

**ATTITUDES OF ISIXHOSA-SPEAKING STUDENTS AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE TOWARDS THE  
USE OF ISIXHOSA AS A LANGUAGE OF LEARNING  
AND TEACHING (LOLT)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present work presents and discusses the results of a survey of a sample of isiXhosa-speaking students at the University of Fort Hare (Alice campus) and their attitudes towards the possible introduction of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction at this institution. More specifically, the research focuses on, among other things, the students' attitudes towards English and isiXhosa and their opinions and beliefs about the introduction of dual-mediumship and its possible consequences. The survey methods used are a questionnaire survey as well as follow-up interviews, supplemented by on-campus observation. The results are first analysed as a whole, and then split into different categories according to a set of background variables (gender, year of study, subject studied etc). This analysis indicates that, while English is recognised as the dominant language in South Africa and, more specifically, in the domain of education, some categories of respondents acknowledge the usefulness of isiXhosa as an additional medium of instruction. This survey clearly shows that it makes little sense to present isiXhosa-speaking students with a rigid choice between the existing English-medium and a dual-medium (English and isiXhosa) policy. If dual-mediumship is ever to be implemented, respondents seem to consider the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction more appropriate in the first years of study, for selected subjects and in some domains within the academic context rather than others. This study is part of a growing set of surveys on the attitudes of university students towards the use of African languages in education, and can be fruitfully compared with similar research at other institutions. Moreover, the results of the present research can be used to inform future decisions regarding language policy at the University of Fort Hare.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief introduction to my research. I therefore discuss the *background to the research*, the *research questions and objectives* as well as the *method of research*. I end this introductory chapter with an outline of the *structure of the dissertation*.

## 1.1 Background to the research

In the history of South Africa, language-in-education policy has been a contentious issue. In fact, as noted by Alexander (2001:8) “the language of teaching was the proximate cause of the Soweto uprising which, as we now know, heralded the end of Apartheid as a political system”. Because of Apartheid education policies, Afrikaans came to be generally identified by Africans as the language of oppression and English as the language of liberation, education and social improvement (Reagan 1986; Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). Mother-tongue education, on the other hand, acquired negative connotations and was associated with segregation policies and backwardness (Luckett 1995; Heugh 1995; Smit 1996).

As far as speakers of an African language are concerned, after the recognition of 11 official languages in the new South African Constitution (Act nr. 108 of 1996), the challenge for the education system has been to strike a balance between the use of the formerly dominant languages (especially English) and the mother tongue as media of instruction. In the long-lasting debate on which medium of instruction is more appropriate for the education of speakers of an African language, arguments have been put forward to support both an English-mainly or English-only policy (see Titlestad 1996) and a bilingual (English and mother tongue) approach (see Alexander 1995, Luckett 1995; Heugh 2000). The central role of the university in leading the transformation of the education system in the direction of a more extensive use of the African languages has been stressed by several authors (Alexander 2001; Sweetnam-Evans 2001) and South African universities have been encouraged by the Council on Higher Education (2001) to revisit their language policies.

In the Eastern Cape Province, where the most widely spoken among the official languages<sup>1</sup> are English and isiXhosa, there are five universities: the University of Port Elizabeth (a bilingual English and Afrikaans institution), Rhodes University (a traditionally English-medium university), the University of Transkei, Vista University and the University of Fort Hare (three previously

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<sup>1</sup> The official languages of the Eastern Cape Province are: Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sesotho (De Klerk 1996).

disadvantaged institutions). The University of Port Elizabeth (1997:3-8) expressed its formal commitment to the implementation of a trilingual English-Afrikaans-isiXhosa policy. Rhodes (2003; see also De Klerk 2001) has made official its intention to retain English as the main medium of instruction, while making provisions for speakers of African languages. To my knowledge, the University of Transkei and Vista University have not yet formulated a new language policy. In my opinion, the University of Fort Hare, which is currently developing its new language policy (Ruthnam 2001), stands out as the institution most likely, at least at the local level, to introduce an African language as a medium of instruction for three main reasons. First of all, with 80% of its students speaking isiXhosa (Gardner 2003), the implementation of dual-mediumship would be more easily justified than at linguistically more heterogeneous institutions such as, for instance, the University of Port Elizabeth. Secondly, The University of Fort Hare is located in a traditionally Xhosa area, far from big urban areas where the influence of English and Afrikaans is stronger. Possibly because of this reason, this institution was considered as the national centre for the development of isiXhosa (Mini 2003). Finally, its tradition of prestige and excellence in the education of the African elite makes of Fort Hare a prominent and innovative place among previously disadvantaged institutions.

Several authors (Edwards 1985:90; Luckett 1995:73; LANGTAG 1996; Heugh 2000:4) stress the need for language-in-education policy to take into account the attitudes of students and their parents. The call for research into language attitudes in education has encouraged a number of studies both at tertiary level (De Klerk 1996; Dyers 1998; Bekker 2002) and at lower levels of education (De Klerk 2000; Barkhuizen 2001). I feel that a study of the language attitudes of isiXhosa-speaking students at the University of Fort Hare could help integrate the research carried out so far and, given the unique tradition and language situation of Fort Hare, such a survey could yield unique and interesting results.

## **1.2 Research questions and objectives**

I begin this section by listing my four research questions, each followed by a brief discussion of its scope. I will then explain the broader aims and objectives of my study.

My research questions are:

- What are the students' general attitudes to and beliefs about English and isiXhosa and their relative role in education?

A broad understanding of general attitudes towards the two relevant languages and their use in education is a prerequisite for the exploration of more specific topics, such as attitudes towards the preferred medium of instruction. Considering that the last survey of language attitudes at the University of Fort Hare dates back to the mid 70s (Vorster & Proctor 1976), I felt that new research was needed.

- What are the attitudes and beliefs expressed by isiXhosa-speaking students at Fort Hare regarding the possible introduction of dual-mediumship at their institution?

The purpose of my research was not simply to present the students with a rigid choice between the existing English medium policy and a dual-medium (English and isiXhosa) one. Based on the findings of previous research (Dyers 1998; Barkhuizen 2001), I expected students to have a more complex model in mind for the relative roles of English and their mother tongue in education. I therefore tried to accommodate complex scenarios for the possible implementation of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction, allowing for the consideration of different options and investigating the level of support expressed by the respondents for each option.

- According to the students, what are the implications of language-in-education policy choices, both in the short and in the long term?

By answering this question, I tried to assess some of the reasons behind the students' preference for one or the other language as a medium of instruction. In the current debate on language-in-education policy, most arguments are based on either pedagogical or practical considerations. It is reasonable to assume that such considerations play a role in shaping language attitudes and preferences concerning medium of instruction, and are therefore of crucial interest for the present study.

- How do language attitudes differ in terms of different background variables (gender, year of study, subject studied and so on)?

It is reasonable to expect to find differences in the attitudes of different categories of students. My hope was that the analysis of such differences would give a deeper insight into the matter. Moreover, the distinction between the responses of students in different years of study is present in

similar research (De Klerk 1996; Dyers 1998) and I thought that a comparison could yield interesting results.

By answering these four research questions, I intend to achieve two main objectives. First of all, I would like to make a contribution to the growing set of research on the language attitudes of university students in South Africa. I feel that, given the unique character of the University of Fort Hare, a survey at this institution would be of particular interest. The findings of my study can also be compared with the findings of similar research at other institutions and the comparison can shed additional light into the topic of language attitudes in tertiary education as a whole. Secondly, given that the University of Fort Hare is in the process of developing a new language policy, my research could contribute to inform the process of decision making.

### **1.3 Method of research**

In this section I provide some information on the methodological aspects of my research, which will be dealt with extensively in Chapter 3.

Traditionally most studies on language attitudes have used either the matched-guise technique or survey questionnaires (Ryan, Giles & Hewstone 1988; Edwards 1994), the choice depending on the kind of data the researcher wants to collect. The purpose of my study was to take a “quick snapshot” (Baker 1997:43) of the situation, focusing on consciously expressed attitudes. Therefore, direct methods of research such as questionnaires and interviews seemed more appropriate. In addition to this, some content analysis was included as part of the theoretical framework. The unique situation of the University of Fort Hare required the development of a new questionnaire, inspired by the four research questions mentioned above (section 1.2) and based on material used for similar studies (Dyers 1998; Barkhuizen 2001) and on the relevant literature. The interview guide for the follow-up interviews was developed after the analysis of the questionnaire data, with the purpose of helping to clarify inconsistencies and provide deeper understanding.

The present study focused on isiXhosa-speaking students at the University of Fort Hare. The inclusion of speakers of other languages in the survey, although interesting in its own right, would have increased the level of complexity and for this reason has been avoided. For reasons of accessibility, the research was restricted to students on the Alice campus, the main campus of the university.

## 1.4 Structure of the dissertation

In this section I outline the structure of my dissertation and provide a brief summary of the content of each chapter.

In **Chapter 2** I discuss the relevant literature in order to provide the theoretical context for my research. I explore issues of language policy and planning, with special attention paid to language-in-education policy in South Africa. I then discuss the ideological and pedagogical implications of the various medium-of-instruction options and summarise the debate on the use of European and African languages in education in Africa. I conclude this chapter with a brief description of language attitudes and an overview on relevant research carried out in South Africa.

In **Chapter 3** I describe the methodology I have used and provide reasons for my methodological choices. First of all, I give a general description of the research methods most commonly used in this kind of research, with special attention paid to questionnaires and interviews, the methods used in this survey. Secondly, I describe the process of development of my methodological tools and the administration of both the questionnaires and the interviews. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the methodological problems encountered in the present study.

In **Chapter 4** I present the findings of my research. The data from the questionnaires are presented with the help of graphs and are organised according to different themes. A summary of each follow-up interview, correlated with observations and additional information, is also provided.

In **Chapter 5** I explain and discuss the findings, dividing them according to different themes and highlighting the differences among students according to the background variables. In this chapter I venture some interpretations based on the findings and I attempt to resolve contradictions. Whenever possible, I also make some critical comparisons with similar research carried out at other institutions.

In **Chapter 6** I summarise and draw some conclusions based on my work, linking it with the present academic discussion on the topic. In this last chapter, I also leave some space for speculation based on the statistical evidence produced by my research and venture some suggestions for future improvements in language policy and further research.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I deal with *language planning*, issues of *multilingualism in education* and *language attitudes*. I discuss *language planning* and the possible ways to develop a language and its role in society, with specific reference to the steps taken by the South African Government, and with a special focus on language-in-education policy (see LANGTAG 1996; NCHE 1996; PanSALB 2001; Ministry of Education 2002). In the section on *multilingualism in education* I discuss the ideological load of language in society, which makes language-in-education policy a contentious issue. I then move to the debate on the use of African languages in education (with specific reference to South Africa) and the possible implications of such a choice. Next, I examine the different values and functions of English and the African languages in South Africa and the way these influence *language attitudes*. I end this chapter with a brief overview of research on language attitudes in education in South Africa.

### 2.1 Language planning

Cooper (1989:31) defines *language planning* as any ‘systematic, theory-based, rational, and organised societal attention to language problems’. According to Eastman (1992:96), ‘language planning generally refers to efforts in a socio-political context to solve language problems, preferably on a long-term basis, by heeding the process of language change’. In other words, language planning refers to any structured, coherent and explicit attempt to design the role a language should have in society by planning its development, its status and possibly how many people are supposed to use it and in which domains (Fettes 1997). Such a broad definition may also include developments in language policy (including language-in-education policy); the only difference being that language policy is usually a less co-ordinate and more haphazard process (Fettes 1997).

This section focuses on those aspects of language planning that are relevant to education (although, as argued by Paulston and McLaughlin (1994, cited in Fettes 1997:14), ‘all aspects of language planning are potentially relevant to education, and vice versa’). Fettes (1997:13) advocates that a language, in order to be suitable for education, must be ‘highly standardised (so that many different schools can use the same curricular and human resources) and both prestigious and widely used (so that education promotes economic mobility and intergroup communication)’.

The branch of language planning dealing with standardisation issues is known as *corpus planning*, while the branch concerned with a language's prestige and dissemination is called *status planning* (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000).

### 2.1.1 Corpus planning

*Corpus planning* concerns the development of a language from a vernacular to an official language suitable for every purpose in society. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:16), corpus planning 'refers to the determination of standards and norms for a language, as well as the introduction of new words and technical terms'. Tollefson (1995) highlights the importance of involving all the stakeholders and considering historical, social and economic factors in corpus planning and MacKey (1984) emphasises the prerequisite that a certain amount of printed material must be available in a language before it can be used for educational purposes.

The primary agents of corpus planning are government bodies or educational institutions of several kinds although, particularly for English, dictionary writers also play a major role (Edwards 1985). Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) term the process of compilation of grammars, manuals and dictionaries *language codification*. According to Fettes (1997), corpus planning comprises *graphisation*, *standardisation* and *modernisation*.

**Graphisation** refers to the development of a writing system for a language. An example of graphisation would be the use of the Latin alphabet, introduced by the missionaries, as the writing system of some African languages. A common problem is that different groups of missionaries transcribed the same language in different ways. Nowadays, graphisation concerns mainly indigenous languages in Africa, Asia, North and South America and the Pacific (Fettes 1997).

For Hudson (1980:32), **standardisation** is 'a direct and deliberate intervention by society to create a standard language where before there were just "dialects" (i.e. non-standard varieties)'. Trudgill (1983:161) argues that standardisation is necessary in order to facilitate communication, to make possible the establishment of an agreed-upon orthography, and to provide a uniform form for educational material. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:18):

Language standardisation is the process by which an authoritative language body (such as a government-appointed body) prescribes how a language should be written ..., how its sounds should be pronounced, how its words should be spelt, which words are acceptable in formal situations, and what the appropriate grammatical constructions of the language are. ... The basis

upon which language bodies make their decisions is very often the linguistic behaviour of the dominant community in the society, and it is the variety spoken by these people that generally becomes the standard language of the broader community.

The choice of a standard variety among the various dialects of the language is crucial because it favours the speakers of the selected variety while marginalising the speakers of less prestigious varieties. Herbert (1992) highlights the potential for intergroup tensions due to the resentment of marginalised groups. This can have even more disruptive effects when the standard variety is chosen as a national or official language and is supposed to function as a symbol of national identity.

In the case of South African indigenous languages, Smit (1996:58-59) argues that the standard varieties for writing were picked randomly by the missionaries, with the effect of creating different languages (for instance: isiXhosa, isiZulu and siSwati) where, from a linguistic point of view, there was a dialect continuum. This also created communication problems between speakers of different varieties of the same language. Standard isiXhosa, for instance, is based on the Ngquika variety (Mini 2003), which is only one of the many varieties of the language. This might be the cause of the difficulties isiXhosa-speaking students reportedly have with “deep”<sup>2</sup> written isiXhosa (Barkhuizen 2001; see also Heugh 2000).

According to Fettes (1997), *modernisation* refers to the creation of new terms for new concepts, and it is typically (but not exclusively) a concern of majority and national languages in industrialised countries. In most cases modernisation consists of borrowing and occasionally adapting new technical terms from the language in which they were invented, and is therefore also known as *technicalisation* (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). English being the main language of scientific and technological innovation, in most cases modernisation takes the shape of borrowing new words from English (Fettes 1997; Mazrui 2002).

As pointed out by Mazrui (2002) and Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), corpus planning in Africa concerns both the development of African languages and the *Africanisation* of the ex-colonial languages. It is important to note that these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive and must be integrated and harmonised in an appropriate strategy of status planning.

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<sup>2</sup> The standard, written variety of isiXhosa is commonly referred to as “deep” isiXhosa.

South African indigenous languages have been standardised in relatively recent times (Smit 1996). In spite of their use as official languages in the former *homelands*<sup>3</sup>, it is often argued that they lack the technical terms to be used in formal domains such as politics, economy and higher education (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000; NCHE 1996). Foreign (and especially English) technical terms are therefore widely used and occasionally *Africanised* to fit into the lexicon of an African language. The tendency to borrow English terms into African languages can be interpreted as one of the consequences of English *linguistic imperialism* (Phillipson 1992). As in many other parts of Africa, a serious concern of purist movements is that Anglicisation of the lexicon might accelerate the loss of non-western ways of thinking and means of knowledge in developing countries (Mazrui 2002). As pointed out by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), the politicised nature of South African languages adds an ideological and symbolic component to the issue of language purism.

An alternative strategy is to develop new terms to make African languages compatible with modern academic discourse and new knowledge. Following the suggestions of the NCHE (1996), various centres for the development of African languages have been established throughout the country. The University of Fort Hare, in particular, is currently busy with the development of a trilingual Afrikaans – English – isiXhosa dictionary and represents an important centre for the development of isiXhosa (Mini 2003).

The second dimension of corpus planning in Africa is the *Africanisation* of ex-colonial languages in order to enable them to express African ways of thinking and an African worldview. Unlike most African languages, ex-colonial languages such as French, Portuguese, English and Afrikaans are highly standardised and technicalised. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:36) state that

these languages are structurally non-African. However, in terms of their borrowings, the meanings of their words, and the pronunciation of their sounds, they can be regarded as Africanised languages. In fact, they have developed distinctive varieties, with Nigerian English, for example, being clearly distinguishable from Kenyan English or the English of Black South Africans.

Indeed, African varieties of English play such an important role in the everyday life of many Africans that African Englishes have become markers of social identity and have acquired a strong symbolic value (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). Gough (1996) notes that, in South Africa, a new variety of English is emerging among speakers of African languages. According to this author,

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<sup>3</sup> The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (Dictionary Unit for South African English 2002:553) defines *homeland* as '(under Apartheid) any of ten partially self-governing areas in South Africa designed as regions where black people might claim citizenship and permanent residence'.

Black South African English (BSAE) constitutes a distinct variety with specific features and it should be officially recognised as such. Wright (1996), on the other hand, argues that Black South African English might be seen as a “stage” in the learning of English by non-native speakers and that this term might actually refer to a number of different varieties. This author also notes that the standardisation of this new variety would require huge efforts, while it is doubtful whether it would actually empower Black people the way Standard English can. Nevertheless, BSAE has been the subject of a number of research publications in recent years (see, for instance, the work done by De Klerk 2002).

### **2.1.2 Status planning**

*Status* is operationalised by Cooper (1989) as ‘the functional allocation of language varieties’. In other words, *status planning* tries to define what a given language variety can and should be used for. This is usually achieved through language legislation or by giving a language an official status. As Bamgbose (1991, cited in Fettes 1997) notes, with particular reference to the African context, it is difficult to determine the exact outcomes of language planning in this field. Because the status of a language is tied to issues of identity, perceived benefit and other attitudinal factors, practice is not as straightforward as theory (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). In South Africa, the strong ideological and symbolic value attached to language as a marker of social identity led to what Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:12) call the *politicisation* of South African languages. This phenomenon is often the cause of linguistic intolerance and may lead to future conflicts. Moreover, the *politicisation* of the African languages prevents them from performing as instruments of national integration, communication and access to public domains. It also makes it difficult to discuss issues such as mother-tongue education, as any support for the use of the home language as a medium of instruction can be interpreted as a threat to national unity. Reagan (1986) also highlights the political nature of language planning and emphasises the importance of democratic participation in decision making. This author argues that, due to negative attitudes among their own speakers, a pro-African languages policy lacks the necessary support “from below”.

In South Africa, as in many other African countries, the issues concerning status planning are the role and status of former colonial languages and the role and status of newly acquired official (African) languages.

During the years of Apartheid, English and Afrikaans were the only official languages of South Africa. African languages had official recognition only in the homelands. The education system was racially (and linguistically) segregated and every child had to attend a school corresponding to his

or her mother tongue (Barkhuizen & Gough 1996). As pointed out by Heugh (2000:18-9), 1976, the year of the Soweto uprising, marked the transition between two different phases in the history of the education of speakers of an African language. Until 1976 the mother tongue of the students was the medium of instruction for the first 8 years of schooling. From the ninth year of study onwards, half of the subjects were taught in English and half in Afrikaans. After 1976, the years of mother-tongue instruction were reduced first to 6 and then to 4, and were followed by a sudden switch to English as the sole medium of instruction in almost all schools.

