them and identify holes. We need to find these holes and amend them. But if we look at these policies they are really saying that education in South Africa must include indigenous languages. I mean from 1994 we have been saying that. I think the constitution uses languages for about 22 times. But we have not implemented even the constitution. That is where we need to start. We need to say, here is the constitution. We need to implement it. And it's criminal not to implement it. That is where we need to start and from there, then we will see the holes in our constitution, we'll see the holes in policy and education, language policy in education and we'll look at them and see where the loop hole are but in 20 years. We have not done anything. With what we were fighting for on this issue of indigenous languages"*

Tshwane believes that as a country we shall not know if the language policies we have, work or not because the government has failed to implement them. On paper they appear perfect but they have never been tested through implementation. Ndivhuwo agrees that his department has not succeeded much in promoting indigenous languages. He agrees with Tshwane that the success is only on paper. If his department could be judged by the policies it has developed and turned into Acts it would appear as though there has been success. The policies have not been implemented. Ndivhuwo attest to minimal success in the utilization of indigenous languages as media of instruction. Schools only use them in the foundation phase and switch to English after foundation phase. This is something which is not legislated, schools do it on their own accord. Contrary to Tshwane's view, the department of basic education has identified language policy loopholes. The policy does not compel schools to use indigenous languages it only says they can be used where practicable. Many schools take advantage of that and claim it is not practicable. The constitution according to Ndivhuwo also uses a language which limits the government's powers to enforce language policy. The constitution states that language use is a choice. If people do not choose a certain language they cannot be forced to doing it. Tumi agrees that South Africa has policies on languages and they have been made Acts which grants people a right to complain if they feel that the policy is not being implemented. However, according to Tumi black South Africans do not exercise that right. Instead they are the first to undermine their languages by embracing English. They speak in English to their children at shopping malls. Their children cannot converse with their grandparents who are not conversant in English. Lingomso also identified some loopholes in language policy such as the fact that policies are only considered official documents when they are in English. When they

are in other languages they are perceived as translated versions. This serves to affirm English as the only official language. Also the definition of official languages includes a usage of languages for business in both public and private spheres yet it is still English and Afrikaans that enjoy such wide usage.

Tshwane argued that the government would have enforced language reforms if it wanted to just like it has done on other matters it feels strongly about:

*“In my review of the policy. I have written about 100 pages. Nathi Mthethwa is complaining that government is not implementing this, it’s the government that is supposed to implement this. But if you look for example at the inkandla issue, how did they implement it, they forced it on the people. If you look at the etolls now, they are forcing them on the people but we do not see that on the things that can enrich us, like the indigenous languages”.*

Ndivhuwo on the contrary believes that the language of the constitution does not allow the government to enforce any law. The constitution speaks of a choice to use any language. It has made it difficult for the government to enforce schools to use indigenous languages. Tshwane, Ndivhuwo and Tumi believe that Black South Africans do not see value in their languages. They do not see their place in the business world. Tumi stated *“Yes, or they will even ask you ‘what are you going to do with your indigenous languages?’ I remember we went to, err, the school that I went to, a private school, the teacher who was teaching us Setswana, she had a PHD in Setswana and one kid asked her in class ‘but what are you going to do with ‘... \*laughs\* we were still at high school then, ‘what are you going to do with Setswana, you’ve got a PHD in Setswana, why didn’t you do a PHD in something else?’ you know just the attitudes, you know, you see it . I mean, let’s also face it, I can bet you, if you get a job in P.E, you go for the job interview, you are interviewed by four or five people who are all Xhosas, the interview won’t be in IsiXhosa, I can bet you my last dollar, why? Even though all those people there, the minute you stop the interview then they start ‘thetha, thetha, thetha’[‘thetha’ is the IsiXhosa word for speak/talk], why?”*

For Ndivhuwo, parents’ attitude hinders the usage of indigenous languages. In schools parents often refuse when attempts are made to introduce indigenous languages. Parents/guardians worry that if children are taught in their home languages they won’t learn English. Teachers also offer resistance when directed by the department to use indigenous languages. However, what the department has realized is that even though they refuse when told, they do conduct lessons in their home languages in

all grades but the assessment is only in English. The languages of instruction and assessment are therefore not the same. Ndivhuwo believes that the South African society is not ready to use indigenous languages. Mastery of English is associated with high status and the English language is associated with success. This has its roots in the colonial era. The current status of indigenous languages cannot be divorced from the colonial past which imposed English and therefore its colonial culture upon black South Africans. It has been difficult for the society to perceive English differently.

Tumi does acknowledge the dilemma that it is the reality of South Africa that business is conducted in English but insists that black South Africans have the power to change that. Like in countries such as Lesotho where people use their language in all spheres. Tshwane agrees that a contributing factor to the negative attitudes toward indigenous languages is the fact that the business of the country is conducted in English. He indicated that youth does not see a place of indigenous languages in the professional world. Ndivhuwo believes that the non-usage of indigenous languages in the professional sphere has hindered the economic development of many African countries. He uses Asian countries (China and Japan) as good example of countries that have prospered economically because they use their own languages.

Zoya (from the Department of Arts and Culture) was the only participant who perceives his department as having done what is has set out to do in terms of promoting indigenous languages. It has turned policies into Acts and legislated the implementation of multilingual policies. The department has played a lead role in the implementation of language policies. Zoya, instead viewed opposition parties as standing in the way of language policy implementation. He believes that they do not allocate sufficient budget for language policy implementation.

#### **4.12.5 Lack of activism**

Tumi perceives the lack of elevation of indigenous languages as stemming from absent voice of black South Africans in the fight for the usage of their languages. He states that there are more Afrikaner than black South African voices in the fight for languages. The elevation of indigenous languages for Tumi needs people with an uncompromising attitude, who will speak their language whether the next person understand or not. As he stated *“And people will speak to you, whether you understand or not, that’s your problem, you see unless we have that activism like that with our languages, you see the Zulu speaking people have got that, also you Xhosas , but I, I find it more*

*amongst the Zulu speaking people and they will tell you ‘What!? You are South African and you don’t know Zulu? What’s wrong with you?’”*

For Tshwane an active civil society that is prepared to make demands to the government that it promotes and develop indigenous languages and indigenous knowledge systems will stop black South Africans from using English as a yardstick with which the success of their languages is measured.

*“I mean you know, if we had a department, say Setswana and they are teaching everything related to Tswana, Tswana culture, Tswana history. You don’t need it, that Ngugi statement doesn’t apply because a foreign European language is not there. Then an African language develops on its own in that sense. The problem that we have is that there is English always, it’s like everything we are doing, we are doing it in comparison. So an African language doesn’t stand. And in post 1994, an African language doesn’t stand on its own as a language. But we have a department of English which does everything. Afrikaans used to do that as well. So I don’t know. I don’t know how we gonna deal with that. (Zethu: So whose responsibility is it ultimately?) I think, ultimately, it’s the responsibility of the parents you know. Errr because, if we can have an active civil society that can speak power to the government and say, you know, we want these languages to be part and parcel of the SA landscape. I think us the people are the only people who can change everything because if we not gonna”*

#### **4.12.6 Languages of indigenous minorities.**

Tumi cautioned against the adaptation of the definition provided by the South African constitution on official languages. In his experience, he reported to having encountered people from various minority language groups who regard their languages as deserving of the official status because they are the languages people grow up speaking. Various provinces are known for having one or two of such languages. For example, there is Kilobedu in Limpopo, IsiHlubi and isiMpondo in the Eastern Cape and the Khoi and the San languages in the Northern Cape which are Nama and Xui languages.

Linguistic hierarchies according to Tumi are also evident among people who speak the same language. He made the example of amaXhosa who originate from the former Ciskei who undermine those who come from the former Transkei based on the way they speak. *“Ahh so you are part of this Kei River that you guys have the attitude for those that come from the other side of the Cape, or the*

*Transkei says 'his Xhosa is rural'. You see all those things they contribute to that and it's all about the attitude. And this history of these attitudes. And unfortunately nobody is coming back to say "hey, it's time", instead we perpetuate things. Like I said next time you go to the mall just observe "mommy I want this, oh come, come, come," I'm thinking okay "come Katleho, no Katleho stop it" \*\*laughs\*\* "Stop it don't do that". It's us and I am thinking Katleho if you just whisper something to Katleho in Xhosa or Sepedi and say "waitsi keng o tlohele hong sokodisa, ke tla go phantsa" he will understand, but "no don't do that Katleho, no". "Nah mommy I want this" \*\*laughs\*\* No just observe and listen".*

#### **4.12.7 Status of indigenous languages.**

Tumi believes that indigenous languages are dying and also that their absence in literature is worrying. According to Tumi, many writers often claim that books in indigenous languages do not sell which results in African authors electing to write in English. Tshwane and Ndivhuwo agree that the status of indigenous languages has diminished with society displaying negative attitudes toward them. However, Zoya believes that the country is moving to the right direction even though the progress has been slow. Lingomso is in agreement with Zoya, she acknowledges that the transformation process is slow but some progress has been made. She counts the establishment of structures in both national and provincial governments such as, the establishment of national language bodies and employment of language practitioners in government departments and provincial language committees as strides that have been made to restore the indigenous languages. She indicated though, that the status of indigenous languages is not where it should be with many minority languages still awaiting development and many indigenous languages not elevated to the same level as English and Afrikaans.

#### **4.12.8 Initiatives to promote indigenous languages.**

Ndivhuwo argues that advocacy campaigns to promote indigenous languages by all sectors would help improve the status of indigenous languages. In trying to address the loopholes in policies that schools often take advantage of, his department is introducing strategies that will compel schools to use indigenous languages. He is currently working on a strategy called *incremental introduction of Indigenous languages* where schools will be forced to do at least one indigenous language. The current policy promotes bilingualism in schools and schools often opt for English and Afrikaans and never an indigenous language. With the new strategy, schools can choose even two indigenous languages and provinces can choose any indigenous languages they want. He made an example, with a school in the North West province that has Setswana, isiXhosa and English as language subjects. He believes this will enable to function in any part of the country.

Ndivhuwo reported that the public is represented by School Governing Bodies in discussion forums where language policy matters are discussed with other stakeholders. For the incremental introduction of indigenous languages strategy which was piloted in 2014 and will start to be rolled out in 2017, parents/guardians were called for discussions. The strategy will start in schools that did not have indigenous languages in their curriculum and those are mainly white dominated schools. White parents, according to Ndivhuwo, were supportive of the strategy and eager to see their children learn indigenous languages. The same cannot be said about black parents. As the excerpt below from Ndivhuwo shows, parents of black South African children displayed a negative attitude toward the strategy:

*“...it’s not an easy strategy to implement, it is not. It is unlike, if I can give an example of how we introduced in grade one, because the minister just made a statement saying ‘English should start in grade one’ and it happened in all schools, just one statement but the same can’t be said about the indigenous languages because you can write a very beautiful paper about their promotion in schools but it won’t get the same nod as English so you can’t compare the two, in terms of prestige. So with this one there will be lots of resistance as well from certain sectors and I’m not talking about white sector because white sector they are in favour of this but black Parents/guardians will tell you “I have taken my kids to that school not to do Setswana and now you want to bring Setswana”.*

Lingomso cited that the organization she works for has a close working relationship with provinces through a structure called provincial language committees which are the representative of the people in communities. These committees bring provincial language concerns to the body. They also have language promotion activities such as book clubs, outreach activities and language calendar events.

#### **4.12.9 Promotion of indigenous languages by province.**

Tshwane believes that the starting point for the promotion of indigenous languages would be provinces that are less diverse. However, Tumi pointed to dangers such a move will cause. For Tumi, people will not be suitable to work in any other province which does not have the language the person uses. He instead suggests a system where people will be able to utilise any language of choice anywhere within South Africa. This is what Ndivhuwo reported as the recent strategy by his office. It is done in order to promote functionality. Pupils will not be restricted to their provinces because they do not know the languages spoken in other provinces.

#### **4.12.10 Utilization of communities in developing indigenous languages.**

For Tshwane, there should not be excuses that people are not well equipped to conduct business in indigenous languages when there are community members who have in-depth knowledge of those languages:

*“...in each and every community, we are not talking about qualifications, in each and every community there are people who speak, isiZulu, isiXhosa or Setswana properly. Why can't they make use of those people in the communities. That is where community eng... what is it, this course.... Is it community development or community engagement, where universities are supposed to, you know do something which helps the community, err there is a... I think it's community engagement. Where you talk about an institution whereby they bring people from the community who speak and teach, not by writing, by orally speaking. Because we are not gonna get a proper isiZulu, if we are talking about UKZN, we are not gonna get a proper isiZulu from any book”.*

#### **4.12.11 Use of arts to promote indigenous languages.**

Tumi suggested that creative arts be used to promote indigenous languages. Authors and musicians should be encouraged to do work in indigenous languages and their work should be put in the public domain:

*“First of all I'm thinking activism starting with us first, it's very important because we can sit and say complain but if we ourselves are doing nothing. Encourage people to dream and write in their own home languages that could be something else. Encourage activities like literature festivals, African literature festivals. Let us not be shy about it, there are lots of book festivals that we attend but it's only in English, there is not even a single one that I have been to where they will say “okay there is English but there is also one in Setswana or Xhosa”. You find book literature festivals in Afrikaans. It goes to music also to say “how much of our Indigenous languages are being used in music”, pure, clear, clean language, no more. But back there in the days of apartheid unfortunately you got groups, I mean who's this guy who just died now? David Masondo, mbaqanga. That was another way of responding to this vacuum of saying “let me play music for my people. I mean how do you explain the fact that the white man comes in and he sings Zulu mbaqanga music and we go crazy “hey” And then why don't we do it ourselves? No we want to be Usher “yeah” or who's this girl?”*

In agreement with Tumi, Tshwane also calls for the use of artists in language activism as they have the ability to reach wider audiences than academics and other people involved in language promotion. In the excerpt below, Tshwane illustrates the power indigenous languages have in making other people listen and take you seriously. Artists whose art is in their home languages have managed to capture the ear of those who do not even speak their languages. Expression of one's self in indigenous languages (as this excerpt suggest) shows people that you know who you are:

*“Mirrian Makeba was singing in isiXhosa, in seSotho, seTswana in New York and she became that famous. And they are saying, the African Americans that they didn't understand the language but the music, the feeling moved them. So can you imagine if Makeba decided to just sing in English, maybe she would not have had, there would not be a Makeba, maybe he would have just disappeared like all the artists. The same thing with Ringo. Ringo was ,you have heard these stories, you have heard that he wanted to sing reggae and all of that and that former Bob Marley manager told Ringo that ‘You need to sing in your languages in your Indigenous languages, that is what people want to hear, they don't want to hear Bob Marley or whoever. Look at Simphiwe Dana as well. It's someone you need to interview on issues of Indigenous languages. How can this person help us. Because you and me will have our PhDs but we are not that important role models as they are. So that is another angle, how can we reverse the situation. We need to have the artists, like Makeba. Who know that by standing there and they have this crowd. They can influence it”.*

#### **4.12.12 The role of the media.**

Media was viewed by Tshwane and Tumi as having been instrumental in preventing indigenous languages from prospering through their construction of stereotypes about blackness and constructing the English language as superior. For Tumi it will take activism on the part of black people to erase these stereotypes:

*“I think the development, the media. You see the media has continuously perpetuated the stereotypes of saying to sell do it to them in English then they'll follow. Because the minute you do it in indigenous languages. I mean look at the whole marketing environment, even if it's targeting black people they will try to put here and there words, you know expressions but the thinking, the creators of marketing tools are still white people. You can see the stereotypes that it's portraying black people as loud, making noise or they sing. And that identifies or explains the whole media strategy in South Africa.*

*Look at the adverts that you see about us, I'll simply say they don't reflect me, everything that is there is like woo, what is this latest one? It took me time to understand what is happening "oh slap what?"*

Tumi decries the fact that indigenous languages were thriving in media during the apartheid era compared to the present. Indigenous languages according to Tumi were spoken properly in various forms of media during apartheid but that had since perished with radio stations in current times using diluted versions of indigenous languages. As Tumi notes:

*"I think this perception of thinking 'English is key, English will give you jobs, English will give you status', remember we come from a culture where, through, where apartheid successfully made sure that if you don't know English or Afrikaans that you are nothing, you are not educated. But at the same time, if you look at, not the evil of apartheid itself, the opportunity that we had then with our Indigenous languages, our Indigenous languages were more alive than now because you knew there was radio...before Umhlobo wenene what was it? Radio Xhosa and everything there was Xhosa and they tried to make it as pure Xhosa as possible with the intention of establishing radio Xhosa but what you were listening to, there were stories told, there were news read, there was literature but everything was in pure Xhosa. But now you listen to Putco Mafani, that's not pure Xhosa, the way he speaks. There was radio Tswana, same thing, radio Lebowa, same thing, radio Zulu same thing. And everything was so pure and clear but now you try to listen to these, they've all changed names now, what you hear now is 99.9 percent American music bubblegum. That's what you hear and you find these people who because they have microphone in front of them, now they're excited, "woo ya, ya, yeah, yeah". So it's that attitude of saying you know if you twang, if you sound American then you are seen to be happening but the more you try to speak Xhosa, the real Xhosa.*

#### **4.12.13 Monitoring of policy implementation.**

Policy key informants were asked if the work that they are tasked with is subjected to any monitoring. Tumi reported that they do report to the portfolio committee in parliament which looks at whether or not they have done what they set out to do. Tshwane maintains that the usage of indigenous languages is not being monitored. The departments who are tasked with doing such are not doing it. Tshwane reported that the national language forum which is spearheaded by the Department of Arts and Culture has not been successful because departments have not formulated the language units they were supposed to put in place that were going to ensure the usage of language policies in each department. This is the forum that Zoya reported as a successful mechanism his department has utilised to ensure

successful monitoring of other departments. Ndivhuwo stated that the national and provincial departments do monitor the implementation of the pilot phase of the strategy in schools. And the national department is monitored through initiatives by the department of arts and culture. Like they are required to form a language unit in their department but he indicated they have not.

Lingomso stated that her organization is the monitoring body that oversees implementation of language policy in various wings of government. She believes that the major obstacle to implementation of language policies has been the lack of allocation of proper funding. Policy implementation is a multi-layered process that requires a lot of resources, according to Lingomso and the government has not managed to allocate sufficient budget to that.

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

The findings presented above point to a similar pattern of thinking about indigenous languages irrespective of the data collection method used. Narratives helped me understand stories of young people from different social settings in Gauteng province about their views on the status and relevance of indigenous languages in post-apartheid South Africa. Themes from various stakeholders provided an insight into the successes and challenges that have impacted the implementation of post-apartheid language policies. Discourses from parents/guardians enabled me to unpack the socio-political underpinnings that impact on the decisions parents/guardians make about their children's language acquisition and usage. Common among these findings was the impact colonial and apartheid era policies have on the status of indigenous languages in today's South Africa.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

Indigenous languages are known to reflect indigenous forms of being. They name, give meaning and transmit indigenous knowledge systems in a manner that sustains generations (Hikwa, 2011). However, to revisit the assertions made in the first chapter, I again argue that, the invasion of lands by colonial powers disrupted such crucial functions of languages and left invaded lands disconnected from their roots. This process could be deemed the most violent as it did not only rob people of life and material wealth but also a sense of their identity. Its remnants are still evident in South Africa today. In this chapter, using a decolonial lens, I shall situate the narratives and discourses presented in the results chapter in the political context highlighted above in order to show how black South Africans (who participated in this study) make sense of the status of indigenous languages. As it will be shown in this chapter, colonialism has continued to be instrumental in inferiorising indigenous languages even after the regime change of 1994. The chapter also engages the interconnectedness of languages to concepts of culture and identity and through the lens of Fanon (1986) Biko (2004) and wa Thiong'o (1986), unpacks the manner in which such concepts have been manipulated to distort self-definition of the colonised. In conclusion, I shall present what the participants offer as suggestions for new language narratives and discourses in efforts to bring forth South Africa's absent voice.

### **5.1 Language, the epicenter of coloniality.**

Participants in this study could not speak of the status of indigenous languages without linking it to the socio-political context of South Africa and at the centre of that context is the colonial and apartheid past which has continued to impact on the way languages are used to this day. Youth narratives speak to what I have found in literature (Bamgbose, 2011; Ramoupi, 2011) and theory (Biko, 2004; waThiong'o, 1986) that indigenous languages in South Africa were placed in the position of inferiority deliberately by colonial powers whose aim was to dominate black South Africans.

#### ***5.1.1 Crafting of a colonial narrative.***

Young people who participated in narrative interviews depicted the implications of deliberate acts of inferiorising languages alluded to above in varying ways. For example, Mbuzani reported a passion for English and Afrikaans which was ignited by his grandmother's ideals. She worked as a domestic worker for white people and, as stated, in the results section she idolised her employers'

ways. In contrast, Gugu appeared to be saddened by the loss of her indigenous language which commenced in her grandparents' era with the advent of migrant work which introduced European languages, thus the European world to the people. As argued in chapters two and three, oppression presented the European reality as the only real world. Under both colonial and apartheid rule black people were made to feel as if their world did not matter and that caused them to want to emulate the white world (Biko, 2004). This is what appeared to have happened with the two grandmothers depicted above and interestingly their behavior had a varying impact on their grandchildren. Mbuzani internalized the messages from her grandmother and his narrative has shown that even in his young adult life he still embraces white people's way including their language. Gugu on the contrary has looked at her grandmother's behavior critically and concluded that it has cost her, her indigenous language which she perceives as her identity. Gugu believes that what has happened to indigenous languages which started in the colonial era has dire implications for the country when she states "*.....We gonna be a country with no origins or culture to fall back on*". This is what both Biko (2004) and wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasise, that a loss of a language is a loss of essence of what defines a people. Gugu's point stems from her frustration that her grandparents cannot tell her anything about her origins and her identity because they lost all of that when they replaced their indigenous languages with a colonial language. Biko refers to culture as a point of reference which I interpret as meaning a space where orientation and guidance about who you are is provided. Losing such a core part of oneself therefore, leads to misguidance and disorientation around identity. Gugu feels strongly that there is no excuse in not preserving indigenous languages because black people are now in power yet they continue to run their business in English. She echoes Bamgbose's (2011) assertion that years after colonial administrators left, colonial policies still govern the formerly colonised lands. This has worked against the status of indigenous languages and has made fears of their extinction appear real. As Gugu argues, black South Africans are the ones who compromise their cultures to accommodate other cultures and that she attributes to an inferiority complex which Fanon (1986) discusses extensively. According to Fanon (1986), an inferiority complex arises when the oppressed start accepting the oppressor's world as superior and spend their lives trying to emulate everything of that world. It is what Gugu believes has happened with indigenous languages. The government has not made them a priority because it has embraced languages deemed superior, which are colonial languages.