The new South African Constitution (Act nr. 108 of 1996) recognises 11 official languages: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu. The underlying principles concerning languages are:

- 1 Provision is made for the use of 11 South African languages in official language functions, thereby promoting a climate of multilingualism (section 6 (1)).
- 2 The status of the historically disadvantaged languages shall be elevated and advanced (section 6 (2)).
- 3 All official languages shall be accorded parity of esteem and equitable treatment (section 6 (4)).
- 4 On national and provincial level, state departments must use at least two languages (section 6 (3) (a)).
- 5 The choice of languages is directed by demographic, economic and attitudinal factors (section 6 (3) (a)).
- 6 The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor their use of official languages (section 4).
- 7 On municipal level, the language preferences, use and proficiency of the residents must be taken into account (section 6 (3) (b)).

(PanSALB 2001:4)

It is immediately clear that language rights are defined according to the area and context rather than the language of the person involved (as it was during Apartheid, see Barkhuizen & Gough 1996). Language policy and choice are in fact organised at the national, provincial and local levels. Promotion of the status and use of indigenous languages and equitable treatment are recommended at all levels, while the use of at least two languages is a requirement only for national and provincial governments. The choice of languages at the national and provincial level should be based on demographic, economic and attitudinal factors, while at the local level the language preferences, use and proficiency of the residents should be taken into account. At the national level the choice of languages is also determined by the National Language Policy and Plan developed by the LANGTAG (Language Plan Task Group).

The LANGTAG was a committee of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology set up to develop a framework for the implementation of the new language policy. Its goals were to promote national unity and cohesion (political thrust), maximise efficiency and intra- as well as international communication (economic thrust) and protect cultural and linguistic diversity (cultural thrust). While the promotion of language awareness in the institutions is left to the various Ministers, the agency in charge of public awareness is the PanSALB (Pan South African Language Board) (LANGTAG 1996).

The PanSALB is a government body (a Subcommittee of the Senate) concerned with the protection of linguistic diversity and language rights. It functions both as a watchdog on the implementation of language policy and as an advisory body for the government. One of its aims is the promotion of functional multilingualism in order to support the progressive elimination of inequality with respect to indigenous languages and to promote people's participation in political, cultural, social and economic life by removing language barriers (PanSALB 2001).

Government policies emphasise the role of education in the redistribution of wealth and power and in the promotion of African languages. According to the Subcommittee on language-in-education of the LANGTAG (1996:5-6), language policy in the education sector should:

- 1 Facilitate access to meaningful education for all South African students.
- 2 Promote multilingualism by, *inter alia*, ensuring that the languages taught at any particular school as well as the languages of learning and teaching are given equitable time.
- 3 Encourage the acquisition by all South African students of at least two but preferably three South African languages even if at different levels of proficiency by means of additive bi- or multilingual strategies.
- 4 Monitor and sustain the legal equality of status of all South African languages.
- 5 Promote the linguistic development and modernisation of the African languages as well as their equality of social status.
- 6 Promote respect for linguistic diversity in the context of a nation-building strategy by supporting the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including languages used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, and Sign Language.
- 7 Promote the use of students' primary languages as languages of learning and teaching in the context of an additive multilingual paradigm and with due regard to the wishes and attitudes of parents, teachers and students.
- 8 Help to equip South African students with the language skills to participate meaningfully in the political economy of South Africa.

- 9 Harmonise with the intentions of the proposed National Qualifications Framework (NQF), viz.
- (a) Open qualification routes.
  - (b) Facilitate the integration of education, training and adult basic education.
  - (c) Use language and communication skills to promote core competencies such as problem solving and critical thinking.

The LANGTAG document highlights some important dimensions of language-in-education policy in favour of the African languages: promotion of status in the wider society, modernisation and mother-tongue education. Emphasis is also put on the role of the education system in promoting multilingualism. With respect to higher education, the Subcommittee explicitly calls for research on the possibility of using African languages as media of instruction at universities and technikons, while stressing the importance not to jeopardise the current levels of proficiency in English and Afrikaans (LANGTAG 1996).

The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE 1996) outlines the two main objectives of language planning in higher education: retaining the advantages of the existing, well developed English-based and Afrikaans-based systems in higher education while promoting the use of African languages for academic purposes. In 1996 the NCHE suggested that English be accepted as the dominant language of learning and teaching at tertiary level for the moment, but urged the development of African languages for high-status (and academic) use, as the rapidly changing socio-economic and political situation might determine a future shift in language attitudes in favour of indigenous languages (NCHE 1996).

The NCHE (1996:386-7) suggested a phased approach for the introduction of African languages as media of instruction at tertiary level:

*Phase 1:* as at the Universities of Transkei and of the North, all courses in African languages and literature for first language speakers and for advanced second language speakers should be offered at all tertiary institutions in the medium of the relevant languages. In other disciplines, institutions could begin by using African languages as auxiliary teaching languages.

*Phase 2:* offer certain courses in African languages as an option. Obvious initial candidates would be subjects which lead to regular contact with the population, such as social work, nursing, law and public administration.

*Phase 3:* offer a wide range of university courses through the medium of an African language. Students should have the choice of studying through an African language (including

Afrikaans) or English. All students must be exposed to an African Language in the course of their university studies.

Such an approach would have the effect of promoting the status and development of African languages and disseminating multilingualism in higher education. In a later document, the Council on Higher Education (CHE 2001) notes that, with the exception of two universities, the number of students of an African language (both as a first and as a second language) at tertiary level is generally decreasing. The CHE highlights a strong orientation to retain an English-medium policy, especially at historically Black institutions, and notes that most projects for the development of the African languages simply pay lip service to what is considered the dominant political orientation at the time. In spite of this, three institutions have made a serious commitment to the development of isiXhosa, isiZulu and Sesotho respectively for future use as languages of tuition at tertiary level. According to the CHE (2001) though, as at the end of April 2000, only five universities seemed to make informal use of the African languages in some tutorials, while no institution was seriously considering using them as media of instruction.

The Ministry of Education (2002) has recently reasserted the right of every South African to receive instruction in the (official) language of his or her choice, provided that such an option is practicable. The Ministry warns against the danger of the languages currently used in education becoming a barrier to access and success and it calls for the development of African languages and the promotion of their study through incentives and funding. Minister of Education Kader Asmal also expressed support for the idea of an African-language university (*The Herald* 2002).

## **2.2 Multilingualism in education**

In this section I deal with three main topics: issues of language in education and power, with a particular focus on hegemony and cultural dependency; the debate on the use of English, as opposed to African languages, as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT<sup>4</sup>) in South Africa and especially at university and the pedagogical implications of such a choice.

### **2.2.1 Language and ideology in education**

There are contrasting views of the role of education in preserving the language and culture of minority groups. Some authors (see Edwards 1985) tend to downplay the role of the education

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<sup>4</sup> In the text LOLT and medium of instruction are used as interchangeable terms.

system in determining the survival of endangered languages, and advocate that social change is the primary factor. Other scholars (see Phillipson 1992) stress the important function of language-in-education policy in determining the survival of minority languages and cultures and in the promotion of national unity. The arguments may vary according to context and personal beliefs, but it seems clear that language policy in education can be effective only if harmonised with wider trends of social change (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). In other words, language policy in education cannot be disconnected from the linguistic goals in society at large and from the role education itself has in it.

Gramsci (1971, cited in Phillipson 1992) challenges the ideologically constructed image of the education system as the *locus* for the redistribution of social power and replaces it with a view of the education system as a tool manipulated by powerful elites in order to maintain their hegemony<sup>5</sup> over dominated groups. According to Gramsci, hegemony rests on the acceptance of domination by those who are dominated. Therefore, with respect to language in education, the widespread belief that one variety is intrinsically better than the other is a condition for its higher status. Bourdieu (1994, cited in Alexander 2001:12) points out that ‘language policy and language practices in institutions such as universities inevitably either reinforce or counter societal tendencies towards the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and life chances’.

Delpit (1995) explains how power relationships between majority and minority groups in society are reflected in the education system. This author interprets the power relationships in the classroom in terms of cultural differences and conflicts between mainstream and non-mainstream cultures. Delpit (1995:24) identifies the dominant culture in a society as the “culture of power”, and defines five principles that have far-reaching implications for the education of non-mainstream students:

- 1 Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.
- 2 There are codes or rules for participating in power, that is, there is a “culture of power”.
- 3 The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.
- 4 If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.
- 5 Those with power are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often more aware of its existence.

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<sup>5</sup> As defined by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:114) ‘linguistic hegemony involves expanding the scope of one language at the expense of another, it is also sometimes called linguistic expansionism. Linguistic hegemony can also lead to discrimination ..., and, when this happens, those discriminated against are said to have been subjected to linguisticism, which is the linguistic equivalent of racism or tribalism’.

Delpit argues that, in multilingual societies, language majorities have both the political power to shape language policy in education and the ideological power to impose their world view as the reference point or the “norm” (see also Tollefson 1995). This means that majority values and parameters define what is important and what is not in education, and determine the criteria for academic success. In this way, power elites are usually able to legitimise the selection of their own members for higher positions in society (on the grounds of good academic performance) and relegate the rest of society to a subordinate position. On the other hand, as noted by Sweetnam-Evans (2001), individuals from the minority group tend to reject the perceived culture of power of the educational institution, thus contributing to their own marginalisation.

It is important to note here that, following the definition by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), the terms *majority* and *minority* refer to the relative power a group has in society rather than the number of its members. This definition is particularly appropriate in the African context, where masses of people with lower levels of education are subject to small but highly educated elites. The use of former colonial languages plays a key role in maintaining these elites in power. Proficiency in the former colonial language is usually a prerequisite for success in African education, especially at tertiary level. Groups with a good command of such a language perform better in education and therefore achieve a dominant role in society. This explains how former colonial languages can be used as a tool to exclude masses of Africans from academic success and participation in power (Mazrui 2002).

Apartheid South Africa offers an example of the use of language-in-education policy for political reasons. According to Heugh (1995; see also Luckett 1995 and Hartshorne 1995) Bantu Education, the education policy for people classified as “Black” in the Apartheid era, was a system designed to enforce segregation in society and marginalise a large portion of the population. This was achieved by coupling mother-tongue instruction<sup>6</sup> with an impoverished curriculum and underfunding of “Black” institutions (see Wright 1996). This has had devastating effects on the education of the speakers of African languages, effects that persist today. Heugh (2000) argues that the English-mainly policy currently followed by the government perpetuates the exclusion from power of speakers of African languages. Children in school are not given enough time to learn English properly before it is used as a medium of instruction (see also MacDonald 1990). This results in low self-esteem, bad school performance (even in English as a subject) and high drop-out rates.

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<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that the principle of mother-tongue instruction was recommended by UNESCO in 1953, the year in which the Bantu Education Act was passed. At that time, South Africa was the only country in Africa implementing this principle. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise the difference between the right to choose mother-tongue instruction recommended by UNESCO and the policy of educational segregation enforced under Apartheid.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) note that, in South Africa, English is becoming more and more the key to upward mobility and success. A good command of English is necessary to get high-status jobs in all sectors. According to Webb (1996:178) less than 25% of the South African Black population has a reasonable competence in English.<sup>7</sup> This means that a large portion of the population is actively disempowered by their lack of English. The courts of law still function almost exclusively in English and Afrikaans and full proficiency in the standard variety of one of the two is a prerequisite for some particular occupations, such as radio and TV reporting, teaching and public service (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000:8-10).

English is predominant in education at all levels and is also slowly penetrating, as a second medium of instruction, into traditionally Afrikaans universities (Titlestad 1996; CHE 2001). As noted by Dlamini (2001:36) ‘while mother-tongue instruction does not necessarily detract from proficiency in English, if a prospective employer were to know that a person studied through the medium of isiZulu<sup>8</sup> he might be reluctant to employ that person’. Although this is pure speculation, it is nevertheless an example of how linguistic discrimination, although not enforced by law, is present reality.

A second component of the use of former colonial languages in education in Africa is *cultural dependency* on the West. Alidou and Mazrui (1999) note how cultural dependency in education began with the shaping of African educational institutions on the models offered by the West. These authors argue that

The African university, for example, is so uncompromisingly alien in the African context and has been transplanted with few concessions if any to African cultures. Its impact therefore has been more culturally alienating than it might have been. A whole generation of African graduates has grown up despising its own ancestry and scrambling to imitate others (Alidou & Mazrui 1999:113).

These authors note that cultural dependency is thus reproduced in the education system, whenever African academics struggle to imitate and reproduce the Western models they have acquired. The language in which African graduates and scholars are taught plays a major role in reproducing cultural dependency for two main reasons. First of all, in order to be familiar with the

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<sup>7</sup> Gough (1996) quotes a number of other studies on English proficiency among Black South Africans, with figures (depending obviously on the definition of *proficiency*) ranging from 61% (SABC 1993:27) to 32% (Schuring 1993:17). The latter source also reports that, at the time of the survey, 1% of the South African English-speaking population was black.

<sup>8</sup> Although the author uses isiZulu as an example, this consideration applies to any other African language.

major intellectual paradigms of the West (which are still the dominant ones in the African and international academic discourse), an African intellectual must have a good command of a European language. This usually implies that he or she has been through a Western-style education system and has acquired typically Western ways of thinking. It is also important to note that proficiency in a former colonial language is not simply an additional skill for African graduates: such a language is the only medium in which they can express their knowledge and in which academic discourse in Africa can be carried out. It is for this reason that ‘intellectual dependency in Africa is perhaps inseparable from linguistic dependency’ (Alidou & Mazrui 1999:114).

The second argument for the strong correlation between language of learning and teaching (especially at university) and cultural dependency is that the exclusion of African languages from the academic debate prevents the most critical portion of the academic population from taking part in it. In other words, those academics with lower levels of proficiency in the former colonial language (and therefore supposedly those who are less Westernised) are actually discouraged from taking part in the debate. Ironically, the contribution of these academics is possibly the most relevant for Africa-centred knowledge, as they can offer the critical assessment necessary to better adapt Western knowledge to the African context (Alidou & Mazrui 1999). Alexander (2001) goes as far as to say that the dominant role of English in South African universities represents a real threat to academic freedom of expression. Among other things, the use of African languages in higher education would also promote their development and technicalisation (Alidou & Mazrui 1999). It is interesting to note that their underdevelopment is a frequently-cited reason not to use African languages at university.

It has been argued that former colonial languages (especially English) can be used in a counter-discourse to challenge linguistic ideologies and the hegemonic position of European languages in African education. This is particularly true for South Africa, where English has been the language of African unity in the struggle against Apartheid (Reagan 1986; Webb 1996). Nevertheless, Alidou and Mazrui (1999) highlight the distinction between a counter-discourse and an independent discourse, arguing that ‘a counter-discourse is often a reactive process to the terms of discourse established by the other’ (Alidou & Mazrui 1999:115). A clear example of such externally set terms of discourse is the fact that, in the academic debate on the use of English in African education, most of the labels used to describe English are “English-functional” (Phillipson 1992:282).<sup>9</sup> Real cultural independence in Africa requires the creation of original and alternative discourses.

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<sup>9</sup> This author argues that, for instance, English is usually referred to as a “language of wider communication” while other languages are often stigmatised as “local” or “closed” languages. An alternative discourse would include considering which language is more relevant at the local level.

## 2.2.2 The debate on multilingual education in South Africa

Webb (1996) notes that English occupies a predominant place in South African education, to the extent that English proficiency is sometimes equated with education as such. At the same time, the power of English represents a real threat to linguistic and cultural diversity in the country. The relative roles of former colonial languages and indigenous African languages as a medium of instruction in education is a contentious issue all over Africa, and especially in South Africa.<sup>10</sup> In my discussion of the topic, I follow the distinction made by Phillipson (1992) between *intrinsic*, *extrinsic* and *functional* arguments used to support the prominent role of English in education world-wide.

*Intrinsic arguments* refer to “what English is”: the properties of the language as such (the most relevant of which seems to be its adaptability) and the fact that it is a global language, supposedly not tied to any particular culture. English has been described as rich, varied, noble, articulate and interesting. Stevns (1976, cited in Phillipson 1992:275) also argues that ‘English possesses a great range of rules for the formation of new words ... English, it would seem, is well adapted for development and change’. Phillipson (1992:275) replies that ‘other languages are equally well adapted for change and development, and may indeed have a simpler structure, morphological, syntactic or phonetic, which renders them more flexible and productive, and arguably easier to learn’. From a strictly linguistic point of view, any language has the potential to be developed for any function and is therefore not intrinsically inferior to any other language (Phillipson 1992; Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000; Mazrui 2002). South Africa offers the example of Afrikaans, which developed quite quickly from a *patois* to a fully technicalised language (Alexander 2001). Lockett (1995; see also Sweetnam-Evans 2001) notes that, in the past, all the effort and the funding for corpus planning were directed at Afrikaans and she argues that now similar resources should be allocated to the African languages, since their technicalisation would support their use in higher education. Heugh (2000:18-9) argues that the terminology developed during the first phase of Bantu Education (1953-1976), when African languages were used as media of instruction for the first eight years of school, is still there and is continually adapted in the code-mixing that still takes place in traditionally Black schools today. The “underdevelopment” of the terminology of African

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<sup>10</sup> As noted by Alexander (2001), Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) and Lockett (1995), it was the decision to enforce the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction that fuelled the Soweto uprising in 1976, heralding the end of Apartheid.

languages is used as an argument to exclude them from the higher domains of education and this in turn inhibits their development (Alidou & Mazrui 1999).

A second argument in favour of English is its supposed non-ethnicity. According to Wardhaugh (1987, cited in Phillipson 1992:275)

since no cultural requirements are tied to the learning of English, you can learn it without having to subscribe to another set of values ... tied to no particular social, political, economic, or religious system, nor to a specific racial or cultural group, English belongs to everyone or to no one, or it at least is quite often regarded as having this property.

Phillipson points out that this argument contrasts with a view of English as a language of progress and development. In fact, English is presented as a key to access the advantages of (Western) civilisation, while on the other hand it is claimed to be non-ethnic and international. These inconsistencies become even more apparent when claims are made for strict adherence to British Standard English as opposed to local varieties (see Titlestad 1996 and Wright 1996). Gough (1996) discusses the use of *indigenised* varieties of English, a growing sociolinguistic phenomenon in many multilingual states. In spite of the obvious communicative advantages, this author argues that the recognition of a Black English variety would not be unproblematic in South Africa, due to the legacy of Apartheid. While attitudes towards the use of indigenous varieties of English in education are predominantly negative, Gough notes that a portion of the intelligentsia is beginning to reject the supposedly neutral role of English and realises its potential as a tool of linguistic hegemony. An alternative to the rejection of English outright would be the use of Black South African English, a variety with a strong symbolic value, linguistically not inferior to Standard English and already used, at least in its higher-status form, in most Black schools (Nwaila 1993). Webb (1996) notes that most Black children, especially in the rural areas, have very little contact with (whichever variety of) English outside the school. He also criticises the argument of English in education as non-ethnic:

Learning English is learning a new culture. Teaching English is teaching a new culture ... Languages are central instruments of culture: they give access to a community's cultural artefacts, they reflect the culture of the community, they are agents of culturalisation; in many ways they are intimately tied up with humanity (Webb 1996:180).

The link between language and culture can also be referred to in pointing out “what English is *not*”: for those whose mother tongue is not English, English is not the language of their cultural

heritage and the language of intense personal feelings and the community, nor is it the language most appropriate for learning to solve problems in cognitively demanding decontextualised situations (Annamalai, Jernudd & Rubin 1986:9).

*Extrinsic arguments* refer to “what English has”: the material and non-material resources that knowledge of English gives access to. Material resources are trained teachers, teacher trainers, teaching materials, literature, dictionaries, multi-national publishers, computer software, English Radio and TV, low-priced book schemes and so on, while non-material resources consist of knowledge, skills, know-how via its experts, etc. (Phillipson 1992:278). One of the main points in favour of the use of English in education is that a lot of textbooks and trained teachers as well as an accomplished English-based education system is already in place. In South Africa, Titlestad (1996) subscribes to these arguments and highlights the asset of having a considerable number of native speakers in the country. Gough (1996:54), however, notes that ‘this fact has had little effect on structuring the acquisitional context, given past “divide and rule” policies’. Adding to this, Webb (1994) doubts that there are enough properly trained English teachers in South Africa to provide everybody with appropriate competence in English. Titlestad (1996; see also De Klerk 2001) also argues that it would be too expensive to implement multilingualism at all levels of society. In the domain of education, Heugh (2000) rejects the argument that a bilingual or multilingual policy would be too expensive for two main reasons: first of all, not transforming the education system in the direction of the African languages would mean maintaining the current drop-out rate of above 70% (added to the relative costs) simply because students in primary and secondary school in the townships and rural areas do not understand the medium of instruction and teachers are not proficient in English themselves. Secondly, a quick calculation based on research for the World Bank indicates that developing material and training teachers for multilingual education in South Africa would imply a very small increase on the education budget (Heugh 2000). A document by the CHE (2001) notes that the language-medium issue is probably one of the factors determining the unacceptably low pass rate at tertiary level and argues that the present situation would be unsustainable if real cost effectiveness were taken into account. Alexander (2001) also suggests that investments in multilingual education would support the development of an African languages industry, with positive spin-offs for a previously disadvantaged segment of the population.

Those who oppose the English-extrinsic argument go on as to say that English does not necessarily have teaching materials which are culturally appropriate, nor experts with the appropriate linguistic and cultural understanding for all learning contexts (Annamalai *et al.* 1986:9). Webb (1996) notes that most African children in the rural areas have little contact with English

outside the school and therefore, for them, it represents a foreign world in which they do not necessarily feel comfortable. Kembo-Sure (2000) also discusses the devastating effects of inappropriate (Western) teaching methods in Africa.

The second extrinsic argument in favour of English is that it gives access to a vast amount of international research and literature, and it is South Africa's first source of knowledge (Titlestad 1996:166). As noted by Alexander (1995), this has a flip side: exposure to and uncritical assimilation of knowledge produced internationally might lead to cultural dependency as well as misconception of the peculiarity of the South African context. In the words of this author:

we have to be wary of any simple transplanting of the orthodox multicultural paradigm from European and North American theories of plural societies. In South Africa, the simplistic adoption or implementation of such theories, under present conditions, tends to revive and to reinforce Apartheid structures and patterns (Alexander 1995:40).

*Functional arguments* refer to “what English does”: the functions English has because of its position, both nationally and internationally. In the international arena, the power of English is backed up by the economic and political hegemony of Britain and the USA. The use of English in education is supported by several institutions, such as the British Council and UNESCO. In spite of this, it is important to remember that English is not the only language of wider communication and, in some parts of the world, other languages may be more relevant (Phillipson 1992). Ansre (1975) also argues that, generally speaking, English as an international link is more useful for elites than for normal students, especially at the primary and secondary level. In this sense English might contribute to the alienation of African academics from the rest of the population, in spite of the arguments that favour it as a tool for national unity.

The need for national unity has traditionally been stressed in many African countries as a reason to promote the use of English as a *lingua franca*<sup>11</sup> to prevent tribalism and intra-national tensions (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000; see also Titlestad 1996). As pointed out by Phillipson (1992), the examples of Uganda and Nigeria show that national unity is not something that any language can guarantee. In fact, Ansre (1975) notes that there is no correlation between the actual use of African languages and the presence of tribalism. Moreover, as noted by Phillipson (1992:281), ‘English is displacing and replacing local languages, rather than functioning as an “auxiliary” or “additional” language’. In South Africa, English has an important function as a *lingua franca* (Mesthrie 1993).

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<sup>11</sup> ‘A *lingua franca* is a language that is used as a medium of communication by people who speak different first languages’ (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000:28).

According to Alexander (2001), both the issues of national unity and intra-national communication would be better addressed by promoting multilingualism. Alexander (1995) argues that the idea that, in order to be modern, efficient and united, a nation must have only one language is an ideological construction of the Western world, and he highlights the position of South Africa as a multilingual society in Africa. Skutnabb-Kangas (1988:13) goes so far as to say that ‘monolingualism ... should be eradicated as soon as possible, because it is dangerous for world peace. It is a reflection of linguisticism’.

### **2.2.3 Pedagogical implications**

According to Andersson and Boyer (1970, cited in Edwards 1985:120), ‘bilingual education is instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part or all of the school curriculum’. A well-established distinction in the field is the one between *transitional* and *maintenance* bilingual education (Edwards 1985). In *transitional* bilingual education the mother tongue of the student is used only in the first years of schooling in order to prepare him or her to shift to instruction in the target language. This form of education, considered to be of an essentially assimilative nature, sees social bilingualism as an unnecessary and undesirable “burden”, which is best avoided by enabling students to function exclusively in the majority language as soon as possible.. In *maintenance* bilingual education, on the other hand, the mother tongue of the students is used as a medium of instruction throughout the study career and social bilingualism is seen as an asset (Baker & Jones 1997). A distinction can also be made between *static* and *developmental* maintenance bilingual education. In the *static* form, the goal is to maintain the mother-tongue proficiency children have when they enter school. In the *developmental* form of maintenance bilingual education, emphasis is put on advancement in mother-tongue proficiency as both intrinsically useful and supporting proficiency in the target language. The ultimate goal of maintenance bilingual education is to promote societal multilingualism and multiliteracy as a resource.

Luckett (1995:75) provides a summary of the psycholinguistic theory concerning the relationship between first and second language in education, as elaborated by Cummins (1986). This theory distinguishes between ‘basic interpersonal communicative skills’ (BICS) and ‘cognitive/academic language proficiency’ (CALP), and claims that the two languages of a bilingual can develop independently up to the BICS level, but at the CALP level they work inter-dependently. This means that, in a decontextualised and cognitively demanding situation (higher education, for instance), the level of CALP in the second language depends on the stage of development in the first language.

This has major implications for the debate between supporters of transitional and maintenance forms of bilingual education, because a failure in the development of CALP in the first language inhibits the acquisition of academic language skills in the second language. Baker and Jones (1997) sum up the theoretical framework developed by Cummins (1986) for the empowerment or disablement of non-mainstream students in education. This framework rests on three principles:

- 1 Instruction through the home language does not prevent the development of academic proficiency in a second language.
- 2 Once academic proficiency is developed in one language, it can be transferred to another, given enough motivation and exposure to the target language (the interdependence hypothesis).
- 3 Minority students are empowered or disabled by the characteristics of the school context. In particular, the four characteristics individuated by Cummins (1986) are: representation of the minority culture and language in the school, participation of the minority communities in the minority students' education, promotion of active participation of such students in school and the extent to which the blame for academic failure is put, whenever possible, on the education system rather than on the student.

In fact Cummins's findings seem to contradict the common sense assumption that the sooner a non-mainstream child starts using the mainstream language in school, the better chances she or he has to learn it successfully. Cummins also highlights the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. In response to Cummins's findings, Edwards (1994) notes that, while they do not support transition as necessary, they do not prove that it is in any way harmful.

With reference to the South African context, Sweetnam-Evans (2001) points out that, when studying in a second language, most students are unable to integrate new knowledge into their knowledge structures and tend to simply memorise the information passed on to them. Usually students perform better academically in their first language rather than a second language forced on them by the circumstances. She also advocates that bilingual education (especially in the maintenance or late transitional forms) is more likely to lead to academic success across the board than monolingual education in either the first or the second language. A particularly relevant remark is that 'students who are not taught entirely in English ..., are likely to have higher levels of competence in English ... than those who are taught in English ..., on condition that they have opportunities to practice it' (Sweetnam-Evans 2001:48). Using English as the sole medium of instruction, on the other hand, does not necessarily improve one's proficiency in it.

MacDonald (1990) and Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) note that the low standards and high drop-out rates in South African education might be the symptoms, among other things, of a language problem. This is particularly true of Black students<sup>12</sup>, disadvantaged by their poor knowledge of the main medium of instruction (English). It is in fact clear that effective learning can take place only in a language that the learner knows well. Lockett (1995:75) notes that ‘many Black pupils could not explain in English what they already knew in their first languages; nor could they transfer into their first languages the new knowledge that they had learnt through English. In other words, they found that pupils had failed to achieve CALP in either language’.

Low English proficiency among Africans is due to a lot of factors: the intrinsic complexity and the immensity of the lexicon of the language, limited exposure to English outside school (especially in the rural areas), poor knowledge of the language by the teachers themselves, alienation from the school culture, low levels of literacy and a poor reading environment and, last but not least, the fact that a sudden switch to English as the only medium of instruction takes place before full academic proficiency is developed in the first language (MacDonald 1990; see also Dlamini 2001). Heugh (2000) demonstrates that in the transition between the first phase of Bantu Education (when the mother tongue was used for the first eight years of schooling) and the second phase (when the years of mother-tongue instruction were reduced to four), there was a drastic drop in the matriculation pass rates. She also mentions that, even when African languages are used in education, the use of a variety unfamiliar to the students might be another alienating factor.

Dlamini (2001:35) argues that

knowledge should not be equated with a particular language. A person can study through the medium of an African language and be quite as knowledgeable as a person who studied through the medium of English. ... Similarly, a person can study through the medium of an African language and yet be proficient in English if he or she has been properly grounded in English.

This author admits it is harder to gain proficiency when English is studied as a subject and not used as a medium of instruction. He also notes that, in particular fields, the relative terminology has to be learned anew no matter the level of proficiency. With reference to tertiary education, Dlamini (2001) highlights two main problems. First of all, most Black students are not proficient in English when they get to university, and they have to work harder than White students because they have to grapple with the language of instruction as well as with the concepts taught. Secondly, in most

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<sup>12</sup> In 1993, the matriculation pass-rate for Black pupils was 39%. In 1994, only 13% of Black pupils in their final school year passed well enough to be admitted to University. Only 1% of the population had degrees (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000).

historically Black institutions, there has traditionally been a lot of cross-cultural and linguistic miscommunication between Black students with low English proficiency and similarly non-English-speaking lecturers (usually Afrikaans speakers supporting the Apartheid ideology). Moreover, the teaching material was written in English by mother-tongue English speakers.

The ideal solution would obviously be the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at all levels, including university. Since this cannot be achieved in the short term, it is important that students acquire academic proficiency in English in primary and secondary school (Dlamini 2001). Alexander (2001) highlights the links between all levels of education, and argues that any change in the language policy at university would also affect the lower levels. Sweetnam-Evans (2001) also calls for universities to take the lead in implementing real bilingual education in South Africa and promoting bilingualism in the wider community (see also CHE 2001). In my opinion, only the tertiary level has the flexibility, the independence and the necessary resources to try and implement (at least on a small scale) a real dual-medium policy. The definition of the circumstances of such implementation should take into account the attitudes of the students which, in the studies carried out so far (see sub-section 2.3.3), seem to favour mainly English. One must also consider that it might be problematic for students to start using their mother tongue at university after many years of English-only instruction at lower levels. The implementation of a dual-medium policy at university would therefore require the strengthening of African languages as a school subject.

Speculations on the possible use of African languages in higher education have led to the formulation of some suggestions. Lockett (1995) encourages the development of teaching material in the African languages and suggests that the discussion of the subjects studied with peers and lecturers should take place in the African languages whenever possible. Sweetnam-Evans (2001) supports a dual-medium approach in tertiary education and makes some practical suggestions for its implementation. According to this author, employing tutors to interpret and discuss the lectures in an African language during tutorials would help students with an African language as their mother tongue and it would also be a cost-effective solution. A translation/research unit, primarily engaged in the technicalisation of the African languages (while English borrowings are used in the meantime) could also assist the marking of exams, which students would be allowed to write in their mother tongue.

## 2.3 Language attitudes

In this section I define the concept of attitude, explore the functions of both English and the African languages in South African society and discuss relevant research on language attitudes in education in South Africa.

### 2.3.1 Definition

The classic definition of *attitude* is ‘a mental or neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence through the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related’ (Allport 1935, cited in Baker 1992:11). A working definition of *language attitude* accepted by most authors in the field (Baker 1992; Edwards 1994:97-98) is ‘a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to a language’. It is widely accepted that attitudes have three main components, based on Plato’s distinction between *cognitive*, *affective* and *conative* functions (Oppenheim 1966:105-106; Edwards 1994:97-98). In the case of language attitudes, the *cognitive* component refers to the beliefs concerning the language (it is useful to communicate with speakers of that language, it gives access to better jobs etc.). The *affective* component implies that some kind of feelings are attached to a particular language (it “sounds nice”, it is a language one “loves” or, alternatively, “hates” etc.). The *conative* component indicates the actions that someone is ready to take in relation to a language, which may range from refusing to learn it or speak it to wanting to kill any speaker of that language. Ajzen (1988:22-23) summarises the relationship between these three components:

the actual or symbolic presence of an object elicits a generally favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction, the attitude towards the object. This attitude, in turn, predisposes cognitive, affective, and conative responses to the object, responses whose evaluative tone is consistent with the overall attitude.

Attitudes are naturally latent and implicit, and their relationship with overt action can be problematic. In fact, there can be (and often there is) a discrepancy between what people feel and think, what they say and what they actually do.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, attitudes can only be inferred from external manifestations, i.e. from what people say and do (Baker 1992; Edwards 1994). Concerning

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<sup>13</sup> A classic example is the study undertaken by LaPiere in 1934. A Chinese couple visited 251 restaurants in the USA, and was refused service in only one of them. Six months later, a questionnaire was sent to the same places asking them whether they would serve Chinese customers. 92% of the restaurants said they would not (Baker 1992:15).

the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, Weber (1992) points out that a number of other factors (including concurrent attitudes) influence one's actions and that an emphasis on rational and attitude-driven behaviour does not account for non-rational factors such as self-perception, self-presentation and self-justification. Baker (1992) also notes that interrelatedness between attitudes and the specificity of circumstances make the relationship between attitudes and behaviour problematic.

Another problem in the study of language attitudes is the widespread confusion between attitudes and other concepts, such as *beliefs*, *perceptions* and *opinions*. *Belief* only refers to what one thinks or knows about a language, and it is just a component of an attitude (Edwards 1994). The term *perception* can also be used to refer to the cognitive component of an attitude (Smit 1996). The term *opinion* can either be defined as a synonym of attitude or used to indicate 'the more specific manifestations of attitudes' (McGuire 1969:152-153). In the latter sense, opinions are not only more conscious and explicit than attitudes, but are also directed to a more specific referent such as, for instance, medium of instruction in school (Smit 1996).<sup>14</sup>

With specific reference to the field of education, Baker (1992) notes that attitudes can be both an input and an output. Attitudes can in fact determine the outcomes of education (if someone has a positive attitude to a language, he or she is more likely to learn it well) but can also be a result of education (a good language course or a dedicated teacher can improve the students' attitudes to a language). This adds a dynamic dimension to attitudes: they may change over time according to the circumstances (see also Smit 1996).

Edwards (1994) argues that, generally speaking, whenever different social groups speak different varieties, arguments are made in favour of the superiority of the variety spoken by the high-status groups. An interesting remark is that not only members of the high-status group, but also speakers of less prestigious varieties have positive attitudes towards the upper-class variety. The acceptance from the lower classes of a positive view of the high-status variety (and conversely a negative attitude towards their own) can be seen as an example of linguistic hegemony (see sub-section 2.2.1). Edwards (1994:97) also notes the 'covert prestige' of working class speech: these low-status varieties are generally associated with positive values of masculinity, while females proved to be more sensitive to the 'overt prestige' of higher-status varieties (see also Milroy 1980). Another point in favour of low-status varieties is that, in spite of the social attractiveness of higher-status

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<sup>14</sup> For this reason, many language attitudes might be more accurately termed language beliefs or opinions, especially in those cases in which the responses are supported by communicative, national, personal, educational and cognitive arguments (Schmied 1991:168).

varieties, most people identify with the variety associated with their original background. In other words, for groups at the bottom of the power hierarchy,

the variety of the high-status group [acts] as a symbol of societal achievement, and the in-group variety [acts] as the sign of one's social identity and feelings of group solidarity. If staying a member of one's original group and improving one's social standing do not go together, individuals usually choose between their solidarity and the societal status varieties (Smit 1996:37; parenthesis added).

Edwards (1994:100) highlights two broad determinants of language perceptions: standardisation and vitality. While standardisation refers to the development of a given variety, vitality refers to the functions and status this variety has in society, the number of its speakers and the support it enjoys. Two evaluative dimensions are social status and solidarity, the latter including the role of language in conveying culture and as a symbol of group identity. A similar distinction is the one made by Heine (1992) between two different functions of a language: vertical (as a language of access to social mobility) and horizontal (as a language of social solidarity). Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguish between two types of language attitudes according to their orientation and motivation. An *instrumental* orientation is characterised by 'a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages', while an *integrative* orientation must be seen as 'a desire to be like representative members of the other language community' (Gardner & Lambert 1972:14).

### **2.3.2 Functions of language**

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) provide a classification of the possible functions of language with references to the African and particularly the South African context. The *instrumental* functions refer to the use of language as a tool to achieve goals, and can be divided into *informative*, and *participatory*. The *integrative* functions of a language are usually opposed to its instrumental function (see Gardner & Lambert 1972; Edwards 1994:114; Webb 1996:179). The *binding/separating* function refers to language as a marker of social identity. The *symbolic* function of a language refers to the values and ideas attached to it, usually for historical or nationalistic reasons.

The *informative function* of a language refers to its use in exchanging information and communicating. In the case of South Africa, English has an important informative value as a tool, both to access the international community and to make communication between speakers of different languages possible. English is South Africa's primary source of knowledge (Titlestad

1996) and it is dominant in the media. Most of the informative as well as the entertainment material coming from abroad is originally in English (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). English is also a linking language to most neighbouring countries, such as Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe etc. While the value of English as the primary language of international communication is virtually unchallenged, both Afrikaans and isiZulu are widely used as *lingua francas* in South Africa (Webb 1996). It could also be argued that, given the strong relations and mutual intelligibility within the two main families of African languages (Sotho and Nguni), the actual communicative usefulness of each African language goes far beyond its language community (Alexander 2001).

The *participatory function* of a language refers to its user's ability to use it to take part in activities and to enjoy privileges. The role of English and especially Afrikaans as gatekeepers to privileges and high positions in society was part of the Apartheid ideology. As noted by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), this situation continues unofficially today and the standard varieties of these two languages are still a prerequisite for social and economic success as well as political participation. In this sense English proficiency (or lack of it) can be used as an 'instrument of inclusion and/or exclusion from rights and privileges' (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000:39). The instrumental value of the African languages, and the positive attitudes related to it, is slowly increasing, as more jobs become available to speakers of African languages (NCHE 1996). However, some knowledge of English is still required and the main function of African languages still seems to be to provide access to participation in the life of the community. Their value is therefore better described as integrative.

Language can be a symbol of social identity (serving the *integrative function*) and in this sense it can have two contrasting functions: as a symbol for unity, both at the national and/or community level (*binding function*), or a basis for discrimination, tribalism and linguicism (*separating function*). Binding and separating functions are two sides of the same coin and play a major role in what Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:12) term *language politicisation*.

The use of a language as a sort of "flag" to unify people is quite a common practice in the process of nation building. Afrikaans offers an example of a language used as a symbol to create a common political identity among (a section of) its speakers (Smit 1996; Palmberg 1999; Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000), there is not enough research on the relationship between language and identity in Africa. It is therefore difficult to establish the extent to which languages can be used as symbols of national unity and the role they play as markers of group identity.

South African history offers several examples of the separating function of language. Herbert (1992) argues that, during Apartheid, language identification was encouraged and language borders were enforced in order to keep different communities separate and, possibly, divided. This favoured the Apartheid policy of divide-and-rule, but left profound traces in South African society: stereotypes, linguistic discrimination and a high potential for intergroup tensions. Education is a very sensitive field with respect to this: because of the emphasis put by Bantu Education on the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction (allegedly to deny Africans access to empowering languages such as English and Afrikaans), the use of African languages as language of learning and teaching has acquired strong negative connotations as it reminds people of the divisive policies of Apartheid (Luckett 1995; Dlamini 2001).