Boity shared similar sentiments that indigenous languages are not embraced by their speakers. She denounced the attitude many black South Africans seem to display toward their languages and the acceptance they give to the English language. She believes that people do not need English to be successful. She expresses displeasure at the fact that people have embraced Western cultures at the expense of their own and, she laments, it appears as if they are not proud to be who they are. This points to the psychological impact of oppression that has left many black South Africans looking at themselves with the same lens the oppressors used and shedding the parts of themselves the oppressor has declared unacceptable. Ntando's narrative about the experiences of his parents as labourers for Afrikaans speaking farmers justifies the cries of both Gugu and Boity. In an excerpt presented in the results section, Ntando manages to show that oppression was intended to wash African cultures off black South Africans' minds and bodies. It took the kind of resistance his parents displayed for African cultures to still be standing today. Similarly, Biko (2004), wa Thiong'o (1986) and Fanon (1986) argue that the ultimate aim of oppression is to rid people of who they are. For oppression to succeed, it was fundamental to erase people's identity by introducing them to colonial cultures. Ntando's parents' refusal to bow to oppressive pressure instilled a message in him that his language thus his identity matter in the world. This lesson remains with him in adulthood. Even though he has been exposed to various languages and recognises the importance of learning other languages he does not see the need to replace his own language. As shown by the findings of this study, parents/guardians play an important role in their children's language acquisition. Participants in narrative interviews who reported an embrace of home languages by their parents displayed a strong grasp of, and an attachment to their home languages while those who indicated that their parents/guardians did not pay much attention to their languages indicated a poor grasp of their home language.

As I have depicted above, narratives have helped map out a linguistic path colonialism crafted which has impacted on black people's conception of self, generation after generation. By tracing their childhood backgrounds participants were able to elect moments in their life journey that were critical in shaping their understanding of the meaning of languages in their lives.

### ***5.1.2 A colonising discourse.***

The above narrative accounts resonate with what parents/guardians perceived as the dominant language discourse in South Africa during focus group discussions. They pointed critically to a

linguistic discourse that is situated in coloniality where languages in South Africa are still perceived as they were during both the apartheid and the colonial eras with English and Afrikaans still dominant in the professional sphere. This has sustained itself through a subtle but powerful discursive machinery that works daily to produce an analogy which sells colonial languages as universal enough to capture everybody's realities. It is this machinery that Nyamnjoh (2012) has warned his audience against as its ontologic grounding rejects a reality that is multiple and capable of co-existing. This machinery is infiltrated in a variety of spheres that the participants of this study were able to uncover and interrogate. Xolelwa, for example, uses the absence of indigenous language material in libraries to point us to the systematic erasure of indigenous realities from the minds of indigenous people. As she argues, this has psychological implications because the underlying message is that indigenous languages are not suitable for professional use and do not belong in the public domain. Thus one's life as an indigenous person has no value. This threads perfectly with what emerged from key policy informant interviews where it was indicated that there is limited literature in indigenous languages because the authors say there is no market for it. This is one of the ways in which discourses gain legitimacy. Perceptions are subtly introduced and may appear harmless yet their implications are dire. In this context, the absent market for indigenous literature was deliberately crafted through systematically erasing it from the public domain and it has in turn worked to destroy indigenous literature. The end result of the absence of literature in indigenous languages will be the extinction of those languages. Literature is one of the ways through which a language is kept alive, a phenomenon Afrikaans speakers mastered from the day Dutch, which is their original language, was developed into Afrikaans. They ensured that material to sustain their language is developed and properly distributed. A practice they have maintained to this day. As Nozipho, who participated in narrative interviews, stated, videos and other teaching aid materials were used at her school to facilitate efficient acquisition of Afrikaans. This is in line with what Webb (1999) and de Kadt (2005) argued that deliberate effort has to be made to ensure the development and promotion of indigenous languages. What is currently happening in schools, as Nozipho has alluded, shows that it is still Afrikaans promoters that ensure their language remains in the public sphere. With the above, I have attempted to show one of the ways in which discourses are entrenched and made to appear legitimate so that the people they are aimed to subjugate receive them unquestioningly. Revisiting wa Thiong'o (1986) assertion, I shall state that we are living post the age of sword and gun, meaning that the oppressor has crafted new strategies to normalise oppression.

This is what parents/guardians' focus group discussions centred around- the need to expose coloniality in the current South African linguistic discourse and to play an active role in ensuring the restoration of indigenous languages.

### ***5.1.3 De-linking from languages of oppression.***

Parents/guardians who participated in focus group discussions spoke critically about the challenges engulfing indigenous languages in South Africa and their criticism is well captured by Nomhle's assertion that *"The system is against black people and we need to fight to change it. To put our languages as official. We are made to depend on English because the economy is in English"*. This compels us to look back at Grosfoguel's (2007) description of coloniality as the embedded European forms in postcolonial government systems. The participant's assertion illustrates clearly that the continuation of colonial policies has worked to disadvantage black South Africans. It has contributed to the absence of indigenous languages in the professional sphere because policies and systems are in colonial languages. Black South Africans are not provided with any choices but to acquire English because it is the only key to access the labour market thus advance economically. This was a sentiment in both focus group discussions with participants interrogating the attainment of political power for it has yielded very little meaningful change as the economy was perceived to be still in the hands of the oppressor. What I deem as encouraging about the results was the realization by participants that they have power to craft a new discourse for South African languages. As shown in Nomhle's excerpt there is a need to fight to change the system. South Africa is built on centuries of steadfast battles and South Africans are not known for standing by when they believe their rights have been undermined. The absence of the protesting voice on the matter of languages was starting to raise concerns. The assertions of these parents/guardians will be the contribution language proponents such as Prah (2006) have been yearning for, in order to strengthen the fight to challenge Eurocentricism in language usage. Parents/guardians believe that they have been complicit in the inferiorisation of their languages by being accommodative of people who demand that they do not use their languages because they are incomprehensible. By allowing this, (according to Themba a participant in the suburban focus group) a person is affirming the belief that indigenous languages are unsuitable for use. Participants demanded black South Africans to reclaim the power they have given to colonial languages. Participants displayed an understanding that the failure to embrace their own languages often leads to an embrace of other people's languages. This concurred

with what Xolelwa (a participant in suburban narrative interviews) stated that one only starts to undermine one's language once one tells one's self that there is another language which is more important than one's own and that language in South Africa, according to Xolelwa is often English or Afrikaans. She believes that if people were to embrace their own languages and appreciate diversity by respecting other languages without losing their own, the beauty of South Africa will emerge. Kleva concurred with the assertion pointing to the beauty he witnessed when South African artists came together to denounce xenophobia using their indigenous language to demonstrate that people could have differences and still get along well. This points us to what I indicated in chapter one, where I highlighted that apartheid's separate development project was meant to create divisions among black South Africans. It robbed black people of the opportunity to dwell together and get to understand one another resulting in an evident lack of acceptance of different cultural groups. Xolelwa's first assertion is a useful decolonial strategy Mignolo (2011) coined de-linking. Xolelwa suggests that we de-link from English and Afrikaans and start looking at indigenous languages in their own right. A sentiment shared by Tshwane. Tshwane also believes that black South Africans need to start to build indigenous languages without using English as a yard stick and only when that happens we shall see the role of indigenous languages as more than just a communication function. As he demonstrates below we shall see the history and the culture of the people through their languages. *".... the problem that we have is that there is English always, it's like everything we are doing, we are doing it in comparison. So an African language doesn't stand and in post 1994, an African language doesn't stand on its own.as a language"*. This shows that a lens that will allow South Africa to look at indigenous languages as complete languages capable of performing functions that colonial languages perform is necessary.

#### ***5.1.4 Government complicit in sustaining coloniality.***

As argued in chapter two, South Africa's democracy turned 21 in April 2015 yet the implementation of language policies is still in its infancy with the incremental use of indigenous languages strategy by the department of education only piloted in 2014. Youth participants agree with Mncwango (2012) who argues that there has not been much transformation in the education sector with Afrikaans schools only adding English classes to their schools. Three participants who attended formerly Afrikaans only schools exposed that they were in English classes and were taught in English instead of Afrikaans and they all indicated that none of the schools had an indigenous language class. This was in contrast to what some of the participants in the suburban

focus group discussion reported. They reported a move toward incorporating indigenous languages in some urban schools. However when acknowledging these changes they did not critically engage with their nature. For example some appeared happy that there is some accommodation of indigenous languages in that children are starting to converse in home languages at school but did not talk about the bigger school context of the status at which these languages are introduced, are they instruction medium? The participants who indicated no change in schools where their children are enrolled were more critical about the way in which indigenous languages tend to be introduced at schools. They indicated that most of the time they were additional subjects and sometimes they get to be introduced only in high school making it difficult for children who were never given an opportunity to learn indigenous language in primary school to choose them. They also criticised the surveys the schools conduct on the choice of indigenous languages preferred by parents/guardians because nothing ever happens after they have participated in the surveys. The above accounts point to two matters I wish to engage with briefly below and those are; the notion that English solves indigenous people's language issues in Afrikaans schools and the concept of accommodating black South Africans in predominately white spaces.

#### ***5.1.4a English and Afrikaans speakers riding on an unfair advantage.***

The introduction of the English language in predominantly Afrikaans schools is often perceived as a long lasting solution to language problems the education system face. It is my argument that such a practice does nothing to aid the black child's quest to acquiring education as English is still foreign to her/him. As illustrated in the narratives, some young participants believe that the utilization of both English and Afrikaans as media of instruction has impacted negatively on the academic development of black children. Xola agreed with Alexander (2005) that other population groups have an unfair advantage of being taught in the languages they grew up speaking while black South African children have to acquire the language of instruction first before dealing with content. To illustrate the challenge a foreign language poses to both teachers and learners, Ndivhuwo stated that in most under privileged schools, teachers tend to use indigenous languages as the medium of instruction but the language of assessment is purely English. This is in line with Alexander's (2005) argument for schools to put black South African children on level ground with children from other population groups where the language of instruction and assessment is the home language. This as Alexander (2005) argues will improve academic performance of black South African children.