The *symbolic functions* of the languages of South Africa depend largely on their historical associations. Historically, because of its strong associations with the Apartheid Government, (Standard) Afrikaans was considered a symbol of oppression and manipulation by dominated groups. English, on the other hand, became the language of the struggle against Apartheid and of African unity (Reagan 1986; Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). Traditionally, English is also a symbol of civilisation, progress and liberalism, but the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE 1996) also points out that a strong move towards English, especially in higher domains of education, might lead to feelings of resentment against English hegemony, as is evident in several other African countries.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) summarise the relationship between English and the African languages (with Afrikaans playing an intermediate and rapidly changing role) as a power relationship. English is essentially a powerful language with status and high instrumental value, capable of empowering its speakers. African languages, on the other hand, do not enjoy such a high-status and are relegated to lower domains such as family use. This generates a *minority syndrome* in African people, characterised by overvaluation of the former colonial languages coupled with low self esteem and low confidence in their own language (Alexander 1995:38). This may contribute to the cultural alienation of many Africans and fuel a desire to integrate with the “White” language communities, which may eventually lead to cultural and language shift. Such individuals tend to subscribe to a number of other culturally bound beliefs and attitudes, such as, for instance, the defence of monolingualism as the only viable choice for a country to be efficient. Pattanayak (1986:vi) also notes that

in the post-colonial developing countries, educated persons tutored in the modes of western thinking consider (1) transnational communication more important than national communication, (2) standardisation and uniformity more important than transmission of knowledge and information within the country, and (3) translation and transference of knowledge more important than creation of knowledge.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) argue that the reasons for this may range from the culturally destructive influence of Christian missionaries to the ideologies of colonialism and Apartheid. Webb (1996) also points out that the modern orientation towards globalisation will make it harder for Africans to preserve their cultural identity and their language.

### **2.3.3 Language attitudes in education**

Baker (1992) highlights the importance of language attitudes as an indicator of the “health” of a language and of possible language shift or death. This author also stresses the important role of language attitudes in informing social policy. As Lewis (1981:262) observes:

Any policy for language, especially in the system of education, has to take account of the attitudes of those likely to be affected. In the long run, no policy will succeed which does not do one of three things: conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved; persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy; or seek to remove the causes of the disagreement. In any case knowledge about attitudes is fundamental to the formulation of a policy as well as to success in its implementation.

The importance of language attitudes for language-in-education policies has been stressed by several authors, both internationally (see Edwards 1985; 1994) and in South Africa (LANGTAG 1996; Heugh 2000). Webb (1996) claims that most African parents prefer English as a medium of instruction for their children in primary school, especially for instrumental reasons. With specific reference to Webb’s findings, Heugh (2000:12-13) notes that parents seem to demand increased access to English rather than substitution of the mother tongue with English as a medium of instruction. Black parents who would opt for an English-mainly or English-only option for their children are therefore a minority. She also claims that, in classroom practice, there has been little change since the end of Apartheid, and calls for more extensive language attitudes research.

In a study involving adult speakers of English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa in Grahamstown (Eastern Cape) in 1992, De Klerk and Bosch (1993) found generally positive attitudes towards English and

acceptance of its status and role in education and as an official language. While English was ranked first as the language of success and of further studies, the multilingual character of the area was acknowledged, with Afrikaans and isiXhosa speakers respectively recognising the role of Afrikaans and actively supporting the promotion of isiXhosa. In the same period, Smit (1996) found positive attitudes among Black students towards the use of other languages (isiXhosa and Afrikaans) alongside English as a medium of instruction. A study on isiXhosa-speaking parents who have chosen to send their children to English-medium schools in the Eastern Cape (De Klerk 2000), points out that the main reasons were the poor conditions of Xhosa schools (a legacy of Apartheid) and the lack of real support for the Xhosa language in education. De Klerk (2000) argues that, by the time the necessary transformation has taken place in the education system, the isiXhosa-speaking elite will have shifted completely to English. Both De Klerk (2000) and Heugh (2000) point out that the parents considered in the sample, being part of an elite, cannot be considered as representative of the attitudes of the whole community.

As far as secondary-school isiXhosa-speaking students are concerned, research conducted in the early 1990s (Young, Ratcliff, Boreham, Khiba & Fitzgerald 1991) revealed that the issue of medium of instruction was still contentious and changes were opposed, mainly for practical reasons. Self-reported language proficiencies ranged between good and high, and attitudes towards English were positive, mainly for instrumental reasons. Students recognised the importance of English as an official language and a *lingua franca* for the New South Africa, but insisted on the importance of knowing at least one other language and of multilingualism.

According to a study carried out by Barkhuizen (2001) on behalf of the PanSALB, learners of isiXhosa as a first language in Western and Eastern Cape secondary schools also had positive opinions about the usefulness of English, both to find a job and for further studies. English was considered more useful for a number of other purposes, such as meeting new people and reading newspapers and magazines, and the only domains in which isiXhosa was ranked higher in this study were peer group, family and community life. In spite of its low instrumental value and the commonly held belief that it is pointless to study a language that one already knows, the majority of the learners thought that it was important to study isiXhosa, mainly for integrative reasons. Barkhuizen (2001) notes that two factors may undermine the support for isiXhosa as a school subject: the emphasis on grammar and accuracy rather than communicative approaches to teaching and the difference between the variety studied in school (“deep” Xhosa) and the one students speak, to the extent that some regarded English, an additional language, as easier to learn. English was preferred as a medium of instruction for all subjects except Biblical Studies. The support for

English was, nevertheless, not as massive as one might expect and there was no clear orientation towards an English-only policy.

De Klerk (1996) offers an overview of the use of and attitudes to English at Rhodes University, in the Eastern Cape. Rhodes is a traditionally English-medium institution but it is catering for a growing number of speakers of other languages. The attitudes of such students towards English were generally positive and a desire to improve their competence in English or a positive orientation to it (especially as an international language) were some of the reasons for choosing Rhodes (together with some practical reasons such as availability of bursaries, residence in Grahamstown or non-existence of a university with their mother tongue as a medium of instruction). Among African students, isiXhosa speakers had a *relatively* less favourable orientation to English and were the only group using its own language more than English on campus. In spite of this, the majority of isiXhosa speakers preferred to use English as the sole medium of instruction. De Klerk (1996) argues that levels of self-assessed English proficiency were worse for students who encountered English late in their study career and seemed to decrease as students moved through their university studies. This means that, while exposure to English before coming to university enhanced students' confidence, the reality of the linguistic standards required at university undermined it. However, as this author points out, low levels of self-assessed proficiency did not appear to affect students' positive attitudes towards English.

Dyers (1998) explored the attitudes of first and second year isiXhosa-speaking students attending the foundation course she lectured at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), a previously disadvantaged institution. Xhosa speakers are the largest language group at UWC, and they use their language in most informal situations. In this study, Xhosa students seemed to identify strongly with their language, they thought it would help them get a job and they did not believe a complete language shift (presumably to English) would ever take place (in spite of the limited attention that they felt the government was paying to isiXhosa). Surprisingly, students preferred "purer" varieties and disliked mix-ups with other languages (especially isiZulu with which isiXhosa has a history of rivalry). They were also favourable to the development of the African languages for use at tertiary level. English was seen as the dominant language in education and the preferred medium of instruction. At the second year level, students' self-assessed English proficiency increased while positive attitudes towards English as the only medium of instruction at university decreased. Students felt that using dominant regional languages at university might exclude speakers of other languages. Similarly, they felt that using their mother tongue (especially in tutorials) would help them, but it would create tensions and make speakers of other languages uncomfortable. Using English as a *lingua franca* was seen as the only "politically correct" option. Previous research at

UWC (Louw-Potgieter & Louw 1991) had shown support for isiXhosa as an official language and for the idea of the official languages of the country being used as LOLT. Bekker (2002) argues, however, that since African languages were not yet official at that time, this can hardly be interpreted as direct support for the use of African languages as media of instruction.

Bekker's (2002) research on the attitudes of African-language-speaking students towards the issue of languages of learning and teaching at UNISA is, in the words of the author, aimed at showing and exploring the complexity of language attitudes and developing a viable methodology rather than providing an opinion poll survey. Bekker also reviews relevant past research on the topic, which seemed to support generally favourable attitudes to English as a medium of instruction at tertiary level (Chick 1998; Coetzee-Van Rooy 1998, cited in Bekker 2002; Cahill & Kamper 1989 cited in Webb, Dirven & Kock 1992:38). By comparing two early studies on language attitudes among Black South Africans, Bekker (2002) notes that the attitudes towards the use of the African languages as a medium of instruction were much more negative where no distinction was made between primary and secondary levels of education (in Edelstein's research 1972, cited in Bekker 2002) than in a subsequent study where this distinction was present (research carried out for the Human Sciences Research Council by Schuring and Yzel 1983, cited in Bekker 2002). The author speculates that the latter more sophisticated analysis, which took into consideration also the level of education, highlighted the respondents' preference for the use of African languages only in the early years of the study career (pre-school and lower primary).

## **2.4 Summary and conclusions**

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical background to my research. The main areas of interest are *language planning*, *multilingualism in education* and *language attitudes*.

The term *language planning* refers to any conscious and explicit decision concerning a language itself (*corpus planning*) or its role in a given society (*status planning*). *Corpus planning* refers to the "development" of a language through graphisation (the definition of the writing system of that language), standardisation (the selection of a standard variety), codification (the definition of the grammatical rules and the lexicon of the language), modernisation and technicalisation (the creation of new words to keep the language "up-to-date"). With respect to the linguistic situation in South Africa, modernisation and technicalisation are particularly important. On the one hand, former colonial languages such as Afrikaans and, especially, English are slowly changing and new, *indigenised* varieties are emerging. On the other hand, new technical terms need to be created in the Black South African languages to equip them for use in higher domains. In education, for instance,

the underdevelopment of the Black South African languages is a frequently-cited reason for their exclusion from the academic context.

In multilingual societies, *status planning* refers to the allocation of different functions to different languages. Because of its political implications (such as, for instance, the benefits for speakers of one of the official languages of a country compared to the speakers of a vernacular), status planning can be a contentious issue. In South Africa, like in most African countries, the problem is to strike a balance between the former colonial languages (English and Afrikaans) and the newly official African languages. The general trend in official documents seems to be to try and retain the advantages of English and Afrikaans while promoting the use and status of the African languages. With specific reference to the education sector, such a liberal policy does not seem to have improved the position of African languages.

In order to understand the power of language and, therefore, the impact of language-in-education policies and practice, it is important to explore the relationship between language and ideology. Language can become a tool of hegemony in two ways: by functioning as a gatekeeper or as a means of cultural dependency. In South Africa, Afrikaans and, more and more, English are the only languages of access to tertiary education. This means that for students who are not proficient in either of the two languages it is *de facto* impossible to carry on with their studies at tertiary level (and it is reasonable to assume that it would be difficult to perform well also at lower levels). The use of English and/or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction conveys a Eurocentric view of the world for those students who do make it into university and actively excludes from the academic debate those who are less “Westernised”.

In the education of African students, the debate over the use of English vis-à-vis the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is a contentious one. The arguments in favour of English can be classified as intrinsic (referring to the properties of the language itself), extrinsic (referring to the material and immaterial assets connected with the language) and functional (referring to the functions and status of English).

Currently the most common model of education for African children is *transitional bilingual education* (the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction only in the first years of schooling and a switch to English takes place as soon as possible). This prevents the students from developing ‘Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency’ and might contribute to the generally high dropout rates and bad academic performance in most previously disadvantaged schools. A *maintenance* approach to bilingual education (both languages are used throughout the curriculum) would probably be the ideal solution, although very difficult to implement in practice. The tertiary level would seem to have the flexibility to implement a truly dual-medium policy and play a leading role

in the transition to maintenance bilingual education. It is doubtful, though, whether it makes sense to start using the African languages to learn and teach only at tertiary level. Moreover, African students themselves might have negative attitudes towards the use of their own language as a medium of instruction at university.

The term *language attitude* generally refers to a set of positive or negative beliefs (cognitive component), feelings (affective component) and actions (conative component) that the object of the attitude provokes in its holder. Language attitudes can be *instrumental* or *integrative*. An *instrumental* orientation to a language refers to its usefulness as a tool, a means to achieve something. A language can in fact be used to communicate (informative function) and to enjoy privileges and take part in activities (participatory function). An *integrative* orientation to a language considers its symbolic value as a marker of social identity (binding/separating function) and as a sort of “flag” representing, for instance, freedom and independence or oppression and domination (symbolic function).

In South Africa, the important instrumental value of English determines the very positive attitudes towards its use as a medium of instruction in school. Research also shows some integrative orientation towards English among some groups of African students. African languages, on the other hand, have a very low instrumental value at the moment and the general orientation towards them among their own speakers is therefore integrative, not instrumental. For this reason, in most cases the use of African languages is relegated to informal domains such as family and peer group.

Language planning, issues of multilingualism in education and language attitudes are important and interrelated topics. To summarise, *language planning*, with its components *corpus* and *status planning*, can be said to define “how things should be” in language in education matters. Issues of *multilingualism in education* include the description of the mechanisms and power relationships leading to a given situation, and can be said to describe “how things are” and, possibly, explain why things are like that. *Language attitudes* are both a consequence and a transformative agent of the linguistic situation in a given country. They can be said to indicate “how people perceive the way things are, and how they would like them to be”. In a democracy this is a crucial factor affecting language planning and, possibly, promoting social change.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for the present research and give a general overview of its theoretical implications. In the next chapter I discuss the various methodologies most commonly used in the research on language attitudes and defend the methodological tools I have used in my study.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I make some general remarks about the methods most frequently used in research on language attitudes. I then move on to the description of the two methods I decided to use (questionnaires and interviews) and describe the process of formation of the tools I have used in my research.

### 3.1 Methodology in research on language attitudes

This section contains a description of the types of research methods most commonly used in the social sciences. In particular I focus on the methods used in research on language attitudes and motivate the choice of the two methods (questionnaires and interviews) I decided to use. I then move on to a description of the questions typically used in these two research methods.

#### 3.1.1 Research methods

Bryman (1988) highlights some important distinctions between different research methods. In the social sciences, research can be conducted through the means of both *direct* and *indirect* methods. *Direct* methods, such as questionnaires and interviews, address the subjects involved directly and seek to elicit an explicit response to a clearly defined question on a given topic. These methods are used in order to explore a phenomenon from the point of view of the subjects of the research. One of their limits is that they usually deal with conscious responses and they do not assess the underlying unconscious dynamics. *Indirect* methods of research, such as document analysis and observation, explore a phenomenon from the outside. These methods are more useful to explore unconscious phenomena.

Another fundamental distinction is the one between *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods of research. *Quantitative* methods, such as censuses and surveys, focus on gathering an extensive amount of data and on the representativity of their results. The merit of these methods is to enable a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by giving a broad overview. A critique is that, by focusing on the comparison and representativity of data, they usually stop at a rather superficial level of analysis.

*Qualitative* methods, such as ethnographic research and individual case studies, focus on the complex dynamics underlying a phenomenon and seek an in-depth understanding. By doing this, they usually elicit results that are applicable only to a very specific situation. A combination of both

qualitative and quantitative methods has been strongly recommended in social research (Bryman 1988). Mutual confirmation of data obtained through different methods is in fact a good indicator of validity.

According to Ryan, Giles and Hewstone (1988), the most common methods of research on language attitudes are the '*matched-guise technique*' (indirect method); *content analysis* (a prevalently indirect method including ethnographic research and sociological and historical observation) and *questionnaires* and *interviews* (direct methods).

The most commonly used indirect method of research on language attitudes is the *matched-guise technique* (Fasold 1984; Edwards 1994). In the "classic" form, the same passage is read in different languages or with different accents by the same person, who is equally proficient in the different varieties. Informants are subsequently asked to rate what they perceive to be different speakers in the different *guises* on a scale of adjectival opposites (i.e. lazy/hard working, friendly/unfriendly etc.). The speaker being the same in all guises, what is actually rated is the variety in question. According to Gardner (1985) the use of scales consisting of adjectival opposites is more likely to elicit unconscious attitudes than Likert-scale type questions, which elicit predominantly conscious, evaluative responses.

According to Edwards (1994), one of the critiques of the matched-guise technique is its artificiality: ranking people on semantic differentials according to the way they speak after hearing them on tape can hardly be considered a natural situation. In spite of this, experiments conducted with natural speech and in more informal situations yielded similar results to classic matched-guise-technique studies (Fasold 1984). Another critique is that this method tends to elicit attitudes to the speakers rather than to the language itself (Edwards 1994). Smit (1998) also notes that it is debatable whether, especially in the case of the same passage read with different accents of the same language, respondents identify the accents correctly and assign speakers to the "right" language community. Cooper (1989) also notes that this technique is more likely to elicit intergroup stereotypes rather than individual language attitudes.

The matched-guise technique may be useful in studies on intergroup relationships in situations where stereotypes are quite strong and clearly defined, but it is not particularly relevant to the present discussion. In the study of attitudes towards the language of learning and teaching at a given institution, the characteristics attributed to the speakers of such a language are, in my view, less relevant than the integrative and instrumental orientation to the language consciously expressed by the students. Moreover, a practical problem with the implementation of the matched-guise technique on a large scale is that it is time-consuming, partly because of its artificiality. In fact,

respondents must take the time to listen to the recordings of the voices and fill in a form designed to elicit their language attitudes, and to create such a situation for large numbers can be a daunting task.

*Content analysis* involves the observation of the societal treatment of languages (Ryan *et al.* 1988), i.e. the description of different roles of and attitudes to languages throughout history and in a contemporary society. This includes considering aspects of history, language policy, demography and previous research on language attitudes. Content analysis is particularly useful in order to contextualise the discussion about language attitudes in a particular domain and, with this intention, I have touched on some of these aspects in the previous chapter.

Both *questionnaires* and *interviews* consist of directing a set of questions to the respondents. In the case of questionnaires, this is done in written form, while in the case of research interviews the questions are asked and answered orally. A combination of the two methods is a popular choice for research on language attitudes in the education system, and it is the solution used in several studies comparable to the present one (see De Klerk 1996; Dyers 1998).

The choice of direct methods of assessment was informed by several theoretical and practical considerations. First of all, the research topic (attitudes towards the use of a language as LOLT), though eliciting a strong affective response, is likely to be heavily informed by explicit, rational and conscious considerations. In fact, the choice of medium of instruction is important in determining one's academic performance and future life chances. Feelings of resentment or attachment to a language are therefore likely to give way to informed practical considerations. Direct methods of research seem to be more appropriate to explore such rational and conscious dynamics. Moreover, responses will probably be influenced by the heated debate around the topic and in most cases students are likely to express (conscious) opinions and beliefs rather than (unconscious) attitudes.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, the focus of the research is rather specific and, in order for its findings to be meaningful, responses should be as clear and explicit as possible. Direct methods of assessment seem better equipped to elicit this kind of response. Generalisability and possible comparison with similar studies are also important, and are better achieved with direct research methods. Specificity of the topic and generalisability of the findings would also add to the usefulness of this study to

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<sup>15</sup> Some authors (see Fishman 1974 and Cooper 1975, cited in Smit 1996) question the possibility of using direct methods to elicit attitudes, due to their latent and unconscious nature. This is definitely true if we adopt a strictly unicomponentialist definition of language attitude and only emphasise the affective component. In my study I use a more loose and broad definition of language attitudes as 'a positive or negative orientation to a language' (see Edwards 1994:97-98) to include more conscious and explicit components such as opinions, perceptions and beliefs.

inform future language-policy decisions: policy-makers could rely on an accurate and extensive survey of the attitudes and opinions openly and consciously expressed by Xhosa students at Fort Hare (and thus use this survey to guide this university's future language policy), as well as compare it to similar studies at nearby institutions to shape a new framework for language policy in general.

### 3.1.2 Questions

Questions are the essential component of both questionnaires and interviews. It is therefore particularly important to choose the right type of questions (*factual* or *concerning subjective experiences*, *open-ended* or *closed-ended*) and answer formats (*classic*, *rating scales*, *semantic differentials* or *ranking*). Attention must also be paid to *question order*, *proximity* and *avoiding bias*.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:251), *factual questions* 'are designed to elicit objective information from the respondents regarding their background, environment, habits, and the like'. Background questions, such as gender or age for instance, are the most common factual questions and the information collected through them can be used to classify the respondents. Several background questions were included in the present study precisely for this reason.

*Questions about subjective experiences* refer to the beliefs, attitudes, feelings and opinions of the respondents. In the field of the social sciences, most questions of this kind concern attitudes. Because of their latent and multidimensional nature, attitudes are particularly difficult to measure. The difficulties a researcher is likely to encounter in an attitude survey are the various degrees of relevance that the topic of an attitude might have for various respondents, the fact that some respondents might not be entirely aware of their own attitudes and the fact that a respondent might have a generally negative attitude towards something (e.g. abortion) and still express more positive attitudes towards it in specific situations (e.g. rape, incest or deformity of the foetus). For these reasons attitude measurement requires the analysis and scaling of several attitude statements. Opinions, on the other hand, can be measured simply by assessing what proportion of the population agrees or disagrees with an opinion statement. Questions on both attitudes and opinions are usually more problematic than factual questions, because of their more subtle nature. Most questions in the present study focused on subjective experiences (see Appendix A).

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) also distinguish between *open-ended* and *closed-ended* questions. In *open-ended* questions, respondents are free to express themselves fully and in detail on a given topic. In spite of these advantages, open-ended questions are difficult to answer for

the respondents and even more difficult to analyse for the researcher. A coding frame must in fact be used to classify the answers and, in the process, the richness of detail which characterises open-ended questions might be lost. A momentary lapse of memory or attention could also prevent the respondents from mentioning important points. Because of the fear that open-ended questions would discourage the respondents or allow for the discussion to go off-topic while relevant points are overlooked, very limited use has been made of this kind of question.

In *closed-ended* questions, respondents can choose from a number of set answers. A strong point in favour of this type of question is that they are easy to answer and analyse. A weak point is that they may introduce bias, either by presenting choices that otherwise would not have been considered or by excluding answers that the respondents might have chosen.

According to Lazarsfeld (1944, cited in Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996:254), closed-ended questions are more appropriate than open-ended ones when the aim of the research is to elicit agreement or disagreement of the respondents on a specific point. Lazarsfeld also suggests that closed-ended questions, being less revealing and threatening, are more suitable for research on sensitive topics and contentious issues. For these reasons closed-ended questions seemed to be the most appropriate for the questionnaire. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, were used in the follow-up interviews to gain a deeper understanding of how attitudes were formed.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), answers to closed-ended questions can be structured in many different ways. The *classic form* is a set of questions among which the respondent can choose the one(s) he or she prefers. A distinction must be made between questions to which the respondent can mark only one answer and questions to which the respondent can mark more than one answer.

In *rating scales* the possible answers are ordered. A typical example of a rating scale, widely used in the social sciences, is the Likert scale, which uses the quantifiers “strongly agree”, “agree”, “don’t know/not sure”, “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. Occasionally several questions with the same rating scale of answers are grouped in a matrix.

*Semantic differentials* consist of a set of adjectival opposites (e.g. “good”/”bad”, “honest”/”dishonest” etc.). Respondents are supposed to choose between the two opposites the adjective that best defines the object of the question. Semantic differentials are typically used in the classic version of the matched-guise technique.

*Ranking* consists of asking respondents to assign a numerical value to each item in a list in order of importance. According to Oppenheim (1966), responses to questions with this answer format are particularly sensitive to the order of the items in the original list.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), the *order* in which questions are posed

influences the responses. In general, putting questions in a funnel sequence (from the one with a broader scope to the one with a narrower scope) helps respondents recall details more effectively. Sometimes starting from broader questions is necessary to focus the attention of the respondents before asking more specific questions (see also Oppenheim 1966). A funnel-inverted order of questions, on the other hand, helps maintain the motivation of the respondents, because questions get progressively easier to answer as the focus gets broader (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996).

*Proximity* among questions on related topics can also influence the responses. For this reason the order of questions in the questionnaire I have used has, to some extent, been randomised and questions on related topics have been separated. It is generally recommended (Oppenheim 1966; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996) that the first question should not be on a particularly sensitive topic and that it should be easy to understand and to answer. This favours the establishment of a rapport between the researcher/interviewer and respondent both in questionnaires and interviews.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) highlight the importance of *avoiding bias* in the wording of the questions. The researcher should avoid difficult words and leading questions. In the wording of the questions it is also important to avoid double-barrelled questions (i.e. asking two things at the same time), as they might confuse the respondents.

It should be borne in mind that it is generally easier for the respondents to agree than disagree with the position expressed by the researcher and to endorse socially acceptable values and norms. Respondents also tend to give the same answer to different questions, regardless of the content, especially when the questions are close to each other, on the same topic and with the same response format. An example of this phenomenon, called *response set*, is a tendency to answer all “strongly agree” (or all “agree”, “don’t know”, “disagree” and so on) in a matrix of Likert-type questions on a similar topic, irrespective of the content. It is also important to note that options which are presented first are more likely to be chosen.

Oppenheim (1966) emphasises the importance of good pilot work in both questionnaires and interviews to detect and eventually correct misunderstandings or bias in the wording of the questions and leading or inappropriate question order. According to this author, a question needs to be re-worded if respondents do not understand it, if it turns out to be a leading question or if it yields meaningless answers. In order to avoid wording errors while phrasing the question, the researcher needs to imagine how respondents would understand and answer the question and should bear in mind the way its answers are to be analysed. Once the questions are ready, they should be pilot-tested on a group of approximately 50 respondents (see Oppenheim 1966:28), and the

composition of the pilot-test sample should be as similar as possible to that of the population as a whole. Questions borrowed from other surveys and details such as the layout and covering letter of a questionnaire should also be pilot tested and, if necessary, reviewed.

### 3.2 The questionnaire

This section includes a brief description of the process of development of the questionnaire I have used, some information on the administration and the analysis of the data and some critical analysis of the questionnaire with some suggestions for improvement.

#### 3.2.1 Development

The questionnaire I have used was developed by reflecting on the relevant literature and by looking at questionnaires used in similar studies. While reviewing the literature on language in education and related attitudes (especially at tertiary level) in South Africa, some particular themes (i.e. “standardisation of the African languages”, “pedagogical implications of mother-tongue education” etc.) emerged. A number of questions were formulated for each theme and eventually the most meaningful were selected. Some questions were borrowed from other surveys conducted both at tertiary (Dyers 1998; Bekker 2002) and secondary level (Barkhuizen 2001), in the hope that this would make direct comparison of some results more meaningful.

During the development of the questionnaire, some practical suggestions by Frazer and Lawley (2000) proved to be helpful. These authors suggest that the researcher should reward the respondents by showing positive regard, support the respondents’ values, maintain a consultative approach and try and make the questionnaire interesting. Trust should be established by identifying with a recognised and legitimate institution and the task of filling in the questionnaire should be made as easy as possible. In particular, embarrassing questions should be avoided, the phrasing of questions should be simple and the time of completion should be brief (Frazer & Lawley 2000). In order to keep the questionnaire as short as possible and maximise the response rate<sup>16</sup> some questions had to be eliminated and only questions on relevant selected topics were kept. Whenever possible, several single-choice questions were merged into a multiple-choice<sup>17</sup> question in order to

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<sup>16</sup> Frazer and Lawley (2000:74) define *response rate* as ‘the number of eligible respondents who actually responded divided by the total number of eligible respondents approached’.

<sup>17</sup> In the present study, the term *multiple choice* is used to refer to a question to which respondents can answer by ticking more than one option within the response set. The term *single-choice*, on the contrary, is used to refer to a question to which respondents are expected to answer by ticking only one option within the response set.

save space and make the questionnaire less lengthy. Throughout this process, the general purpose and focus of the research and the necessity of subsequently analysing the responses for meaningful results were borne in mind.

Frazer and Lawley (2000:93) acknowledge the importance of providing respondents with a translation in their own language when needed. The decision to provide students with an isiXhosa translation of the questionnaire alongside the original English version (see Appendices B and A respectively) was informed by both practical and ethical considerations. First of all, some of the studies mentioned above (i.e. Barkhuizen 2001 and Dyers 1998) made use of two versions of the same questionnaire, one in each language, and it seemed interesting to replicate this in view of a possible comparison. The analysis of the differences in responses to the English and the isiXhosa versions of the questionnaires also promised to yield very interesting results. Secondly, the use of a questionnaire in two languages made it possible for the students to refer to a translation in another language whenever an item was not clear. Finally, the most obvious advantage of using both languages was to include in the survey students who might have found it difficult to complete a questionnaire in English, and who might actually be the most interesting subjects. On top of that, given the topic at hand (dual-medium language policy at university), it seemed fair to provide the respondents with a translation into isiXhosa, as it is an official language of the country, although not a medium of instruction at the university. I also hoped that this “sign of respect” for their language would reassure students as to the neutral stand of my research and encourage them to respond freely.

The translation of the original English version into isiXhosa was first made by a professional teacher of isiXhosa first language at a high school in Grahamstown, and several corrections were made by the staff of the Department of African Languages at Fort Hare. The draft was then revisited by the isiXhosa Dictionary Unit, where Professor B. Mini (Editor in Chief of the trilingual Afrikaans–English–isiXhosa Dictionary) made sure that the isiXhosa translation could “stand on its own”, so that students would not have to rely on the English version. This final draft of the isiXhosa version was then pilot tested with a volunteer isiXhosa-speaking student at Fort Hare and proved to be fully understandable.

The pilot test was carried out on 45 students, mainly in the Departments of English, African Languages and Computer Science. I chose two departments with presumably opposite views on the issue (African Languages and English) and one (Computer Science) where, because of the inherently technological nature of the subject studied, the issue of using an African language as a medium of instruction would be particularly contentious. Emphasis was put on reaching students of different gender and in all different years of study. Inconsistencies in answers to other questions

revealed that the formulation of two questions, although logical and linguistically correct, was misleading. Corrections had to be made both to the English and the isiXhosa versions and the results for those specific questions were not included in the main survey.

The final product of the development process was a four-page questionnaire in two languages, which took approximately 20 minutes to fill in (see Appendices A and B). Each copy contained both an English and an isiXhosa version, alternating with respect to which language came first. This was done because of a general tendency, noted in the pilot test, to fill in the version in front irrespective of the language. Each version contained a brief description of the purpose of the questionnaire, a space for the students to leave their details if they wanted to be contacted for an interview and a blank page for comments at the back.

Out of the 30 questions asked, 4 were background questions (gender, year of study, subject studied and level of education when English was first used as a medium of instruction), 12 were Likert-type questions, 8 were single-choice questions and 7 were multiple-choice questions. Most of them were closed-ended questions. Only one background question (subject studied) and one single-choice question (asking for further explanations) were open-ended.

### **3.2.2 Administration of the questionnaires and analysis of the data**

Approximately 1500 questionnaires were administered in three stages. The pilot test of 45 questionnaires was carried out in August 2002. Half of the copies were distributed by lecturers in class and half were distributed through the Students' Representative Council (SRC). The response rate was approximately 60% when questionnaires were distributed in class and 85% in the case of volunteer students contacted through the SRC. A preference for the copies with English in front was immediately evident, together with a general tendency to fill in the version in front. Because of these observations, in the administration of the first non-pilot round of questionnaires, copies with the English version first were equally mixed with copies with the isiXhosa version first.

The distribution of the first round of 1000 questionnaires took place in September 2002. Questionnaires were distributed mainly in the Student Centre, in the library and in the residences. Two methods were employed: distribution by placing the questionnaires in boxes with a note inviting students to take one and distribution with the help of volunteer students and members of the SRC. In both cases, students were invited to return the completed questionnaires to the SRC offices or to one of the appropriate boxes on campus. All in all, approximately 20% of the questionnaires were returned correctly filled in. Of these, almost two-thirds were English versions. In order to get a comparable number of isiXhosa versions, for my second round I used only copies with isiXhosa in

front.

The 500 questionnaires of the second round were distributed in March 2003. Questionnaires were distributed in class by lecturers in those faculties for which the total number of questionnaires collected in the first round was not sufficient for statistical analysis. On average, the response rate was 25%, just slightly higher than in the case of the random distribution on campus.

Overall, 352 forms were returned in both rounds and the pilot test together. The overall response rate was about 23%. The data from the questionnaire were analysed statistically and all variables were considered as categorical variables i.e. responses were put in different categories and were not measured numerically.<sup>18</sup> Following the suggestion by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), the responses to Likert-type questions were considered as ordinal (and not numerical) variables. In fact, as pointed out by these authors, ‘rating scales ... are most often measured on ordinal levels, which only describe whether one level is higher or lower than another level but do not indicate how much higher or lower’ (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996:258). The recognition of a decreasing order of the “strongly agree”, “agree”, “don’t know”, “disagree” and “strongly disagree” positions allowed for the occasional convergence of the first two and the last two types of response into categories of general agreement and disagreement respectively. This was sometimes done to simplify the statistical analysis and the presentation of the findings. The independent variable “year of study” was treated as a nominal variable in most cases. Nevertheless, while moving from earlier to later years of study, some consistent trends were observed and in these cases the ordinal nature of this variable has been considered. Every other variable was considered as a nominal variable.<sup>19</sup>

In line with the generally accepted approach to the statistical analysis of categorical data (see Pagano 2001), the chi-square test was used to determine the dependence/independence of the responses to the independent variables (language of the version filled in, gender, year of study, subject studied and level of education at which English was introduced as a medium of instruction). Following a “conservative” approach, the chi-square test was considered valid only for expected frequencies higher than five (Radloff 2003).

Each question was considered as a separate item and analysed independently. For the sake of

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<sup>18</sup> This might seem strange in the case of the responses to Likert-type questions. This approach was motivated by the difficulty in quantifying the difference between different responses in numerical terms i.e. to “measure” the distance between a “strongly agree” and an “agree” and establish if it is equivalent to the distance between a “strongly disagree” and a “disagree”. Moreover, the treatment of “don’t know” answers as a position on the continuum between “agree” and “disagree” is problematic.

<sup>19</sup> In “nominal” variables, each category is considered independently of the others, while in “ordinal” variables the various categories are put in a specific order (e.g., in the case of “year of study”, “first year” clearly precedes “second year”, which in turn precedes “third year” and so on).

clarity, items were eventually grouped into different categories referring to related topics, such as attitudes to and self-reported proficiencies in the two languages (English and isiXhosa); attitudes and beliefs concerning English as a medium of instruction in general; the question of the development of isiXhosa; attitudes to the issue of dual-mediumship at Fort Hare; possible scenarios for the practical implementation of a dual-medium policy and the future implications of such a choice. Results for each dimension were generally consistent, both when the sample as a whole was under consideration and when responses were sorted according to the independent variables.

### **3.2.3 Problems and possible improvements**

One criticism that can be levelled at my research, when compared to similar studies, is the relatively low response rate. Although 352 questionnaires (corresponding to almost 10% of the isiXhosa-speaking population of Fort Hare students) seem representative and suitable for statistical analysis, the response rate was considerably lower than the ones for surveys at other institutions and far below the figures of 40-60% indicated by Oppenheim (1966:34) as an acceptable response rate for mail questionnaires. The low response rate might be attributed to a number of factors. First of all, judging from informal communication with the students, the respondents had not been frequently exposed to surveys and questionnaires in the past. Secondly, dealing with tertiary level students and supposedly mature respondents, I did not feel it appropriate to “force” students to respond by, for instance, asking the lecturers to put pressure on them. Even when teaching staff were involved, I made a point of not putting pressure on the students if they were not interested. In this sense, a voluntary response rate of 23% can be interpreted as showing an interest among the students towards the topic of the research. This was confirmed by the fact that, in some instances, (different) students filled in both the English and the isiXhosa version on the same copy. From the practical point of view, I doubt that anything more could have been done to reach a greater number of students or a broader variety of respondents.

A more serious problem, highlighted by Oppenheim (1966) and by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) is the fact that respondents are likely to differ considerably from non-respondents. This has been taken into consideration when making generalisations based on the findings.

In order to contain the costs, it would have been possible to distribute English and isiXhosa versions separately: the copy which was not filled in was in fact a waste of money. If this approach had been taken, though, students would have had to be carefully warned and constantly reminded of the existence of two versions in the two relevant languages. As such, one could argue that actually making the choice available to the students at any time would have implied additional

organisational problems which might have neutralised the immediate advantages of cutting the costs.

The translation into isiXhosa did not prove particularly problematic, although in one instance a question was accidentally translated into its exact opposite.<sup>20</sup> This problem became evident during the process of data-capture and has been given special attention during the analysis of the results. Some responses to the only open-ended question in the questionnaire also suggest a possible interpretation of the term *dual-medium university* as ‘university where two languages are spoken on campus’ rather than ‘university where two languages are used to learn and teach’. This confusion, however, seems to take place in both languages with a very low frequency (and for this reason could not be detected during the pilot test).

A possible way to overcome translation problems would have been to have the final isiXhosa version translated back into English by yet a different person. Apart from the problems and costs of getting another person to translate the four-page questionnaire and judge the degree of similarity of the two English versions (the original one and the one translated from isiXhosa), I honestly felt that several degrees of control and the involvement of professionals in the field were a good enough guarantee of the accuracy of the translation.

### 3.3 Interviews

In this section I consider the differences between interviews and questionnaires as well as the different types of research interview. I then move on to a brief description of the development of the interview questions I have used and to the way the interviews were conducted and analysed.

#### 3.3.1 The interview as a research tool

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:232) describe an interview as ‘a face-to-face, interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research hypotheses. The questions, their wording, and their sequence define the structure of the interview’. According to Fontana and Frey (1994:361) ‘the most common type of interviewing is the individual, face-to-face verbal interview, but it can also take the form of face-to-face group interviewing, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, and telephone surveys’. In order to avoid confusion, in the present study the term *interview* refers only to an oral event (as

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<sup>20</sup> ‘My English is good enough to cope with University studies’ became, in isiXhosa, ‘IsiNgesi sam asiphucukanga ncam kangangokuba ndingalungelana neyunivesithi’ (*my English is not good enough to cope with University studies*).

opposed to a written questionnaire). Group and telephone interviewing have been rejected because of fear that respondents might influence each other in the first case and problems of cost and feasibility in the second case.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), the personal interview is a much more flexible tool and gives the researcher much more control over the research than the questionnaire. Interviews also have a higher response rate, as some respondents who would not take the trouble to fill in a questionnaire (for a number of reasons, including a lack of confidence in the language) are willing to be interviewed. Moreover, interviews allow the researcher to record additional information such as context and the immediate reaction of the respondents to the questions, which can be used in the subsequent analysis.

The disadvantages of interviews are that the analysis of the data is usually more complicated than for questionnaires, and they cannot guarantee anonymity. The gender and race of the interviewer can also generate assumptions regarding his or her expectations. Respondents might then try to fulfil these expectations. In addition, the very flexibility which is the interview's strong point can allow for the personal beliefs and attitudes of the interviewer to unconsciously influence the responses or their analysis (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996). With respect to the last point, Oppenheim (1966) seems to think that, in most cases, the risk of bias is worth taking, given the richness of information interviews can yield.

Fontana and Frey (1994) highlight the importance of the researcher/interviewer establishing rapport with and gaining the trust of respondents. This is necessary in order to understand their point of view, but it generally requires patience and hard work, especially if the research topic is a sensitive one. Mishler (1986) emphasises the difference between research interviewing and the daily practice of asking and answering questions. In particular this author warns against the set of assumptions that are perfectly legitimate (and in fact essential) in everyday conversation but cannot be taken for granted in research interviewing. It is commonly held (see Mishler 1986; Fontana & Frey 1994) that the interviewer should maintain a supportive attitude, encouraging the respondents to express themselves freely, but maintaining a neutral stand.