#### **5.1.4b Being accommodated at home.**

If the quest to decolonise systems that work against the attainment of true liberation for black South Africans is to succeed, perhaps the concept of being accommodated in spaces that were previously meant for Europeans who invaded the land needs to be problematised. The addition of English in Afrikaans schools and introduction of lower grade indigenous languages in English schools is an accommodative practice that works to aid coloniality. This takes us back to what Tshwane alluded to in the results section that the post-apartheid government has reformed colonial policies instead of deconstructing them and crafting completely new policies. As shown by the results of this study, schools have now opened tiny gaps to accommodate the previously excluded groups of people. Being accommodated in your own land could be a problematic concept. It could be interpreted to mean you are where you should not be. Decolonial thought forces the subjugated people to reclaim their place and assert their presence as full members of the society. Their rights to express their cultures, use their languages, practice their spirituality and embrace their identities should be protected in all spheres as the constitution promises.

#### **5.1.5 “We continue to sell ourselves to the highest dollar!”**

Government’s plan to introduce Mandarin (a Chinese language) in South African schools was used to depict the manner in which the government continues to treat indigenous languages with less urgency. The move to introduce Mandarin was seen as a form of colonialism as Ntombi *noted “the outside countries do not only bring their languages, they bring their cultures with”*. This concurs with what decolonial thought emphasises, that languages are powerful weapons used to entrench foreign cultures to people (Mignolo, 2011; Mangayi, 1981). The dangers associated with the introduction of Mandarin in schools are not different from the dangers the introduction of English and Afrikaans posed where indigenous languages ended up being pushed to the periphery. Tshwane expressed displeasure at the introduction of Mandarin in schools in a country that has its own language policy implementation issues. Tshwane captures the feelings of many participants well in his exclamation “*Angie Motshega was talking about Mandarin, really?! How do we talk about that when we have these other language policies that we have not been implemented? And they say that the Chinese we need them more than they need us. So that’s why we need to do that language. So ..... (silence). We continue to sell ourselves to the highest dollar!*”

Selling ourselves to the highest dollar is a construct which could be considered as aptly capturing the refusal of post-colonial governments to break away from foreign wings. South Africa

seems unbothered by the gradual infiltration of the Chinese influence in its shores. For a country which is still battling with the legacy of European domination one would expect an exercise of caution when dealing with outside countries that possess more political influence and stature. The distress expressed by South Africans is therefore understandable as colonial history has shown that languages can be a weapon of domination. If South Africans are dubbed as needing the Chinese more than Chinese need them, it appears justifiable to be uneasy about the introduction of Mandarin in schools. South Africa is a country with fundamental language problems that were created by the presence of foreign countries. Such a socio-political context should help South Africans to be more alert when dealing with outside countries especially under a democratic rule.

#### ***5.1.6 Other business.***

The complicit role to maintain coloniality was not only limited to the education sector. The media was also criticised for its lack of promotion of indigenous languages in particular and blackness in general. Even though the radio was seen as the medium which has prioritized indigenous languages compared to other media during the suburban focus group, a theme which arose from key policy informants in-depth interviews reminded the reader that radio is riding on the success of a system which was designed by oppressors to entrench their discriminatory policies. It was perceived as sad that even that system has turned out to be better at presenting indigenous languages than what the current government is doing. *Tumi* believes that the media in the present day has been instrumental in preventing indigenous languages from prospering through their construction of stereotypes about blackness in advertisements that portray black as loud and trivial and a consistent use of diluted versions of indigenous languages. Thus perpetuating the dehumanising narrative that puts blackness under constant distortion.

#### ***5.1.7 Whose responsibility is it anyway?***

Both the government and communities were blamed during focus group discussions for failing the black child in a plethora of ways. The government was seen as having dragged its feet in ensuring the development of schools where the majority of black South African children attend and turning them into places of learning that are capable of attending to their educational needs holistically. The participants saw the government as having a huge role to play in the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages. Parents/guardians were also seen as possessing power to preserve these languages by imparting them onto their children. Parents/guardians in Soweto believe that they are key agents in ensuring that indigenous languages do not die. An indication that they see themselves as

being in a position to shape a new linguistic discourse which puts indigenous languages at the same level as other official languages which boast colonial and apartheid stripes.

The government was perceived as the institution that carries the largest share of responsibility to promote, preserve and ensure wide usage of indigenous languages. It was however seen as not having done enough to make sure that is realized. Narratives, discourses and themes emanating from the findings point to a lack of transformation in the education system, a failure to make meaningful shifts in media and misguided use of agency. Young people whose schooling commenced post-apartheid attested to non-existent use of indigenous languages as instruction media while parents/guardians pointed to the introduction of Mandarin as a sign that the government can act on languages but it is taking misguided actions. Key policy informants' themes also picked this lack of commitment from the government as allowing colonial languages to take the dominant position. However a participant from the department of education pointed to the negative attitude of black South African parents toward indigenous languages as hindering their efforts. Parents/guardians according to the participant, are often resistant when the government attempts to introduce indigenous languages as medium of instruction. He indicated that he found white parents more enthusiastic than parents of black South African children when discussions about the inclusion of indigenous languages in schools are held. The blame game displayed above could be perceived as the depiction of one positive aspect which is the desire by both parents/guardians and government to see indigenous languages being utilized in schools. That can be used as the stepping stone in ensuring the status of indigenous languages is elevated to a true official language status which they do not currently enjoy as the findings have shown. Lingomso aided the understanding of what it means to enjoy the official language status when she clarified that an official language needs to enjoy a wide usage in "government, parastatal organizations and private enterprises". As indicated earlier, this is currently not the case in South Africa.

## **5.2 Language is both culture and identity.**

Narratives from most young people indicated that they perceived language as being an integral part of culture and identity. Language was seen as helpful in people's definition of self and expression of cultures. This is what wa'Thiong'o (1986) and Biko (2004) also believe that languages help in the transmission of culture and the continuation of a people. Participants see languages as an important

part of who they are and if it is taken away they will lose a sense of identity. As Gxilitshé (2009) and Fanon (1986) assert, once people adopt a new language they become a part of a world whose language they have assimilated. This came out from Ntando who stated

*“Your originality goes with your language, how can I put it, amasiko like traditionally, like if I am among people who speak English, I’ll develop a sense that I am more like those people. If they do not do cultural related things, I’ll also abandon my culture because I’ve adopted their ways. I may start thinking it is also best for me to turn my back on these cultural related things forgetting that it’s my originality. Because I use their language, I’ll start thinking I am like those people. And turn my back on my culture and all that”.*

From what Ntando is saying I deduce that language defines a person and determines behavior. It impacts on who you are, where you belong and how your people have lived. This was also depicted by Boity when she expressed sadness over not having a grasp of her home language. She mentioned that she experiences envy when her friends who originate from provinces outside Gauteng travel home to perform rituals. For her, they have a sense of belonging she wishes for because she believes that knowing your roots helps you to carve a future for yourself. When one loses language one loses the grasp of one’s culture and once that is lost, as Biko (2004) argues, one loses a point of reference. A person has nothing to measure self against or to look back at and see whether or not the person is on the right track. Gugu spoke of this loss of a cultural point of reference as having impacted on her sense of identity. Because her parents and her grandparents’ indigenous languages were eroded in Mozambique, they are unable to respond to many questions she has about her identity. This illustrates the danger South Africa is facing if robust action is not taken to preserve indigenous languages. Children run a risk of having no knowledge of their origins and their way of life. While this is often perceived as cultural evolution, decolonial thinkers call it assimilation as it is usually the cultures of the western world that replace African cultures. Biko (2004) did not dismiss that cultures do evolve but was against the dodgy assumption that assimilation of Western cultures is evolution. He believes that cultures are capable of evolving and borrowing from influences around them but still maintaining their distinctive features. This is similar to sentiments shared by Waziyatawin (as cited in Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005) who views language evolution as a natural process where an indigenous lens is used to ensure that languages adapt and expand in response to environmental changes. The replacement of indigenous languages with English is an

interruption of that process for Waziyatawin (as cited in Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005) and it eventually leads to language death. The participants in narrative interviews spoke of township version of indigenous languages in varying ways. Some saw it as what fits into the definition of evolution. That when people from various backgrounds meet languages begin to mix, like in the case of isiPitori, where Pretorians mix a variety of languages. They also spoke of township versions of Shangaan and isiZulu for example which point to the evolution of languages. But others expressed a sense of loss over this dilution of languages. That they feel a void, they do not really know their identity. This is the challenge that decolonial project urges decolonial scholars to face. The origins, purpose and meaning of evolution for indigenous languages demand decolonial interrogation. If decolonial scholars choose decoloniality as an option to reclaim black people's identities, There is a need to examine the meaning of what is label as evolution and look into whose interests are served best by the diluted versions of indigenous languages. Assimilation was decried by those participants who felt strongly about their home language. They decried the popular practice which replaces home language with English especially by the younger generation arguing that it will lead to the death of indigenous languages.

The conclusion I draw from these narratives is that the responsibility to prevent indigenous languages from fading lies in a variety of sites. Families, as demonstrated above, have an important role to play especially those with young children. How they display their perceptions of home languages shapes their children's perceptions of who they are.

The interconnectedness of culture and language was also evident in the discourses presented by suburban parents/guardians who participated in the focus group discussions. The difficulty of talking about one without referring to the other is captured in the following excerpt;

*"I think to me your question is linked to what she said, the language is not so much about like now let's talk about the culture, it's in your the behaviour , in how you act and also you can't divorce language from culture, so in my case, I do try to make my kids aware about African culture or certain things that Zulus do and also I think it's about exposing them as well like when there's a funeral or wedding , you explain to them why this is happening then it's part of the culture, so speak a bit about the language".*

Language and culture for Ntombi are lived rather than preached experiences. She has tried to impart a home language to her children through exposing them to cultural events. In this way she gets an

opportunity to explain cultural practices and that introduces them to the concepts of their home language. This reiterates wa Thiong'o's (1986) argument that language and culture are interconnected. Makosha also agrees that it is not common to just introduce talks about home languages but in discussions about culture which take place in her household, she finds matters of language entering the frame. Even though Makosha embraces her culture she exercises agency to reject aspects of it that she views unsuitable for her and her children. This depicts that she constructs power as located within herself. She challenges the patriarchal view on matters that involve circumcision. Themba who was the only male in the group responded by saying he believes single women have a fear that certain cultural practices do not fit in with suburb life or are harsh but he thinks they should introduce boys to rural life so that they can learn to be boys. Themba's construction of the culturally acceptable way of raising boys is situated in traditional masculinity. He does not consider what Makosha presents as an option, he seems to be of the view that there is only one way of perceiving the practice of circumcision.