### **3.3.2 Types of interview**

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) explore the distinction between *schedule-structured*, *focused* and *non-directive interviews*. This partly overlaps with the distinction, made by Fontana and Frey (1994) between *structured*, *semi-structured* and *unstructured interviews*.

In *schedule-structured* interviews the same questions (in the same order and with identical wording) are asked to all respondents and the interviewer is not allowed to rephrase or clarify the questions. Fontana and Frey (1994) suggest that, in this kind of interview, the interviewer should maintain a neutral but encouraging attitude, and avoid giving explanations or suggesting response categories.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) note that using the very same schedule in all interviews prevents different wording or question order from influencing the responses and ensures that only actual differences between respondents are tested. According to these authors the schedule-structured interview rests on three assumptions:

- 1 That, for any research objective, the respondents have a sufficiently common vocabulary so that it is possible to formulate questions which have the same meaning for each of them.
- 2 That it is possible to phrase all questions in a form that is equally meaningful to each respondent.
- 3 That, if the meaning of each question is to be identical for each respondent, its context must be identical and, since all preceding questions constitute part of the context, the sequence of questions must be identical.

(Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996:234)

In this study, a strict adherence to the schedule-structured form of interview was rejected for several reasons. First of all, the purpose of the interview was not to elicit differences between individuals but to identify and explore general trends that had already emerged in the analysis of the data from the questionnaires. Another reason for rejecting the schedule-structured interview was the huge disparity in English proficiency among the respondents. In fact, all interviews had to be carried out in English, as interviews in isiXhosa would have introduced further complications (see Freeman 1983, cited in Fontana & Frey 1994:366). While in some cases mutual understanding was immediately possible, in other cases explanations and rephrasing were necessary and this called for some flexibility.

In the *focused interview* (roughly corresponding to the *semi-structured interview*), only the situation of the encounter between interviewer and interviewee is structured. After a brief explanation of the topic and purpose of the research, respondents are allowed to express their position free from the rigid constraints of an interview schedule, although there is an interview guide (usually in the form of a list of topics) to help keep the interview “on track”. The key to success in this kind of interview is to strike a balance between flexibility (in order to allow for

unexpected information to emerge) and standardisation (in order to follow strong patterns). According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:234), the focused interview rests on the following assumptions:

- 1 It takes place with respondents known to have been involved in a particular experience.
- 2 It refers to situations that have been analysed prior to the interview.
- 3 It proceeds on the basis of an interview guide specifying topics related to the research hypotheses.
- 4 It is focused on the subjects' experiences regarding the situations under study.

According to these authors, the strength of this form of interview is that it allows for a deeper exploration of personal responses and emotions. Moreover, the fact that the interviewer has the possibility to analyse the relevant data beforehand makes it a particularly useful tool for clarifying inconsistencies and omissions. These characteristics seem to make the focused interview a valuable tool for the present research, given the emphasis on understanding respondents' emotions and opinions in depth and on clarifying previous data and completing previous analyses.

In the third model, the *non-directive interview* (roughly corresponding to the *unstructured interview*), the interviewer introduces broad themes and areas of discussion with the interviewee, but there is no clear interview schedule or guide. Questions may change from time to time, depending on the direction taken by the interviewee, and ample discretion is left to the interviewer with respect to asking more specific questions.

In the present study, I felt that this kind of interview would have been extremely time-consuming, with the additional risk of students repeating data that were already clear in the questionnaires and leading the conversation away from the topics of particular interest.

Although I found the focused interview form more suitable for the present purposes, I also integrated aspects of the other two models. First of all, a detailed interview guide was prepared (see Appendix C) and I tried, whenever possible, to stick to it. I only changed the wording when I needed to overcome the language barrier, but without putting too much emphasis on precision of understanding. In fact in some cases, after attempting some further explanations, I preferred to accept a slightly different understanding of some questions, rather than disrupt the whole experience. Although this is contrary to general recommendations (see Oppenheim 1966; Frankfort Nachmias & Nachmias 1996), I felt that in this particular situation, given the possible costs and benefits, it was the best choice. As I proceeded with the interviews, it also became clear that some

of the questions were too sensitive or not particularly meaningful to the respondents, so such questions were dropped or modified in the process.

### **3.3.3 Interview development, administration and analysis of the data**

The interview questions (see Appendix C) were developed by looking at the general trends emerging from the questionnaire data. The interview guide consisted mainly of questions which, for any reasons, appeared to be particularly controversial (e.g. questions 10 and 12) and of questions whose topic was too complex to be dealt with in the questionnaire and required further exploration (e.g. questions 8 and 9). Some questions were asked only to a specific group of students (i.e. students in a particular faculty or year of study) which had responded in a unique way to the questionnaires.

The final interview schedule included approximately 15 open-ended questions and a few additional questions for students in particular faculties or years of study. Approximately a dozen interviews were carried out in the second term of 2003. Students who had filled in the questionnaire were contacted either on a personal basis or by using the details voluntarily left by the students at the end of the questionnaire.

According to common practice in social sciences research (see Mishler 1986) the results from the interviews were coded and subsequently analysed. Short summaries of the interviews are provided in section 4.2. The data from the interviews have been analysed qualitatively in a rather descriptive manner: no statistical analysis has been attempted. The reasons for this are the function of the interviews as a follow-up to the questionnaires and the small number of interviews carried out, the latter not allowing for any meaningful statistical analysis.

### **3.3.4 Problems and possible improvements**

The most important problem I encountered while conducting the interviews was the language barrier. The fact that some of the respondents were not very proficient in English made it difficult to create a relaxed environment and elicit responses. Unfortunately, interviews in isiXhosa would have increased the costs and the complexity of analysis.

A second problem was timing: the fact that interviews had to be carried out soon before the exams made it difficult to convince respondents to participate.

A last and somewhat minor problem was the fact that some respondents, not very familiar with the interview experience, were clearly expecting a more formal situation. I suspect that this was

encouraged by the use of the word *interview* which, in the mind of some respondents, seems to evoke the *job interview* situation. In future I think that the expression “meeting to discuss about...” should be used.

### **3.4 Summary and conclusions**

In the present research, direct research methods were preferred over indirect methods. In fact, the matched-guise technique, the most common indirect method in research on language attitudes, would have proved to be inappropriate, very expensive and time consuming. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (questionnaires and interviews respectively) seems to be the most popular choice for this type of study and is strongly recommended to validate the findings (see Bryman 1988).

Closed-ended questions seemed more appropriate for the questionnaire, because of its sensitive topic and narrow focus. A combination of different response formats (Likert-scale, single-choice and multiple-choice) was used and only in one instance was an open-ended question used for probing. Once the topics of interest were established, open-ended questions were used in the follow-up interviews to gain a deeper understanding. While preparing the questionnaire and the interview schedule, attention was paid to question order and wording and to avoiding bias. Both the questionnaire and the interview schedule were pilot tested.

The questionnaire was developed by looking at previous research and by reflecting on the relevant literature. After a small-scale pilot-test and the consequent adjustments, approximately 1500 copies of the questionnaire were administered in two rounds. In the first round the questionnaires were distributed randomly on campus, in the second they were distributed in class with the help of lecturers. In both cases the response rate was approximately 20-25%, and the sample covered approximately 10% of the isiXhosa-speaking population at Fort Hare.

The questionnaire data were analysed statistically using the chi-square test. The sample was considered first as a whole and then respondents were classified into groups according to the background variables. Various questions were eventually grouped according to common themes.

Follow-up interviews had the function of integrating and clarifying the data from the questionnaire. For this reason a combination of features from the structured and focused interview seemed to be the best choice, in order to both maintain focus and a reasonable level of flexibility. The interview schedule was developed by looking at strong trends and peculiar answers in the questionnaire data. Specific questions were also asked to students in a particular faculty or year of study. The interviews were eventually summarised and the data analysed qualitatively.

In this chapter I have given reasons for my methodological choices and explained and discussed the methodological aspects of my research. In the next chapter I present the findings of both questionnaires and interviews.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The aim of this chapter is to give a broad overview of the findings of both the questionnaires (see Appendices A and B) which were administered and the follow-up interviews (see Appendix C) which were carried out in this study. According to a widely used convention, whenever the chi-square test was used, three asterisks (\*\*\*) indicate a strong dependence ( $p < 0.01$ ), two asterisks (\*\*) a statistically meaningful dependence ( $p < 0.05$ ) and one asterisk (\*) a somewhat “weaker” but still interesting dependence. Symbols representing different levels of dependency have been placed immediately after the name of the relevant group of students (i.e. Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were particularly favourable to...). Another convention I have used concerns the response format to various types of questions. In this chapter, the symbol “LS” attached to a question indicates that it is a Likert-scale type question. For this type of question the response categories are “SA” (strongly agree), “A” (agree), “DK” (don’t know), “D” (disagree) and “SD” (strongly disagree). The symbol “SC” (single-choice) attached to a question indicates that the respondents could choose only one option (and therefore the total of all percentages is 100%) and “MC” (multiple-choice) indicates that the respondents could choose more than one option (therefore the total may exceed 100%).

### 4.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered in September-October 2002 and in March-April 2003 on the Alice campus of the University of Fort Hare. The target group was isiXhosa-speaking students. Out of 1545 questionnaires 352 were returned, which represents a response rate of 23%. The findings are introduced by a description of the *composition of the sample* and subsequently presented according to different themes: *English as a language and as a medium of instruction, isiXhosa and its development for academic purposes, dual-mediumship, scenarios for practical implementation, pedagogical implications and consequences of dual-mediumship*. In every section the results for each of the relevant questions are reported in full and are followed by a description of the differences between various groups of students.

#### 4.1.1 Composition of the sample

The sample represented approximately 10% of the 3400 isiXhosa-speaking students at the University of Fort Hare, Alice campus (Gardner 2003). The statistical data provided by the Technology Support Centre of the university (Gardner 2003) allowed for a rough comparison

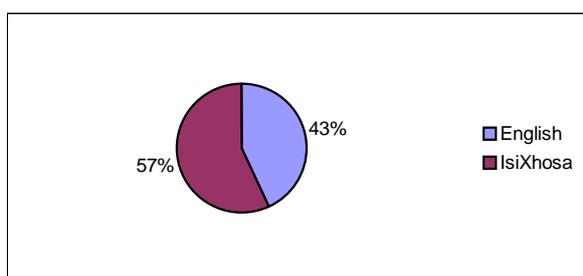
between the composition of the sample and of the isiXhosa-speaking population at Fort Hare in terms of gender and subject studied (see Table 1).

**Table 1: breakdown of the sample in terms of gender and subject studied (figures for the entire population in brackets).**

	Agriculture		Arts		Economics		Law		Science		Social Sciences		Total	
<b>Males</b>	7%	(3%)	9%	(4%)	4%	(9%)	7%	(7%)	6%	(6%)	6%	(9%)	39%	(39%)
<b>Females</b>	5%	(3%)	13%	(6%)	8%	(14%)	4%	(4%)	10%	(11%)	16%	(24%)	58%	(61%)
<b>Total</b>	12%	(6%)	22%	(10%)	12%	(23%)	11%	(11%)	16%	(17%)	22%	(33%)	95%	(100%)

As shown in Table 1, the sum of the percentages for males and females and for various subjects studied do not add up to 100%. The reason for this is that 3% of the students did not answer the question on gender and 5% did not indicate any subject of study. The students who did reveal their gender but not which subject they were studying were in most cases females, and their percentage (2%) has been added to the total of females. Table 1 indicates that Arts and Agriculture students were probably overrepresented in the sample at the expense of students of Economics and of Social Sciences. The proportions between genders and years of study<sup>21</sup> seemed to reflect those in the entire population. A discussion of the composition of the sample for *language of the version filled in, gender, year of study, subject studied and level of education at which English was first used as LOLT* follows.

**Table 2: language of the version filled in.**



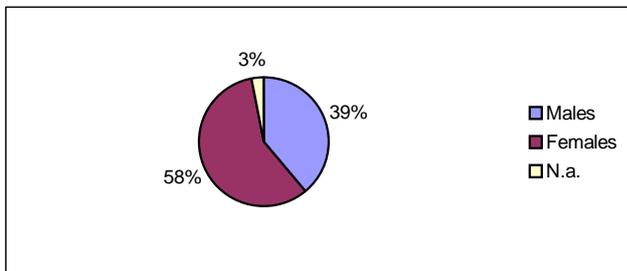
In absolute terms, most respondents filled in the isiXhosa version of the questionnaire. It is interesting to note that only a minority of the students (28%) decided to fill in the version at the back (thus actively “taking the trouble” to look for the version in the language they wanted). The vast

majority (81%) of them did so in order to choose the English version. In order to get groups of comparable size for all subjects studied, the second round of questionnaires (in which all copies had the isiXhosa version in front and the English version at the back) targeted especially Agriculture<sup>\*\*\*</sup>,

<sup>21</sup> The data provided by the University for year of study were incomplete and this variable has not been included in Table 1. Anyway, whenever a comparison was possible it confirmed that the proportions in the sample reflected those in the entire population.

Arts<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and Law<sup>\*</sup> students. Because of this, a higher percentage of students in these faculties filled in the isiXhosa version of the questionnaire.

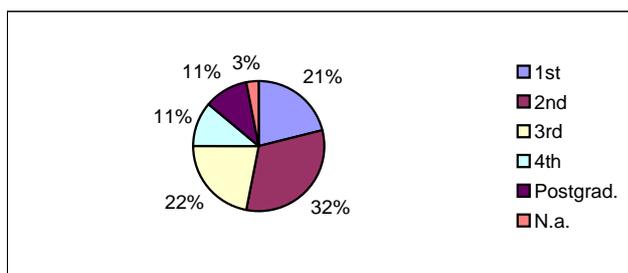
**Table 3: gender.**



The proportion between males and females in the sample seemed to reflect quite accurately the actual proportion of isiXhosa-speaking male and female students on the Alice campus. Because of the actual composition of some

faculties in terms of gender, students of some subjects (e.g. Agriculture<sup>\*\*</sup> and Law<sup>\*\*\*</sup>) were overrepresented among males and students of other subjects (e.g. Social Sciences<sup>\*\*\*</sup>) were overrepresented among females.

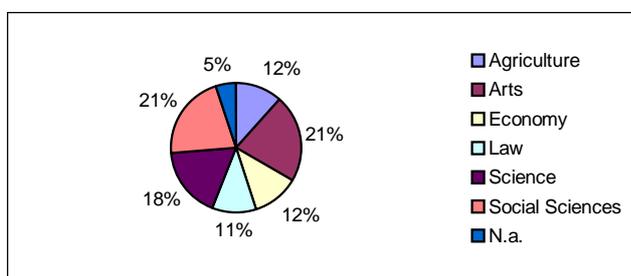
**Table 4: year of study.**



In the presentation of the findings, fourth years have been grouped together with third years as final year students. Although not all faculties offer four years degrees, different subjects were equally represented in this group. Science students<sup>\*\*</sup> were slightly overrepresented among

postgraduates, while there were no postgraduate students of Agriculture.

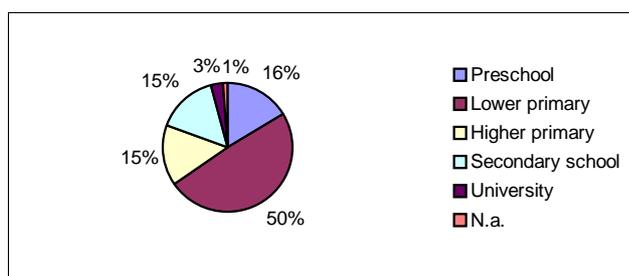
**Table 5: subject studied.**



Due to the strategies of administration implemented to obtain groups of comparable size, the response rate differed considerably across faculties. As a result, faculties with a lot of students (e.g. Social Sciences) yielded the same percentage of respondents as much

smaller faculties (e.g. Arts). Please note that, for the purposes of this study, the distinction between subjects studied corresponds to the distinction between different faculties.

**Table 6: level of education at which English was first used as LOLT.**



In future discussion of this background variable, students have been divided into two groups: those who were already using English as LOLT in lower primary school and those who started using it later. Students of different genders, in different years or in different faculties were

equally represented in each group.

The Tables above show that the classification produced groups of comparable size. If we exclude students who started using English as LOLT at university (and those who did not answer some of the background questions), in fact, no group represented less than 10% of the sample. Observation suggests that a rather high percentage of students were in their second year and a comparatively low percentage were postgraduates. Students in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences were also big groups, compared to students in other faculties.

#### 4.1.2 English as a language and as a medium of instruction

In this sub-section I discuss responses to questions 27, 19, 17, 8 and 7 (see Appendix A), which deal with attitudes towards English as a language and as a medium of instruction, as well as self-assessed English academic proficiency.

##### Perceptions of English

<b>English is the Language of<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	international contact (70%)	liberation (9%)	national unity (24%)
	division (7%)	tertiary education (24%)	other (mainly communication) (7%)
	public affairs (14%)	corruption (4%)	
	ambition (5%)	oppression (7%)	

English was considered the language of international communication by 70% of the students, tertiary education and national unity by 24% and public affairs by 14%. Only 7% of the students expressed negative attitudes, considering English as a language of oppression and division. Surprisingly, only 9% of the students considered English as the language of liberation. In general, students who filled in the English version<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were more favourable to English. Arts students<sup>\*\*</sup> were not as supportive of the idea of English as a language of tertiary education as students in other

faculties. A view of English as the language of public affairs was more popular among postgraduate students \*\*\* than among undergraduates.

### Pronunciation in English

<b>When I speak English to an English native speaker<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	I try to sound like a mother-tongue speaker of English (23%) I am proud of my Xhosa accent and I stick to it (50%) I don't care about my accent (27%)
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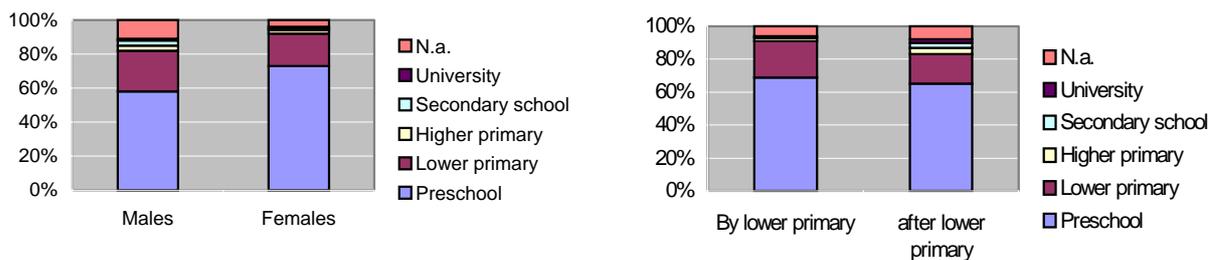
50% of the students claimed to be proud of their Xhosa accent and to stick to it when they spoke to a native speaker of English. 27% did not seem to care about the way they spoke and only 23% said they tried to achieve native-like pronunciation. Students who filled in the isiXhosa version \*\*\* and males \*\* seemed to be particularly proud of their Xhosa accent, together with Arts \*\*\* students. Law \*\*\* and Science \*\* students were the ones who considered pronunciation less important.

### Introduction of English as LOLT

<b>English should be introduced as the language of learning and teaching<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	from the very beginning (67%) during lower primary school (21%) during higher primary school (3%) in secondary school (2%)	at university (1%) never: it should just be studied as a subject (7%)
--	---	--

67% of the respondents indicated that English should be introduced as LOLT from the very beginning of the school experience and according to 21% it should be introduced in lower primary. Females \*\* and students who themselves started using English at lower levels of education \*\* were the most favourable to an early introduction of English as LOLT (see Tables 7a and 7b). Only 7% indicated that English should never be used as a medium of instruction, but just be taught as a subject.