Tshwane traces the roots of misgivings black South Africans have about cultural practices by using wa Thiong'o and Biko as a reminder that African cultures have gone through colonial distortions and their substance has been denigrated over the years. He stresses the need to remember that the practice of circumcision is more than just the removal of the foreskin. The Western world, he argues, has made it to be about the foreskin and some Africans have started to give it recognition because the West has approved the foreskin removal part of it and prescribed western medical surgeon for its removal. Tshwane believes that circumcision has been removed from its indigenous context and the media has been instrumental in marketing it as such and not as an educational African practice. Decolonial theory requires the oppressed to disassociate with colonial lessons and craft an ontology that allows them to define themselves. In dealing with Makosha and Themba's contrasting views I borrow from Nyamnjoh (2012) who argues that the key to understanding the world is to acknowledge that multiple realities can co-exist.

Another gender related matter evident in the suburban focus group came when I asked the group about the language/languages that are mainly spoken in their households. Ntombi who reported to be married to a Setswana speaking man indicated that at her home they mainly speak English and isiZulu (which is her home language). This points to a shift from patriarchal ways of doing things where the language of the husband/male partner ( in the case of heterosexual couples) in households usually becomes the home language. As depicted in the discourses presented by both Ntombi and Makosha,

even though black South Africans spoke highly of their culture and identity, they still did not perceive it as something rigid. They were able to discard elements of their cultures they deemed unsuitable for them.

The culture and identity discourse was absent during conversation with Soweto parents/guardians. When talking about the importance of indigenous languages the participants did not make any reference to culture. The only form of identity that was alluded to was the Sowetan identity and they spoke of it proudly. This was also evident in the narrative of Kleva who has lived in Soweto all his life. He alluded to not following any cultural belief. Throughout this thesis, I have argued in agreement with Fanon (1986), Biko (2004) and wa Thiong'o (1986) that the ultimate aim of oppression was to rid people of their knowlegdes, cultures and identities. It would appear that with the introduction of migrant labour and the movement of people from rural areas to cities and small towns in search of employment, cultures underwent gradual erosion and people defined themselves in terms of subcultures they constructed in their new settings. I therefore perceive being Sowetan as laying a claim to one of those subcultures. Biko (2004) lamented the mushrooming of these township subcultures as cultural evolution. It is therefore not easy to be dismissive of them as they are a reflection of what was birthed by the structural changes that were imposed upon black South Africa. They expose the multi-layers of the South African society and should help us respond to matters of indigenous languages in an encompassing manner.

Another concept closely linked to identity is security. Language was perceived as contributing to a sense of security. Ntando alluded to the fact that when he moved to Pretoria from KZN, he felt unsafe when he could not communicate in languages that are dominant in Pretoria. This could be attributed to the fact that South Africa's diversity, as it was demonstrated in chapter one, was manipulated by the previous oppressive regimes to create rifts among black South Africans. This led to mistrust and territorial feelings among different cultural groups. Language became an inclusion and exclusion tool and the inability to converse in a particular group's language caused feelings of insecurity. It is in that context that I situate Ntando's feelings of insecurity when he could not speak local languages. From his narratives I deduce that language and belonging are interrelated. The ability to speak a language gives a person an access to a world of that language and that brings about a sense of security. It is this sense of security that compelled him to learn other languages. It is however worth noting that the dynamics tend to be different when the language learnt is a language

of oppression. As Fanon (1986) points out, the acquisition of the coloniser's language never results to access to the oppressor's world, a black person will always be perceived as such.

### **5.3 Decolonial parenting.**

The role of parents/guardians was perceived to be important by parents/guardians themselves. As the findings from focus group discussions show, parents/guardians felt that they need to play an active role if indigenous languages are to survive. However, some parents/guardians expressed the difficulty of having to impart indigenous languages to children in a social environment that is not conducive. The fears expressed by Ntombi and the agency portrayed by Makosha exposed contrasting stances; Ntombi expressed pride in her language but it was accompanied by feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. She attributes her children's inability to converse in isiZulu to the social environment. She puts power to the community and school. She sees those agents as having control over the languages in which her children converse. Responding to that Makosha argued that parents have a responsibility within their homes to instill home languages in their children. The interaction between Makosha and Ntombi depicts the varying perceptions of the positioning of power in ensuring home language usage within families. On one hand Makosha depicts power as lying within self to change her situation, to resist outside forces and ensure she instills a sense of importance of home language to her children. She reclaimed her power from the social environment and plays an active role in teaching her children their home language. Ntombi on the other hand has given power to outside sources and refuses to share some blame for her children's inability to grasp a home language. Feeling helpless, she believes she has done everything in her power to teach her children their home language. She suspects that lack of visits to her ancestral home has exacerbated the situation. Again she points to outside sources that have contributed to her children's situation. These contrasting discourses urge us to pay careful attention to how social and family environment interact to aid coloniality and how it can be challenged and resisted.

That is by no means a suggestion that being a parent in a neo-colonial environment is as clear cut. As demonstrated by Ratele (2013) the complexities of post-apartheid social realities present varying facets of language struggles black South African families confront. The situation is even more complicated for black middle class families whose economic standing allow them access to the 'white world'. As participants illustrated above in a social and family environment that makes it challenging to acquire an indigenous language, children easily acquire the language available to them (through school, media and home environment that, for one reason or another does not enable home language

acquisition). The situation compels scholars to revisit what Manganyi (1973) attempted to dissect in the early 1970s with the advent of Black Consciousness movement and which is something Ratele (2013) laments- the question of what it means to be black in the world. Decolonial thought attempts to answer this question by begging of us to take the question of re-imagining the world to different heights. In the current capitalist South Africa, as Ratele (2013) highlights, it is only a handful of black people which is absorbed into the upper economic classes. This situation, as echoed by Fanon (1986) does not only create a false binary between rich and poor blacks but also causes an internal battle for rich black South Africans whose perceived access to the white world might lead them to remove themselves from the issues dominant in the daily realities of poor black South Africans. The access to a life which at least restores some of their human dignity might appear to be posing different set of struggles for them to the ones faced by poor black South Africans while, in fact, it is the embedded coloniality which crowned English and its world of origin universal which is a problem. These are dangerous binaries that decolonial theory are urging black people to be cognisant of and work toward a world where hierarchies of inferiority and superiority will be non-existent. This will allow South Africans to view the world with a lens that refuses to recognize the inbuilt superiorities of the colonial world- that is when colonial languages will lose significance. It is only in such a space that I imagine families like Ntombi's and Makosha's having little anxieties when sending their children to school as the likelihood of using their home languages would be high, the media would present material that is a true reflection of the demographics of the land and black South Africans would not even have to teach their children about blackness as it would be a lived experience allowing space for evolving, modifying and discarding when deemed fit without judgement.

#### ***5.4 Perceiving and performing languages.***

The social context played a key role when I looked at how participants from both suburban and township communities spoke of and reportedly perform home languages. In suburban areas households tended to be less diverse and therefore home language and dominant spoken language were easy to identify. Most participants alluded to utilizing only one language at home. Startling contrasts were found in the township. Soweto is one of the oldest and the most diverse townships in South Africa. Participants in the focus group represented that diversity well. Some Parents/guardians alluded to being fluent in more than three indigenous languages and never speaking their home languages but other indigenous languages. They also indicated that their children would speak one language to the mother and another to the father with none of those languages being the home

language of either parent. They were however worried about the youngest generation which attends English medium schools that tends to speak English all the time and refuse to communicate in an indigenous language. They attributed this to the schools they attend. They come back from school thinking English is better and in the community they are perceived as smarter. They believe that enforcing indigenous languages in schools that are outside townships could help change this attitude.

Some young participants viewed English as the universal language. As alluded to in the literature (De Klerk, 2002; Conduah, 2003) such a view has strengthened the case for the dominant usage of English. Even the participants who called for the need to embrace indigenous language did not challenge the dominance of English. This shows the manner in which English has for centuries managed to cement its place through what Mignolo (2011) refers to as deliberate manipulation. Mignolo (2011) urges us to look critically at the concept of universality as it masks deliberate strategies by Western nations to continue their dominance over their former colonies.

Unlike in Damba's (2009) study in Zimbabwe where participants displayed a negative attitude toward indigenous languages, participants in my study were generally positive about indigenous languages and criticised the government's lack of commitment in promoting these languages. Instead, they were critical of the negative attitude they have observed around them. It was always 'other' who didn't display pride in their languages, never, themselves or their close friends.

A similar embrace was observed in focus groups of Parents/guardians from both suburban and township areas. In expressing how he feels about his home language, Themba, (who was a participant in the suburban focus group discussion), had this to say "*.....I think if people of other languages can take time to understand IsiXhosa to me it's one of the rich languages by the way, IsiXhosa is the only African language that uses all the letters of the alphabet. So you can see the richness of the language, if you use all those letters of the alphabet that means that it is rich in terms of how it is constructed, yeah that's what I can say about my mother-tongue*"

The quote depicts ownership and pride in home language by the participant. He starts off by subtly expressing his feelings toward being misconstrued as umXhosa in Gauteng Province and follows it by expressing pride and attachment to his language. The 'only' language that uses all letters of the alphabet can be viewed as a depiction of deep seated pride in one's language. It shows that he has paid careful attention to the smallest details about his language. Usage of words such as 'rich' and 'people should

*learn*’ it are further indication that the participant feels that his language has prestige among indigenous languages.

### **5.5 Linguistic zone of being and non-being.**

The findings of this study confirmed the existence of linguistic hierarchies that were created by colonial powers to benefit their quest for control of African nations. At first they were racially and then ethnically organised. As depicted in chapter one, racial organisation of languages meant that the languages of the oppressor assumed dominance over those of the oppressed. This was then followed by the creation of ethnic divisions where ethnic groups were pitted against one another and dialects within languages were manipulated to cause divisions among black South Africans.

Fanon (1986) speaks of a line which was created to separate humanity into two halves. As discussed in chapter three, the manner in which languages are treated depends on where the Western world has placed you around the human line. The languages of those believed to be below the line, thus sub human are declared inferior and removed from the mainstream. This, in South Africa, is evident in the manner in which English and Afrikaans are perceived. The prestige with which these languages are treated, earned through colonial stripes and brutal apartheid policies, stem from the fact that their speakers are placed above the human line thus regarded as real human beings and the speakers of other languages as sub-human beings.

Fanon (1986) cautioned that within these lines exist hierarchies but the underlying factor is that if you are above the human line whether viewed superior or inferior (by members of your own race) you will be treated humanely and if you are below the line, whether superior or inferior you will still be sub-human. For example, it does not matter how English and Afrikaans speakers perceive one another, conditions relating to their humanity will remain decent because they were appropriated the status of a superior race and the opposite is true for the speakers of indigenous languages.

#### ***5.5.1 Zone of being- affirmation of English as superior.***

The perceptions of superiority of (to a greater extent) English and (to a lesser extent) Afrikaans were displayed by some participants in this study. The acceptance that English is a neutral language which was evident in De Klerk (2009) and Conduah (2003) studies was also evident in my study. None of the young participants challenged the position of the English language and its dominant usage. Even some government departments shared this view that English is necessary for business. Participants’ views on the role of English in the society was in line with the conclusion I drew in chapter two that

there are two distinct beliefs concerning the relevance of the English language in post-apartheid times . One sees it as necessary only for business and the other believed it improves their social standing. The majority of participants felt that they needed English for economic advancement. There were few that I believed fit well into the category of the culturally disposed described by Fanon (1986). This was evident in their constructions of the English language as “polite” “smooth” “universal”. And its ability to make them see white people as equals. This shows that they measure their sense of being with how far they are to a white person.

Construction of English as the language of intellect and power was heavily challenged by parents/guardians who participated in the focus group which was conducted in the township. Nomhle was critical of those who indicated that children needed English in order to prosper at the workplace. These participants believe that people who are not eloquent in English are discriminated against in the job market. Nomhle believes that attitude as well as the positioning of the English language should be challenged. She challenged the discourse which equates English with intelligence and associates that line of thinking with mental slavery. This is what decolonial project urges its scholars to do. If they are to successfully challenge coloniality they need to identify, challenge and replace colonial beliefs with new affirmations. The ANC was also seen as promoting the notion that indigenous languages are not suitable for official use for using English in public gatherings held in townships where almost everyone is multilingual. As alluded to by Prah, (2006) if communication is not in the language that people understand then those who are in power are not speaking to the people. The good language policies that the government boasts should be seen being implemented by its officials first. That is when the public will see the seriousness of the language issue.

#### ***5.5.2 The zone of non-being.***

The ethnic organization of linguistic hierarchies alluded to earlier was evident in this study. Participants who believed that their languages were dominant tended to inferiorise other indigenous languages and their speakers yet their languages do not occupy an equal status to English and Afrikaans. This is the clear illustration of one’s standing in relation to the human line that those in the zone of non-being will continue to be perceived as sub-human irrespective of their standing within their own zone. The inferiorisation of minority languages by other indigenous people points to a danger that comes with assuming that dominant indigenous languages should be promoted robustly and imposed upon people whose languages are in the minority. While multilingualism as shown both by literature and the findings of this study cannot be used to excuse the dominant usage of English in

public domain, we cannot overlook the fact that it poses a challenge in taking robust measures to replace colonial languages. Young participants expressed a concern that promoting only one indigenous language into a language of business will cause minority languages to feel like their languages are marginalized and will promote the idea that some languages are more important than others. This was in line with the findings of Conduah (2005) and Moodley (2009) where university students in their respective studies shared similar concerns. This also transpired in the discourse presented by parents/guardians that the long history of inferiorization of indigenous languages needs to be taken cognisance. Suburban focus group participants attested to the existence of linguistic hierarchies among indigenous language groups which dates back to apartheid times. Makosha constructed Pedi people as having rendered their power to those who inferiorised their language, this was evident in her assertion “..... *My mother-tongue is Sepedi according to your research topic here, before or prior the democratic elections in 1994, most of the Pedis were shying away to expose themselves especially when they were in mixed cultures, they would in some cases forced themselves to speak IsiZulu or Xhosa or Tswana, but not trying to show people that they are Pedis yes, so only after these languages were getting exposed and all that is when they felt free to can speak their languages*”

The above was also observed in narrative interviews where participants who grew up in communities where there was an additional dialect to the dominant language. Xolelwa, for example labeled the isiHlubi vocabulary as amusing “*it’s..... err, I can say other words of isiHlubi are different from isiXhosa ... for example ukugwencela (to climb) in Xhosa is called ukugwebherela in isiHlubi. They use funny words. Ukurhawuzelela (to scratch an itch) is to ukugrwabhija. Words like that (laughs)*”.

Kleva narrative shows that he has bought into the belief that amaShangane are a different people even though he is Shangaan himself. He sees himself as different from Shangaans from Giyani “*There is a difference, I can see it and the people that live around here, the Shangaans from here, they can see that there’s a difference. I wouldn’t go and hang out with them/party with them*” The above was confirmed by Boity who attested to people born in the Gauteng province being derogatory to migrants.

It might be useful to bring in Tumi’s caution against the adaptation of the definition provided by the South African constitution on official languages for exactly the reasons mentioned above. As

he stated, people from various minority language groups regard these languages as their home languages. These are the languages people grow up speaking, they are used in their communities but they do not have an official status. Various provinces have them, like Kilobedu in Limpopo, IsiHlubi and isiMpondo in the Eastern Cape, the Khoi and the San languages in the Northern Cape which are Nama languages and Xui and the minority languages found in Mpumalanga province such as isiSwati, isiNdebele and isiPulane. Lingomso was in agreement with Tumi that the definition of official languages is limiting and exclusionary.

Tumi traced the notion of superiority complex often displayed by some indigenous people to the colonial era. He argued that this has caused people who speak the same language to chastise one another based on how the language is used. This is how coloniality was ingrained to black South African people's minds. In colonial times, the manner in which you sounded determined how civilized you are and that made people feel as close to whiteness thus humanness as possible.

The findings also showed that it is not only minority languages that are subjected to maltreatment in Gauteng, it was indicated, for example, that isiXhosa speakers tend to be received with cold hands because they are perceived as having a dominant presence. Similar notions were shared in narrative interviews about isiZulu, Mbuzani put it in this manner “.....*Something that I've noticed at university, other cultural groups look down on others. Like Zulus for instance. Zulus do not learn any language you know. Whenever they say “siyanibonani” I'm like why the hell do you think I understand that? You know. Why would you think I understand isiZulu? I could be Tswana, I could be, you know. But it's like, you know most of them, the country, the government and everything you know having printed material in isiZulu more than any other languages give them an idea you know that they are the most important people. I was actually speaking to a classmate of mine today, you know. And that issue came up you know that Zulus actually regard themselves as human beings and the rest of us as additional members you know. Themselves as human beings and the rest of us as additional members you know. I once heard this good joke, you know, a friend of mine said that, you know you Tsongas, if you went to KZN and you were in an accident and there were Zulus in that car, and then they were asked how many people got hurt. They would be like ‘okay, abantu abambalwa abalimele, namaShangane, namaTsonga’ (few people were injured and some Tsongas and amaShangane) actually that perpetuates the stereotype that we are nothing and they are worthy of being called human beings. You know, so hence I'm saying, you know, should South Africa want to*

*nationalize or whatever or say we going one national language or we going vernacular, Zulu should take the cup. Because statistically so, if my memory serves me right Zulus have the highest rate of speakers. I don't know if I'm right, am I wrong?"*

This, it can be argued, depicts the fact that superiority and inferiority perceptions often have similar deadly consequences of causing rifts among human beings. What is interesting about the excerpt from Mbusani is the ease with which he criticizes isiZulu as the domineering or the language with perceived superiority yet he does not apply the same critique to the English language. This cautions us as we attempt to preserve indigenous languages to be aware of tensions and stereotypes that exist between different indigenous language groups.

Language superiority was not entirely viewed as something negative. As this excerpt below from Tumi shows something can be learned from people who perceive their languages as superior. According to Tumi, the elevation of indigenous languages requires an uncompromising attitude. *".....And people will speak to you, whether you understand or not, that's your problem, you see unless we have that activism like that with our languages, you see the Zulu speaking people have got that, also you Xhosas , but I, I find it more amongst the Zulu speaking people and they will tell you 'What!? You are South African and you don't know Zulu? What's wrong with you?'"*

I am in agreement with Tumi that after all the violence indigenous languages were subjected to under oppression; the time has come to adopt an uncompromising attitude to ensure that indigenous languages are elevated. The notions that criticise the dominance of indigenous languages but fail to question the universality of the English language should be interrogated as they perpetuate a discourse which deems domination by western world acceptable.

The findings of the current study also depict that English made some black people feel superior to those with minimal grasp of the language. Mbusani, for example, depicted his human line positioning well when he spoke of how his ability to speak eloquent English makes him feel less intimidated by white people, he sees them as equals but still stating that at the end of the day they still see a black person, they expect him to know who he is. This is the zone of non-being we referred to earlier. It is where no matter how efficiently you have mastered the white world you will never be accepted as belonging to it. To revisit Fanon's (1986) assertion, the embrace of colonial languages does not make sense as it does not yield to the acceptance of the colonised to the colonisers' world. As shown in this study even the participants who felt attached to colonial languages still indicated

that to the speakers of those languages they are not perceived any differently from other members of their race. Adversely as portrayed by Ntando, these people risk being rejected by members of their own race too. Ntando expressed reluctance to adopt a language foreign to his community as it could lead to his rejection by community members who might think that he has adopted a new identity. In line with Fanon (1986) he also highlighted that, often people who adopt a new language tend to disconnect from their communities.

The rejection and disconnection highlighted above has led to Biko's (2004) proposal for what he calls 'inward looking'. Inward looking refers to internal work which requires black South Africans to search their hearts and minds to identify the roots of the beliefs that cause them to undermine themselves. Inward-looking suggests that black people uproot such beliefs and ingrain affirming messages to their brains that their humanity matters (Biko, 2004). Tshwane illustrated the concept of inward looking perfectly when he pointed to the need for black South African to return to themselves and that starts by, as he puts it, understanding that they cannot use colonial tools to get rid of the colonial legacy. That speaks to the core of decolonial thought that colonial structures have to be collapsed from the foundation if societies are to rebuild authentic identities. Tshwane asks a curious question that "*how can an African experience be expressed in a language that is not of that experience?*" This makes language the epicenter of decolonisation. Liberation will continue to appear elusive if the very languages used to demand it belong to the coloniser. That will affirm the colonial myth that the previously invaded lands need coloniality to sustain themselves.

Participants perceived their black counterparts as still feeling inferior about their languages, years after apartheid was abolished. This is the inferiority complex that Biko (2004) and Fanon (1986) believe black people need to overcome and breakaway from. Young participants were dismayed that black South Africans are always first to undermine efforts to promote indigenous languages. This was shown by Boity's narrative on the reaction of black South Africans to the announcement by the department of education that it will be forcing schools to have indigenous languages in 2016. Black people responded (on social media) with anger to the announcement arguing that people who want to learn indigenous languages must do so on their own accord.

### **5.6 Shaping new discourses, crafting different narratives and finding the absent voice.**

The participants in this study suggested varying ways that could be utilised as South Africa searches for its lost voice. They regarded themselves as part of agents in society who have a critical role to play in crafting narratives to ensure that indigenous languages form a part of new language discourses in South Africa.

In the township focus group, the current schools' language discourse was challenged with participants putting the blame on the government for not making indigenous languages a priority. According to the participants both private and public schools should be forced to promote indigenous languages. Government is perceived as a powerful institution which has demonstrated over the years that it can enforce any law it deems important. In the excerpt below Nomhle makes an example about the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy on private companies as an indication that the government is capable of using its power to enforce change. *“Government is not serious about promoting indigenous languages like private schools can be forced to do them like they did with BEE on private sector companies. Government has power to implement language changes. If they can impose BEE on private sector companies, they should be capable of imposing indigenous languages”*.

Tshwane also believes that the government would have enforced language policies if it wanted to just like it has done on other matters it feels strongly about *“In my review of the policy. I have written about 100 pages, Nathi Mthethwa is complaining that government is not implementing this, it's the government that is supposed to implement this. But if you look for example at the Inkandla issue, how did they implement it, they forced it on the people. If you look at the etolls now, they are forcing them on the people but we do not see that on the things that can enrich us, like the indigenous languages”*.