**Table 7: level of education at which English should be introduced as LOLT according to (a) gender. (b) level of schooling at which English was first used as LOLT.**



## English speakers in education

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>In education, mother-tongue English-speakers have an unfair advantage over African language speakers<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	26%	34%	13%	20%	7%

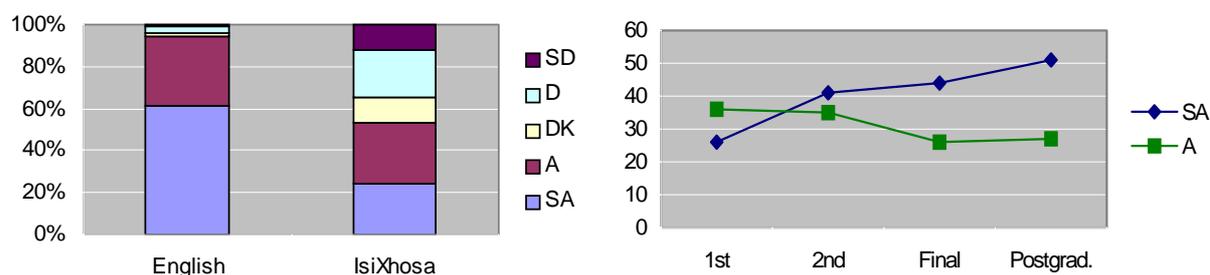
60% of the students agreed that in education English-speakers had an unfair advantage over African language speakers. Such belief was stronger in some faculties, such as Arts<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, and weaker in others, such as Agriculture<sup>\*\*\*</sup>. Students who started using English as LOLT later in their study career<sup>\*\*</sup> were also more likely to think that English-speakers had an unfair advantage in education.

## Self-assessed English academic proficiency

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>My English is good enough to cope with university studies<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	40%	31%	8%	14%	7%

71% of the students felt confident about their level of academic English. Students who filled in the English version<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were more likely to feel that their English was good enough to cope with university studies (see Table 8a) and so were those who started using English in pre-school or lower primary school<sup>\*\*</sup>. A higher level of academic English confidence was found in the Faculties of Science<sup>\*</sup> and Social Sciences<sup>\*\*</sup>, while students in the Faculty of Arts<sup>\*\*\*</sup> reported a generally lower level of academic English. Observation suggests that the level of self-assessed academic English proficiency increased with the year of study (see Table 8b).

**Table 8: confidence in academic English, according to**  
**(a) language of the version filled in.**                      **(b) year of study.**



### 4.1.3 IsiXhosa and its development for academic purposes

In this sub-section I discuss responses to questions 24, 4, 5, 6, 10, 9, 23, which relate to attitudes towards isiXhosa, level of self-assessed oral and written proficiency and its development for academic use.

### Importance of isiXhosa

<b>IsiXhosa is Important<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	as an official language (58%)	it is not important (8%)
	because it will help me to get a job (9%) because it is the language of my people (57%)	other (mainly “for cultural reasons”) (7%)

IsiXhosa was considered important as an official language of South Africa by 58% of the students and as a marker of social identity by 57%. Only 9% seemed to think isiXhosa could be useful to get a job while 8% felt it was not important at all. Students who filled in the isiXhosa version<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, females<sup>\*\*</sup> and final year students<sup>\*\*</sup> showed stronger integrative attitudes towards the language. Agriculture students<sup>\*\*</sup> were the ones with the weakest integrative attachment to isiXhosa, and Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were the ones who believed more strongly in the usefulness of isiXhosa to find a job.

### Oral and written proficiencies in isiXhosa

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>I speak isiXhosa well<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	73%	23%	2%	2%	-
<b>I write isiXhosa well<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	71%	23%	3%	3%	1%
<b>I read isiXhosa well<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	67%	26%	2%	4%	1%

Almost all students felt confident about their isiXhosa, both spoken and written, and just slightly less confident about their ability to read in isiXhosa (with students who filled in the isiXhosa version<sup>\*\*</sup> feeling slightly more confident about their level of written proficiency). Economics students<sup>\*\*</sup> reported the lowest isiXhosa reading proficiency.

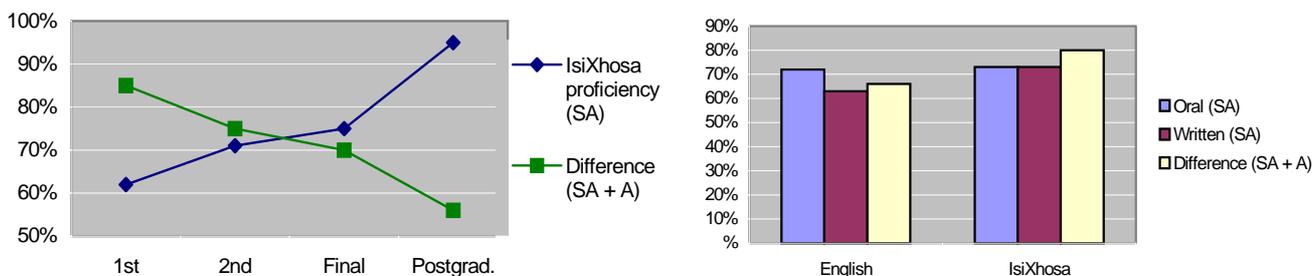
### Difference between spoken and written isiXhosa

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>10) Written isiXhosa is very different to the type of isiXhosa I speak<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	24%	49%	4%	16%	6%

As illustrated above, 73% of the respondents seemed to think that the variety of isiXhosa they spoke was very different to the written standard. This might explain why self-assessed isiXhosa written proficiency (particularly reading) was rated slightly lower than oral proficiency. As self-assessed proficiency in isiXhosa slowly increased over the years, the perception that one’s variety was different to the standard decreased<sup>\*</sup> (see Table 9a). While the difference between self-assessed oral and written isiXhosa proficiencies was smaller than for students who filled in the English

version, students who filled in the isiXhosa version<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were more likely to think that the kind of isiXhosa they spoke was different to the written standard (see Table 9b).

**Table 9: isiXhosa (oral and written) self-assessed proficiency and perceived difference between the variety spoken by the students and the standard according to (a) year of study. (b) language of the version filled in.**



### Past neglect of African languages

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>IsiXhosa and other African languages have been neglected in the past<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	47%	32%	9%	9%	3%

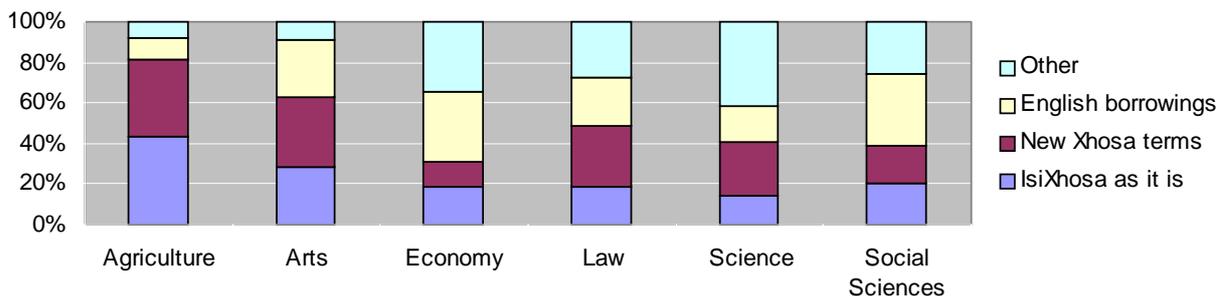
The vast majority (79%) of the students agreed that isiXhosa and other African languages have been neglected in the past. This perception was equally strong across the board.

### Development of isiXhosa

<b>If isiXhosa were used to learn and teach at Fort Hare<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	isiXhosa can be used to express academic ideas (24%) new technical terms in isiXhosa should be developed (27%) English technical terms could be fitted in isiXhosa explanations (27%) other (mainly opposing the development of isiXhosa for academic use) (22%)
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As for the development of isiXhosa as a language of learning and teaching at Fort Hare, roughly equal proportions of students were in favour of the use of isiXhosa as it was (24%), of the development of new technical terms in isiXhosa (27%) and of the borrowing of English technical terms (27%). 22% gave a different answer to this question, mainly opposing the development of isiXhosa for academic use at Fort Hare. Females<sup>\*\*</sup> and Science students<sup>\*\*</sup> seemed to be less favourable to the development of isiXhosa, while students who filled in the isiXhosa version<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and students in the Faculties of Arts<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and Agriculture<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were the most favourable. First year students<sup>\*\*</sup> were more likely to indicate the borrowing of English technical terms as a way to develop isiXhosa, while Agriculture students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> seemed to think that the language could be used as it was or new isiXhosa terms could be developed (see Table 10).

**Table 10: development of isiXhosa for academic purposes according to subject studied.**



#### 4.1.4 Dual-mediumship

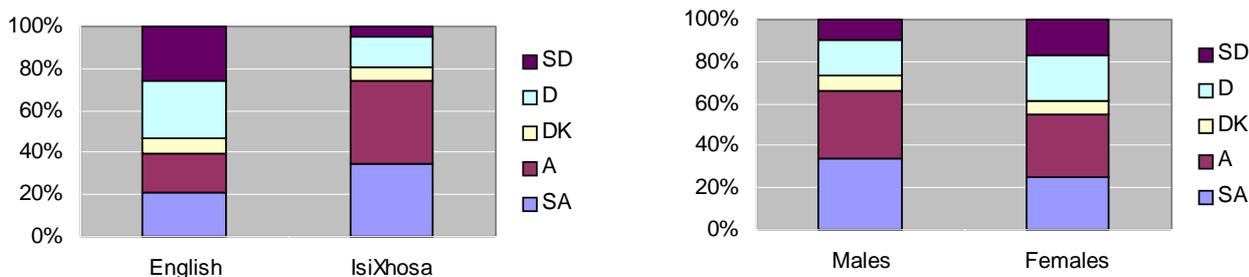
In this sub-section I discuss responses to questions 15 and 18, dealing with the advisability and feasibility of dual-mediumship.

##### Dual-mediumship

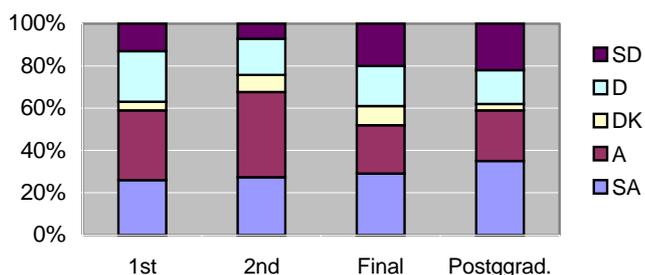
	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>Fort Hare should become a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	29%	30%	7%	20%	14%

On the issue of Fort Hare becoming a dual-medium university, the sample was split in half. When asked directly whether Fort Hare should become a dual medium university, 59% of the students agreed and only 34% disagreed. Students who filled in the isiXhosa version<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, males<sup>\*\*</sup>, second years<sup>\*\*</sup> and Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were generally more favourable to dual-mediumship, while students in the Faculty of Economics<sup>\*\*</sup> opposed it the most (see Tables 11a, 11b, 11c and 11d).

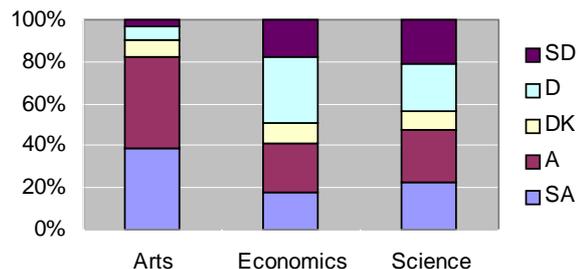
**Table 11: attitudes towards dual-mediumship according to (a) language of the version filled in. (b) gender.**



(c) year of study.



(d) subject studied.

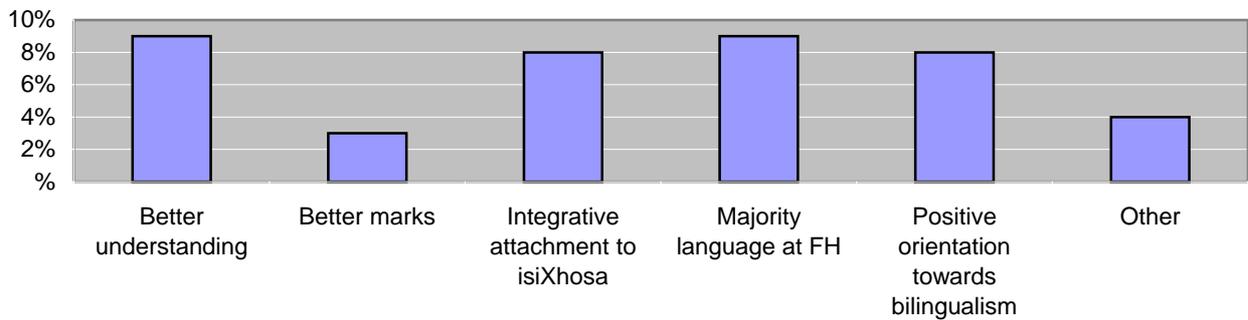


### Feasibility of dual-mediumship

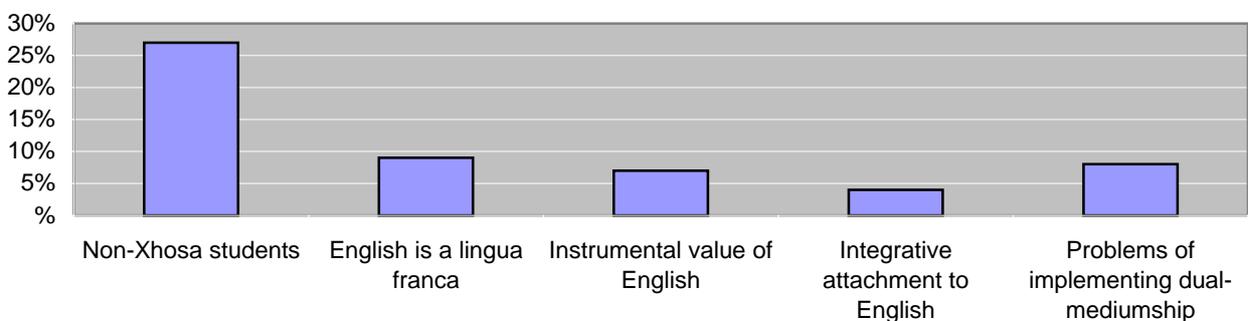
<b>I think that for Fort Hare to become a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university is<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	possible, and it should be done (49%) possible, but it shouldn't be done (31%) impossible (20%)
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In spite of the relatively favourable attitudes towards dual-mediumship expressed in response to the previous question, only 49% of the students seemed to think that dual-mediumship was possible and that it should be implemented. The main reason, given by 12% of the students in response to an open-ended (probing) question, to support dual-mediumship was that it would help students (especially the ones from the rural areas) to understand and perform better. Other reasons, each expressed by approximately 9% of the respondents, were a generally positive orientation towards bilingualism, the importance placed on the symbolic value of isiXhosa and its function as a marker of social identity, and the fact that isiXhosa-speaking students were a majority at Fort Hare (see Table 12a). An additional 1% seemed to think that both English and isiXhosa were already used in common practice. On the other hand, 27% of the respondents expressed concern for students who spoke languages other than isiXhosa (although 1% of the answers hint at an interest on the part of these students to learn isiXhosa). 9% mentioned the importance of English as a language of wider communication (nationally and internationally) and 7% noted its importance to find a job (either in South Africa or overseas) or continue one's studies abroad. 4% of the students also seemed to have an enthusiastically positive orientation to English. Other reasons to oppose the introduction of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction were the intrinsic difficulty and underdevelopment of the language, the costs involved, the lack of isiXhosa-speaking academic staff and the fact that standards would drop, all in all accounting for 8% of the respondents (see Table 12b). An additional 1% mentioned the fact that it would be confusing to start using isiXhosa as LOLT after using English for many years. In total, 51% of the students seemed to think that for Fort Hare to become a dual-medium university was either impossible or not advisable. Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> were the most favourable, while Science students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> opposed dual-mediumship the most.

**Table 12: reasons given by students to support (a) the use of isiXhosa as LOLT.**



**(b) the status quo.**



#### 4.1.5 Scenarios for practical implementation

In this sub-section I deal with responses to questions 26, 28, 21 and 22, defining a possible scenario for the practical implementation of dual-mediumship.

##### Preferred role of isiXhosa

<b>At Fort Hare, isiXhosa should be<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	studied as a subject (54%) used only to teach the language itself (38%) used to teach some of the undergraduate courses (11%) used to teach some of the postgraduate courses (6%) other (mainly “as an optional subject” (3%); “only for translations “ (1%) or “it has no place at all” (1%))
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In spite of strong support for the study of isiXhosa as a subject (54%) and for its use to teach the language itself (38%), only 11% of the respondents seemed to think it should be used to teach at undergraduate level and 6% suggested that it should be used at postgraduate level. Interestingly, no difference was found between students in different years of study or between undergraduates and

postgraduates. The only meaningful difference was a stronger support for the study of isiXhosa as a subject in the Faculty of Arts\*\* and a weaker support in the Faculties of Agriculture\*\* and Law\*\*.

### Faculties in which isiXhosa should be used as LOLT

<b>At Fort Hare, isiXhosa should be used alongside English as a language of learning and teaching mainly in the Faculties of<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	Agriculture (21%)	Law (18%)
	Arts (21%)	Science (14%)
	Economics (14%)	Social Sciences (32%)
	Education (36%)	None (24%)

The faculties in which isiXhosa should be used according to a higher percentage of students were Education (36%) and Social Sciences (32%). Economics and Science were ranked the lowest (14% each) and the Faculty of Arts, where isiXhosa was taught, was indicated by 21% of the respondents. 24% of the students expressed the view that isiXhosa should not be used in any of the faculties. Apart for a smaller percentage of Arts students\*\*\* choosing the last option, no interesting pattern was found in the responses of students in different faculties.

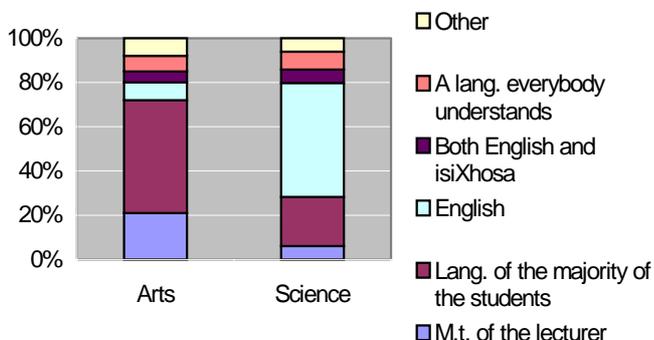
### Language of a course and relative exam

<b>The language of a course, including the exam, should be<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	the mother-tongue of the lecturer (9%) the language of the majority of the students in the course (39%) other (mainly “English” (30%); “a language that everybody understands” (17%) and “both English and isiXhosa” (5%))
<b>The language of a course, including the exam, should be decided by<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	a meeting between the students and the lecturer at the beginning of each course (38%) the university (50%) other (mainly “government” and “industry”) (12%)

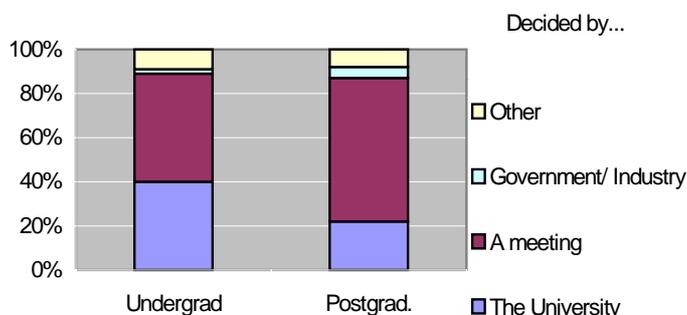
The language of a course (and relative exam) should be the language of the majority of the students for 39%, English for 30% and both, English and isiXhosa, for just 5% of the respondents. 17% gave a different answer (mainly “a language that everybody understands”, which might be interpreted as implicitly suggesting English) and 9% said that the language of the lecturer should be used. The final decision on the language of a course should be taken by the university for 50% of the respondents and after negotiation between students and lecturer for 38%. 12% gave a different answer, mainly leaving the choice to external bodies such as the government and the industry. Arts students\*\*\* opted for a more “democratic” choice of the language of a course, while more students in their final year\*\* left the final decision to the government or the industry and more undergraduates\* indicated the university as a decision-maker (see Table 13b). Students in the

Faculty of Science\*\* expressed a clear preference for English as a medium of instruction (see Table 13a).