Both the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and the Nkandla issue are arguably among the landmark stances the post-apartheid government has taken despite heightened criticism and pressure from opposing ranks. The BEE is a policy which ensures the reintegration of black South Africans into the economic sector after systematic exclusion by both colonial and apartheid regimes. This policy was met with vehement criticism by many white people who argue that it is the reversal of apartheid laws. However the government remained unshaken and the BEE still stands as a policy. Nkandla, is among the most recent controversies the government has had to deal with where the

presidential home underwent renovations dubbed ‘security upgrades’ by the government. Many South Africans felt the process was exorbitant, unlawful and had nothing to do with the security of the property. There were even demands that the president takes care of some of the costs incurred. Despite this national outcry the government financed the entire project and protected the president from any criticism. This is the kind of muscle that the participants believe the government has yet to show in the elevation of indigenous languages.

The demands for action from the government echo the sentiments made by de Kadt (2005) that in post-apartheid South Africa the promotion of indigenous languages has taken a back seat because the survival of government does not rely upon it. This is where calls for a stronger grassroots voice become even more important. The government needs to be let known how ordinary South Africans who form the country’s majority feel about their languages.

Participants agree with Kaschula’s (2013) and Phillipson (1996)’s call for the education system to embed indigenous languages in school curricula. Almost all participants saw schools as having a critical role to play in the promotion of indigenous languages. To them the continuous usage of these languages in schools will keep them relevant and in use.

When asked if language plays a role when choosing schools for their children, parents/guardians from both focus groups cited convenience and school resources as main reasons they send their children to multiracial schools. An acquisition of a foreign language was not cited as the reason. Nomhle dispelled the belief that English medium schools are better by sharing her experience that she once enrolled her child at such a school but realized his academic development was lagging compared to his peers. Other parents cited that resources that schools have on offer influence their choices. This indicates that education to these parents is more than acquisition of English. This is in contrast with De Klerk (2009) study which found that parents sent their children to former model C schools and private schools to learn English and thus sophistication.

The absent voice of indigenous people in the language discourse was decried by participants. These cries concurred with Alexander (2005) and Prah’s (2006) cries that indigenous people’s voices are silent in the debate about languages in South Africa. They never make language demands in schools where they send their children. Participants in the suburban parents/guardians’ focus group discussion echoed the calls for parents/guardians to reclaim their power and start making demands at schools. Their silence has led to schools making decisions for them that do not favour the promotion and

preservation of indigenous languages. As Linda stated “.....if we, as parents were doing so, the schools would be offering at least one African language, actually they should introduce African language throughout South Africa. If our children can be able to do Afrikaans as a second language, they should also be doing one vernacular language, for the mere fact that our schools, I mean schools that we take our children to, especially in the suburbs, if they are not offering even one African language, they haven't done anything really”.

Parents/guardians are perceived as having power to challenge the colonial practices that are entrenched in the education system. Participants did not perceive themselves as powerless. They believe that there is an active role they ought to play. They argued that white children should also be subjected to the same treatment of having to learn a language which is not theirs.

Other participants added that language activism should transcend schools to the work place. Working black South Africans, for these participants, need to fight for the elevation of their languages to equal status as English and Afrikaans. This is what Alexander (2005) and de Kadt (2005) believe should happen. They both call for black South Africans, especially the middle class to stand up against the exclusion of indigenous languages. This, I believe will strengthen the voice against the domination of languages that perpetuate the subservient status of black South Africans.

The theme emanating from the national key policy informants about the role of parents/guardians in the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages was that parents/guardians are not supportive of government efforts. They are often the first people who oppose policy implementation strategies, refusing steps to introduce indigenous languages in schools, especially in former whites-only schools. Tumi stated that there are more Afrikaans than black South African voices in the fight for languages. Language policy has been transformed into Acts and that, therefore, allows people to fight if their languages are discriminated against but only Afrikaans speakers are fighting. Black South Africans, as Tumi indicates only fight for the usage of English instead of their own languages. This emphasised a point made earlier in this chapter that English to most black people occupies an unchallenged space of officialdom. For Tshwane an active civil society that is prepared to make demands to the government that it promotes and develop indigenous languages is what is required.

Some parents/guardians indicated that they do play an active role in ensuring that their children grasp indigenous languages through using their creativity. The use of creative strategies like figurative

language and storytelling to expose children to their home language points to the agency of parents/guardians in ensuring that their children get a formidable grasp of their home languages on one hand but on the other it exposes an element of loss. A home language is something that is ideally not taught, it is picked up within the household as children develop and start grasping and mimicking what Parents/guardians/family members say. In South Africa today such a natural process has become conscious effort. Speaking a home language requires ‘reinforcement’ as one participant labeled it. This is what Biko (2004) and wa Thiong’o (2004) mean when they state that school was used as a tool to remove children from their cultural environment. What they experience at school is different from what is practised at home. This leaves parents with an additional task of having to teach language and culture to their children.

The use of arts emanated as a theme that some key policy informants cited as having a contribution to make in the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages. Tumi believes that creative arts can be effective in promoting indigenous languages. Writers and musicians should be encouraged to do work in indigenous languages and their work should be put in the public domain. This view about the inclusion of artists in language activism was supported by Tshwane who stated that artists are influential people with a wider reach. They could make a difference by showing an embrace of their indigenous language.

Tshwane believes that there should not be excuses that people are not well equipped to conduct business in indigenous languages when there are community members who have in-depth knowledge of those languages Tshwane’s sentiments come from the observation that black South Africans do not see value in their languages. They do not see their place in the business world. Tumi does acknowledge the dilemma that it is the reality of South Africa that business is conducted in English but insists that black South African have the power to change that. Ndivhuwo believes that the non-usage of indigenous languages as business languages has hampered the development of many states in Africa. He argues that economically advanced countries have attained success through using their local languages. The concerns of black South African cannot be dismissed as their livelihoods are dependent upon their formidable grasp of the language of business. As alluded earlier, people with no formidable grasp of the language of business often face discrimination.

Provinces were viewed as sites where the implementation of language policies should start especially those provinces with a few dominant languages. Young participants believed that in these

provinces indigenous languages should be put alongside English and Afrikaans. This concurs with Alexander's (2005) argument that localized sites would ensure swift implementation of language policies. Alexander (2005) however also cautions that this should not be limited to small spaces, solutions should be devised for more complex contexts in order to ensure mainstream utilization of indigenous languages. This was one of many motivating factors which led me to conduct this study in a diverse province like Gauteng. I wanted to explore the extent of multicultural complexities and how they are perceived by people that have to maneuver around them on a daily basis. As these findings are depicting diversity is a wildly celebrated phenomenon among the participants and that could be used as the stepping stone to changing the landscape for indigenous languages.

An interesting theme on loopholes in certain policy strategies emerged from the data from key national policy informants. Tumi identified a loophole in the promotion of languages by province, that it will confine people to provinces where those particular languages are spoken. He instead suggested a system where all languages are available for use from any part of the country. Ndivhuwo indicated that the department of Basic Education has taken care of that through its new strategy which is currently being piloted which will ensure that provinces are free to choose any indigenous languages as subjects. This is done to ensure that South Africans are able to function in any province they may live in. What Lingomso identified as a loophole is the recognition of only English as the legal policy language. This speaks against the very issues South African language policies aim to achieve. If policies cannot be declared official if they are not written in languages they aim to promote then it becomes difficult to believe that they will be successfully implemented. Another shortcoming pointed out by key policy informants is that the language used in the constitution is too democratic it promotes choice and practicality rather than force. This makes it difficult for the government to enforce policies as some institutions use the constitution to defend their non-usage of indigenous languages

### **5.7 Monitoring of policy implementers.**

Key national informants agreed that the government has put mechanisms in place to monitor the implementation of language policy but their views differed on how they perceived the success of those. For example Zoya believed that his department has succeeded in ensuring that other government departments promote policies on multilingualism and has created platforms to ensure ongoing engagements with those departments. On the contrary Tshwane believes such platforms have not yielded success because departments never obliged with undertakings emanating from those. This is the critical area where the success of language policies lies. As Kaschula (2013)

indicated, the lack of proper planning and monitoring strategies has contributed to the current diminished status of indigenous languages. These mixed feelings from participants urge the government to properly evaluate its monitoring strategy to ensure it reaps intended rewards.

### **5.8 Conclusion.**

The majority of participants in this study believe that indigenous languages are important as they form a critical part of a person's identity. They think in this manner because of what they perceive African life to be and how other population groups have used language to define their identity. They also perceived the status of indigenous languages as diminishing and they see key operating systems (education and economic) being conducted in English and in some cases Afrikaans. This is believed to be caused by mental slavery which makes people perceive colonial languages as deserving of high status.

Participants believe that only small strides have been made in media and some government spheres, for example, when you visit public offices you are likely to be addressed in an indigenous language. But when it comes to mainstream transformation, the business of the country is still dominated by the languages that dominated the oppression era. Policies of the current era appear good, according to the majority of national policy key informants but the main problem is the lack of their implementation. Lack of agency from the indigenous languages speakers to compel the government to implement these policies has worsened the situation.

The fact that there are multiple indigenous languages poses a challenge that forces South Africa to seek solutions to its diversity complexities. The department of Education appears to be on the positive path through its implementation of the incremental use of indigenous languages strategy which entered pilot stage in 2014. The strategy aims at ensuring that all schools have an indigenous language in their curriculum and that provinces will have a choice of another indigenous language other than the dominant language to add to the curriculum. Attitudes of speakers of indigenous languages were reported as needing a shift. As themes, narrative and discourses emerging from this study depict, the impact of colonial and apartheid era distortions still defines the way the South African populace perceive the relevance and the importance of their languages. Even though the participants of the current study showed a positive attitude and a sense of ownership of their home languages, they expressed a concern that the general feeling in their communities is that indigenous languages are not important. This is where calls for decolonisation of languages need to be made

stronger and as suggested by participants; everyone has a role to play in ensuring that indigenous languages are elevated. The government and the general public need to have a common understanding in relation to indigenous languages. The results highlight the complexities associated with language policies and how the different cohorts make meaning of these challenges. What becomes pertinent is how these complexities intersect and are weaved together, affecting various facets of society such as the home, the school, and the workplace to name but a few. It is therefore critical to think holistically when reimagining and seeking ways to provide a space for the absent voice.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

The 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1976 presented the bloodiest of South Africa's language struggles where youth led protests against the use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in schools was met with violent response from apartheid forces. The memory of that day, to many, carried a promise that language would be among the issues that top the agenda of the democratic South Africa. Indeed, language formed part of the democratic era agenda with language policies and relevant structures put in place. However, the second decade of democracy ushered in concerns that despite all government efforts the status of indigenous languages could be deteriorating even further. These concerns should trouble the people who care about indigenous languages because languages are a heartbeat of every society. Language serves numerous functions including connecting people with their histories, cultures and identities. As argued throughout this thesis, the implications of language loss lamented by Biko (2004), Fanon (1986), Gxilitshé (2009), wa Thiong'o (1986) are dire as they include a loss of connection to a person's roots. It is the fear of this loss that caused me to explore the status of indigenous languages in post-apartheid South Africa.

Psychology theory on languages has largely focused on human development matters with limited focus on the socio-political burden that hangs over languages especially in the former colonised lands. If language is said to be the key marker of identity, among other things, then it becomes important to explore language and identity matters using a lens that perceives languages as serving beyond just communication tasks. A decolonial lens could help us understand how the interplay of psychosocial and political factors work to keep reproducing a discourse that aids the deterioration of indigenous languages.

### 6.1 Language inferiorisation.

Language inferiorisation, which began in colonial times, as shown by the findings of this study has had an impact on how indigenous languages are perceived today. Colonial invasion was a violent process with long lasting effect on the colonised people. Language inferiorisation as a subset of that has left psychological scars which South Africa is still reeling from, two decades after apartheid was replaced by a democratic system. In this study, I have worked with Fanon's (1986) diagnosis that linguistic inferiorisation results in identity loss, thus leads to inferiority complex. It is this complex that affirms the colonial message that indigenous languages have no place in the professional world. This was revealed in the current study when participants alluded

to the perceived embrace of western cultures by indigenous people and their absent voice in demanding elevation of their languages.

### **6.2 Decolonising language policy.**

We could also learn from this study that decolonisation is not only an option for ordinary citizens. Policy making and implementation require that coloniality is completely collapsed and the building of indigenous languages is started from a new foundation which is void of superiority and inferiority categories. Participants in this study shared quite a number of loopholes that are embedded in current language policies which work against the elevation of indigenous languages and full implementation of post-apartheid policies and among those is the attempt to be accommodative to indigenous languages, a practice which leaves the positioning of colonial languages unchallenged. It is the pitfall Biko (2004) warned against, to avoid merely appending black people's realities to the dominant cultures of Europe. As indicated in the discussion chapter, inferiority and superiority complexes work together to maintain the colonial order. If this accommodative strategy is left un-interrogated South African languages will continue to have unequal status. South Africa is known for its multiple languages, hence the term 'rainbow nation' - coined at the advent of democracy in attempts to make citizens embrace their diversity. It is for this reason that proponents of indigenous languages find it difficult to accept the country's business being dominated by languages that belong to only a fraction of its population.

### **6.3 The multilingual challenge.**

Multilingualism could be seen as one of the cultural accessories that South Africa proudly flaunts as a true reflection of the country's diversity. Legitimised by the constitution and cemented in policies and legislation, it becomes tough to understand how these multiple languages are absent in the official sphere. The Gauteng province, where this study was conducted is the melting pot of multilingualism and it is not the only province where more than one indigenous language is spoken. Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape are among other provinces where people are fluent in a variety of indigenous languages. This has been viewed varyingly as Mncwango (2012) highlighted. Some see it as a strength while others perceive it as a shortcoming and cite it as the reason for failure to properly implement language policies (Mncwango, 2012). While multilingualism was received warmly by participants in this study, they also cautioned us to tread carefully on language diversity as it could be the most delicate aspect in efforts to ensure proper elevation of indigenous languages. To avoid repeating the ills of pre-democratic regimes, minority

languages would need to be given the attention they deserve. South Africa boasts as many minority languages as official languages. A majority of those languages suffered even worse inferiorisation under oppressive regimes than languages that were granted official status. It is with this understanding that I hope my study would offer new possibilities in thinking about indigenous languages that work from the root cause of the current language problem South Africa is currently grappling with, which is coloniality. As Mignolo (2011) and Grosfoguel, (2007) cautioned, colonially informed practices still form part of our society but they are operating in refashioned ways that are suited for the current times. It therefore becomes the duty of scholarship to ensure that the knowledge that is produced aids the society in uncovering the colonial underhand and fashioning ontologies and epistemologies that embrace humanity in its totality and is understanding of multiplicity in truth and existence.

#### **6.4 Methodological shortcomings.**

One of the shortcomings I encountered during the collection of data for this study was being compelled to change a data collection method after an in-depth interview participant refused to do a face to face interview. I was forced to send the interview schedule to him via email and that prevented any probing or seeking in-depth information. His interview therefore comprised limited depth compared to the rest of the interviews. This could have been averted by replacing the participant but because he was a key policy informant, identified as someone who works directly with language policy and his refusal being based on the fact that the unit he works for was under time pressures, I felt strongly that I could not do otherwise. A replacement would have had similar time constraints as well.

Another shortcoming was the inability to have equal sex representation especially for focus group discussions. I was satisfied with the spread of sexes in narrative interviews but it became impossible to achieve the same for focus group discussions as most males cancelled on the day of the group discussion giving the recruiters little time to find replacements. This showed the difficulty in scheduling focus group discussions on a weekend with adults as there are social responsibilities they need to attend to such as funerals and running of errands. Equal sex representation would have aided in balancing the views in this study especially when the issue of circumcision came up during the suburban focus group discussion. I became curious to know how the discussion would have panned out had there been a few more males. I did not have much control over the sex of the participants for

in-depth interviews as most participants were chosen by their departments or organisations because of their expertise in language policies.

### **6.5 Limitations and Recommendations.**

This study aimed to explore perceptions of young people, parents and policy informants on the status of indigenous languages in the democratic era. Indigenous languages for this study included and were limited to all South African languages that suffered inferiorisation under both apartheid and colonialism. It transpired from this study that colonialism and apartheid did not only succeed in inferiorising indigenous languages and dehumanising its speakers but also managed to create rifts among these languages with one language group perceiving another with disdain. Languages with fewer speakers were hardest hit by this development with some of them suffering a total loss of recognition. For future research I wish to suggest that this be studied as a phenomenon on its own as it might prove useful in the decolonisation of South African languages. There is a need to involve speakers of indigenous minority languages including the Khoi and the San languages to not only ensure that South Africa builds formidable scholarship on decolonising languages but also to change the discourse on language policy and make it to be about the people on the ground.

The current study was conducted among a selection of participants in Gauteng province. Gauteng province provides dynamics unique to multicultural communities. The reality of South Africa is diverse and each province provides its own language narrative that is unique to its history and geographic positioning. It would therefore be useful for future studies to explore the language realities that include other provinces for contrasting dynamics.

Another matter that transpired in this study is that decolonisation is not only for those who were pushed to the sidelines and dehumanised by colonial and apartheid forces. The colonising agents themselves need decolonisation in order to understand that superiority complex is as cumbersome to humanity as is inferiority complex and requires not just the dehumanised but the oppressor as well to interrogate his or her position of privilege. It is for this reason that I suggest future research in this area to include private sector voices. As participants revealed, the workplace is dominated by the unquestioned/normalised usage of the English language. These spaces are cited as the ultimate reason why English is the medium of instruction in schools in the first place. They are therefore critical if South Africa is to make meaningful strides in the inclusion of indigenous languages in the business sphere.

In conclusion, it is my hope that this study is a useful contribution to scholarship at this opportune moment in South Africa where the discourse of, as Manganyi (1973) puts it, ‘being black in the world’ has forced its way to the nation’s consciousness. This work could serve to inform policy and remind South Africa that the concept of being could only find proper expression in languages of the people who are fighting to reclaim their place in the world.

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## **Appendix A**

### **INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR In search of the absent voice: The status of indigenous languages in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

Principal investigator: Zethu Cakata

PhD student

Department of Psychology

Unisa

Cell- 0769816892/0829554510

Email- zethu.cakata@gmail.com

My name is Zethu, I am a PhD student in the Psychology Department at the University of South Africa (Unisa). I am doing a research study to fulfil the requirements of my studies. I invite you to take part in this research and I would like to ask for your consent. Please take some time to read the information presented here which will explain the details of the project. Please ask me any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you understand what the research entails and how you may be involved. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you are at all uncomfortable with the process you may contact me. You are also free to withdraw at any stage, even if you do agree to take part. Please note that this research is part of my PhD studies in Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Unisa and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles required by this policy.

#### **What is this research study all about?**

This research is about the status of Indigenous language in Post-Apartheid South Africa. I am seeking your views about where you see Indigenous language in our society today. I am also interested in your opinions about factors that contribute to the current status of Indigenous language.

**What would participation in this study involve?**

Your participation in this study will entail responding to a set of questions that I will pose. Please note that the questions only require your thoughts and opinions, there are no correct or incorrect responses. I only want you to tell me what you think and what you feel about the status of Indigenous language.

**Will you benefit from taking part in this research?**

You will not directly benefit from taking part in this research. However, I hope that your opinions, combined with those of the other participants will help me develop a research report which can be used to make a case to those who make decisions about language usage in South Africa. This will in turn benefit South African people.

**Who will have access to the information you give me?**

All information collected will be treated as confidential and protected. If it is used in a publication or thesis, the identity of the participant will remain anonymous. The only people who will have access to the information collected will be, myself- Zethu Cakata and Prof Puleng Segalo, who is my supervisor. As part of the PhD process records may need to be reviewed by research assistants and other lecturers who will be examining this project but they are also bound by ethical guidelines and principles that ensure that the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants is respected.

**Will you be paid to take part in the study and are there any costs involved?**

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study

### **Is there anything else you should know or do?**

Please don't hesitate to contact, me- Zethu Cakata at telephone 076 981 6892 should you have any further queries or encounter any problems about this study. You may also contact my supervisor- Prof Puleng Segalo should you feel that your rights as a participant are not respected. Her email address is Segalpj@unisa.ac.za

### **How will my views be collected?**

I also request your permission to use a voice recorder to record the interviews. The voice recorder is useful in gathering everything said during the interview. It ensures that researchers do not lose information collected. The recordings will be securely stored and after the PhD is completed the tapes will be kept locked at a storeroom at the University of South Africa

Please indicate by ticking either **YES**, if you agree or **NO**, if you disagree to the use of a tape recorder.

YES.....

NO.....

### **CONSENT**

By signing below, I.....give consent for to take part in the research study entitled: *In search of the absent voice: The status of indigenous languages in Post-Apartheid South Africa*

I declare that:

I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.

I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurized to take part.  
I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.

Signed at (place).....on (date).....

.....

**Signature**

.....

**Signature of witness**

## Appendix B



### Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants

*The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa has evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA and the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.*

**Student Name:** Zethu Cakata

**Student no.** 54223709

**Supervisor/promoter:** Dr P Segalo

**Affiliation:** Department of Psychology, Unisa

**Title of project:**

In Search of the Absent Voice: The Status of Indigenous Languages in Post-Apartheid South Africa.

The proposal was evaluated for adherence to appropriate ethical standards as required by the Psychology Department of Unisa. The application was approved by the departmental Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology without further conditions.

*Signed:*

Моральщина

Prof. M Papaikonomou

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Date: 2014-09-29

[For the Ethics Committee                   ]  
[ Department of Psychology, Unisa ]