**Table 13: preferred language of a course and relative exam according to (a) subject studied.**



**(b) year of study.**



#### 4.1.6 Pedagogical implications

In this sub-section I deal with responses to questions 20, 25, 14, 13 and 11, relative to the effects that using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction would have on the standards of teaching, the quality of learning and the academic performance of the students.

#### Language problems at Fort Hare

<b>The most important language problem at Fort Hare is<sup>(SC)</sup>:</b>	that most students don't speak English well enough (44%) students are forced to study in English which, for most of them, is a second language (34%) there is no language problem at Fort Hare (22%)
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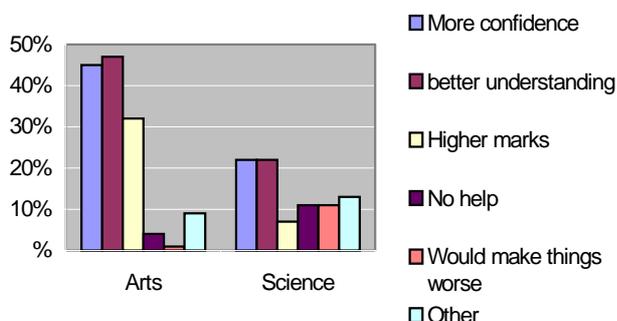
The vast majority of the students (78%) recognised that there was a language problem at Fort Hare. For 44% the problem was that students did not speak English well enough, while for 34% the problem was that students had to study everything in a second language (English). 22% of the respondents felt that there was no language problem at Fort Hare. Students in the Faculty of Arts\*\* were more likely to consider studying in a second language the main problem at Fort Hare.

#### Effects of studying in isiXhosa

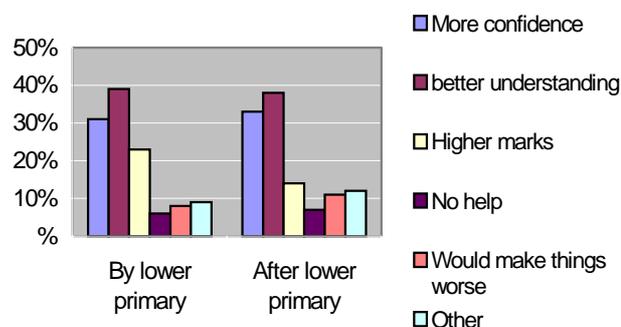
<b>To study in isiXhosa<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	would make me feel more confident (31%) would help me understand things better (36%) would help me get higher marks (19%) other (mainly "it would not help" (6%) and "it should not be done" (9%))
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If both English and isiXhosa were actually used as a medium of instruction, 36% of the students were convinced that this would help them understand things better and 31% said it would make them feel more confident, but only 19% seemed to think it would improve their marks. 6% explicitly said that using isiXhosa as LOLT would not help them or would make no difference. 9% were overtly against it, claiming that it would make things worse. Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and, somewhat surprisingly, students who started using English as LOLT earlier in their study career<sup>\*\*</sup> were more likely to think that using isiXhosa would get them higher marks (see Tables 14a and 14b), while final year students<sup>\*\*</sup> did not think so. Science students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> opposed both the view that using isiXhosa would improve their marks and that they would understand things better.

**Table 14: advantages of using isiXhosa as LOLT according to**  
**(a) subject studied.**



**(b) level of education at which English was first introduced as LOLT.**



### Use of isiXhosa in some courses and in exams

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
At university, I'd rather study some things in isiXhosa and learn how to translate my knowledge into English, than study everything in English <sup>(LS)</sup>	17%	30%	5%	31%	16%
If either English or isiXhosa could be used in the exams, that would help students overcome their language problems <sup>(LS)</sup>	32%	33%	13%	14%	8%

When asked if they wanted to learn some things in isiXhosa and learn to translate this knowledge into English, the sample was split in half, with 47% of the students in favour of this option and 47% against it (5% were not sure). In spite of this, 65% of the students agreed that using both English and isiXhosa in the exams would help them overcome language problems. Males<sup>\*\*</sup>, Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and second years<sup>\*\*</sup> seemed to support the use of isiXhosa, while Science students<sup>\*\*</sup> seemed to oppose it.

## Standards of teaching of isiXhosa-speaking lecturers

	SA	A	DK	D	SD
<b>IsiXhosa-speaking lecturers would be better lecturers if they could teach in isiXhosa<sup>(LS)</sup></b>	34%	28%	13%	17%	9%

62% of the respondents agreed that the quality of teaching of Xhosa lecturers would improve if they could teach in isiXhosa. This was particularly true for the Faculties of Agriculture<sup>\*\*</sup> and Arts<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, while Economics<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and Science<sup>\*\*\*</sup> students disagreed quite strongly, together with females<sup>\*\*</sup>, final year students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and students who started using English later in their study careers<sup>\*\*\*</sup>.

### 4.1.7 Consequences of dual-mediumship

In this sub-section I deal with responses to questions 29 and 30, in relation to the consequences that the introduction of dual-mediumship would have for Fort Hare and its graduates.

#### Consequences of dual-mediumship

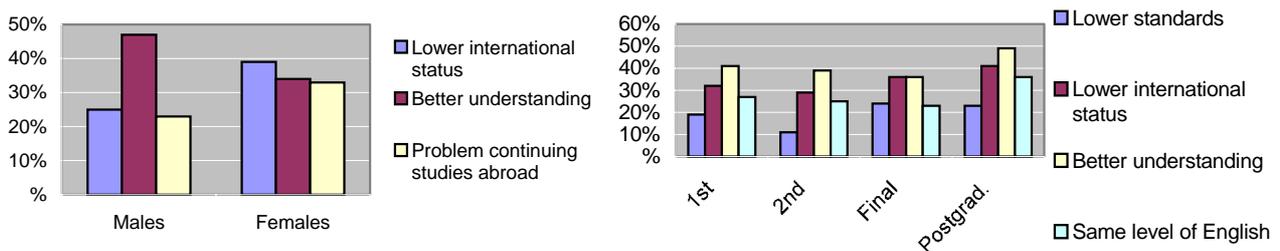
<b>If Fort Hare becomes a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the standard of teaching will decline (19%)</li> <li>it will be harder to get funding (13%)</li> <li>the number of students will decrease (26%)</li> <li>more Xhosa students will be able to go to university (32%)</li> <li>it will affect the international status of Fort Hare negatively (34%)</li> <li>other (mainly favourable to the use of isiXhosa) (14%)</li> </ul>
<b>If Fort Hare becomes a dual medium university, its graduates<sup>(MC)</sup>:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will have a better understanding of the topics they have studied (38%)</li> <li>will still speak English as well as they do now (26%)</li> <li>will have more problems finding a job (24%)</li> <li>will have more problems continuing their studies abroad (29%)</li> <li>other (5%)</li> </ul>

When asked about the possible effects of Fort Hare becoming a dual-medium university, 34% of the students seemed to think that this would affect the international status of the university negatively. The number of students would decrease for 26% while 19% of the students feared that teaching standards would drop. According to 32% of the respondents more Xhosa students would have the chance to attend university and 14% gave a different answer, mainly positive towards the use of isiXhosa (some students suggested that standards would increase). 38% of the students suggested that dual-mediumship would improve the understanding Fort Hare graduates would have of the subjects studied and their English proficiency would not be affected for 26% of the

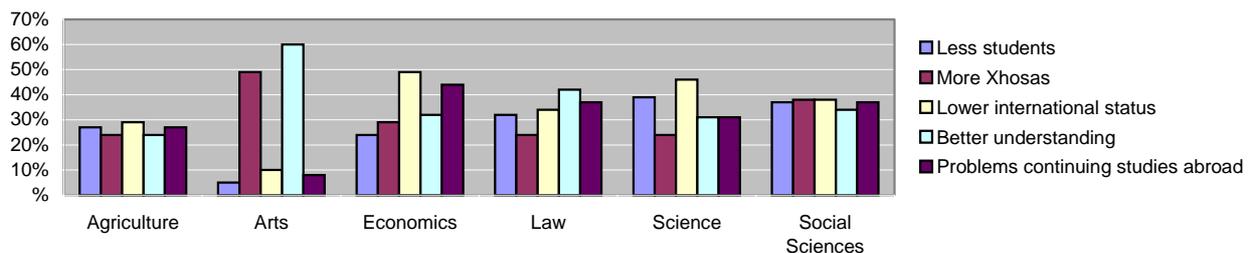
respondents. Graduates would have more problems continuing their studies abroad for 29% of the students and finding a job for 24%.

Concern for teaching standards was more common among final year students<sup>\*\*</sup> and postgraduates<sup>\*</sup> than second years<sup>\*\*</sup> (see Table 15b). The number of students would decrease according to more Science and Social Sciences students<sup>\*\*</sup>, while in the opinions of comparatively more Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> total numbers would not drop and more Xhosa students would have a chance to attend university. Females<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and students of Economics and Science<sup>\*\*</sup> seemed particularly concerned with the international status of the university, and thought that graduates would have more problems continuing their studies abroad if isiXhosa were used. Females<sup>\*\*</sup> and students of Agriculture<sup>\*\*</sup> did not believe that dual-mediumship would help graduates have a better understanding of the things they have studied, while Arts students<sup>\*\*\*</sup> did (see Tables 15a and 15c).

**Table 15: consequences of dual-mediumship for Fort Hare and its graduates according to (a) gender. (b) year of study.**



**(c) subject studied.**



## 4.2 Interviews

The following section contains nine summaries of follow-up interviews and some additional observations about respondents. Respondents were of different genders and were studying in different years and faculties.

#### 4.2.1 Asanda<sup>22</sup>

Asanda was a first year student of Law. He had chosen to come and study at Fort Hare because the institution was close to the place where he lived. He started using English as LOLT in Standard 6, but a truly English-only policy was implemented only in high school and at university. He felt that his English was not perfect, but he was constantly trying to improve. In his opinion, studying at university helped him a lot with respect to this and he hoped his English proficiency would improve even further. He felt that he was progressing every day and he considered good English proficiency particularly important for him as a prospective lawyer. In fact he stressed the need for a good level of English proficiency to “convince the court” and he insisted on the importance of practising discussion and argumentation in English for Law students. He felt very positive about using English, as it was the language most used for communication throughout the world and within South Africa. He also mentioned the role of English as a language of African unity and its usefulness in finding a job.

Asanda also liked isiXhosa and he was proud to speak it. He listened to Xhosa music when he was away from home and he took a personal interest in reading Xhosa novels and short stories. Like most respondents, he emphasised the strong tie between the Xhosa language and culture.

According to him, at Fort Hare isiXhosa was often used for informal communication among Xhosa students. During lectures isiXhosa was never used, also because most lecturers in Asanda’s faculty were not isiXhosa speakers. Instead, isiXhosa was used in informal study groups to explain difficult words to people who otherwise would be left behind. Students with a sound knowledge of the subject but a poor level of English were usually shy to speak out in class, and using their mother tongue allowed them to express themselves and actively participate in study groups. The respondent considered this function of isiXhosa to be very important, and he also had positive attitudes towards the use of booklets, manuals and other printed material in isiXhosa. In spite of this, he claimed that only English should be used in lectures and tutorials, because students needed to practice the only language which had any value in the “real world”. This was particularly true for Law students, since isiXhosa was not recognised as an official language of discussion in court.

In his view, using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction would improve students’ marks, but would ultimately disadvantage them in the workplace once they graduate. Another problem, pointed out by many other respondents and already highlighted in the questionnaires, was the presence of international and non-isiXhosa-speaking students who would not be able to follow lectures in isiXhosa.

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<sup>22</sup> Permission was kindly granted by all interviewees to use their real names in the thesis.

Asanda thought it would be very difficult for Fort Hare to become a dual-medium university. He agreed that, because of the area in which Fort Hare was situated, it would be an ideal place for the implementation of a dual-medium (English and isiXhosa) policy, but he feared that in that case the university would lose a lot of students.

Before coming to Fort Hare, Asanda had been working in a tourist resort on the coast, an experience that might have influenced his view of English as a *lingua franca*. He came to the interview accompanied by a friend, who refused to be interviewed, possibly because he was too shy to speak English. Asanda was an enthusiastic first year student, excited by the idea of being at university and possibly proud of the status deriving from this. He seemed to value success and “being the best” very much, and he probably saw tertiary education as a way to achieve status. He also seemed to emphasise the importance of the participation of weaker students and tolerance for different kinds of people.

#### **4.2.2 Busisiwe**

Busisiwe was a third year student of Fine Art. She had chosen Fort Hare because of financial reasons and because the Department of Fine Arts had a longer and more prestigious history than those in other universities in South Africa. In her school, teachers had used isiXhosa most of the time, so she started using English as the sole medium of instruction only at Fort Hare. She considered her level of English average and she thought it had improved a lot while she was at Fort Hare. She had neutral feelings about English as a language, but she acknowledged its importance as a medium of international communication.

She identified isiXhosa as part of her background and she commented that ‘you have to know your language in order to know yourself’. She also supported the view that ‘Xhosas already know isiXhosa from home’ and needed to adapt and learn English.

She complained that, at Fort Hare, Xhosa students used isiXhosa “all the time”, irrespective of the language of the student they were talking to. She thought that international students were willing to learn isiXhosa, but only for casual communication and not for academic use.

In her Department isiXhosa was never used, as she did not have isiXhosa-speaking lecturers. In tutorials and in study groups, where students were grouped according to language, isiXhosa was used in order to help students understand. According to Busisiwe, some practical aspects (such as making a sculpture, for instance) could be better explained in isiXhosa, but not more “academic” subjects such as History of Art. In any case, new knowledge always had to be translated into

English. While using isiXhosa in the exams would have been appropriate at lower levels of education, she felt that it was unacceptable at university.

According to Busisiwe, using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction would not help the students, most of whom would have to leave the Eastern Cape after university and would be disadvantaged. She doubted that Fort Hare would ever become a dual-medium university, both because it was not a common practice in South Africa and because of the presence of many international students and speakers of other languages. She was not planning to use isiXhosa in her future job, so she would rather prefer to learn additional languages.

Busisiwe met her Tsonga boyfriend at Fort Hare. She told me that, although their first contacts were in English, they were now learning each other's language. This particular situation might have made her more sensitive to the presence of non-isiXhosa speakers at Fort Hare. She also seemed to enjoy the university life very much and she emphasised the difference from high school.

#### **4.2.3 Luthando**

Luthando was a second year student of Economics (Public Administration). He had chosen Fort Hare because many prominent Black historical figures studied there. He started using English as LOLT in Grade 7. He was not particularly confident about his level of English and he thought that, due to his non native-like pronunciation, some people found it difficult to understand him. He felt that his level of English had improved since he came to university, and he was confident that it would improve even further. He claimed to “feel good” about English as a language.

Luthando also claimed to be proud of isiXhosa as his mother tongue. He thought that, even if at university he used mostly English, his attitudes towards isiXhosa had not changed since he came to university. He confirmed that isiXhosa at Fort Hare was used mainly for informal communication, but he also admitted that lecturers (many of whom were isiXhosa speakers in his faculty) used isiXhosa words and explanations in class to help students from the rural areas to understand. Most tutors used isiXhosa for the same reason, especially in the first year. According to Luthando, Public Administration could easily be taught in isiXhosa, as it related to things “in real life”. The use of isiXhosa in the exams, on the other hand, was not appropriate at university level, according to him.

Luthando thought that it would be possible for Fort Hare to become a dual-medium university, provided that international students were willing to learn isiXhosa (which was the case, according to him), but he did not believe that this would change the role of and perceptions towards isiXhosa in society. Confirming the findings from the questionnaires, when faced with the possibility of

studying some subjects in isiXhosa in his final year, he was a bit uncomfortable, thinking that this would disadvantage him in his eventual search for a job. He felt that first and second years were better suited for such “experiments”. Once graduated, he was planning to be a public servant, possibly in the Western Cape or overseas. He recognised that, in the first case, he might use isiXhosa with customers and that it would be an advantage having studied some things in isiXhosa.

Luthando represented a somehow moderate position. In fact he recognised the usefulness of isiXhosa to make students understand, but at the same time he did not challenge the role of English as the dominant language. After the end of the interview, he complained again about his poor level of English and the problems it was giving him in the academic context.

#### 4.2.4 Masakhe

Masakhe was a Masters student in Economics and, at the same time, was lecturing second year students. He had chosen Fort Hare for financial reasons and because it was close to the place where he grew up. He was also attracted by the prestigious history of the university. He started using English as LOLT in higher primary school, and he felt very comfortable in expressing himself in English, although he admitted he was not as fluent as a native speaker. He said that his level of English had improved during his study career at Fort Hare. He considered his pronunciation very “African” but he thought this was not a problem, as it did not hamper communication. He liked the English language for its usefulness in communication across groups and nations.

Masakhe felt passionate about isiXhosa and proud of his language and his identity, but he recognised it could not replace English as a *lingua franca*. He felt that his variety of isiXhosa was quite different to the standard, but he also claimed to be able to speak in the more formal variety if necessary. Interestingly, Masakhe remarked that both males and females spoke “incorrect” isiXhosa, but while males mixed it with *Tsotsitaal*<sup>23</sup>, females tended to mix it with English.

In spite of its paramount importance for informal communication on campus, Masakhe believed that isiXhosa had a very limited role to play in lectures. He seemed to think that, since some words could not be translated from English into isiXhosa, in class, code-switching was the best solution to help students understand (this, of course, provided that all students in a course and the lecturer were isiXhosa speakers). According to his experience as a lecturer, students understood things much better with a brief explanation in isiXhosa *after* class rather than during lectures in English. Using

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<sup>23</sup> The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (Dictionary Unit for South African English 2002:1262) defines *Tsotsitaal* as an ‘Afrikaans-influenced township patois’.

their mother tongue also allowed bright students who otherwise would have been disadvantaged by their poor level of English to express themselves fully. For these reasons he warmly supported the idea of using isiXhosa in tutorials and translating manuals into isiXhosa. Code mixing, on the other hand, was preferable for lectures but only in the first and partly in the second year of study, until full English academic proficiency was achieved. In his view, exams should be written in English, but a translation of the questions into isiXhosa could be provided. This would motivate the students to use English (the language most used in the workplace) but also allow them to understand the questions. Masakhe seemed to think that it would be particularly difficult to teach Economics in isiXhosa, and he indicated the Social Sciences as a preferable subject to implement a dual-medium policy.

In his opinion, if isiXhosa were used as LOLT, a lot of international students and speakers of other languages would suffer. Such students, equally present in all faculties, were interested in studying isiXhosa but not to the extent of using it as a medium of instruction.

Besides being a student, Masakhe was also a lecturer and this gave him a different perspective. His perception of the problems and possible solutions seemed to be much more articulate and pragmatic than those of other respondents.

#### **4.2.5 Ndumiso**

Ndumiso was a fourth year student of Social Sciences (Communication). He had chosen to study at Fort Hare because of the prestigious history of the university. Having spent most of his life with people who could not speak English at all, he thought that his level of English still needed to improve. He started learning English as a subject in grade 2 but, as far as I could understand, English was never used as the main medium of instruction until university.

He confirmed that sometimes some lecturers explained some things in isiXhosa, and this helped the students understand. He thought that this was an appropriate way of using isiXhosa and that more extensive use should not be encouraged, because some students, who were not willing to learn English, would not get enough practice. In his own tutorials, sometimes Xhosa students tried to speak isiXhosa, but he encouraged them to use English instead. He agreed that using isiXhosa would help the students, but once they graduated it would be harder for them to find a job.

He thought that the possibility for Fort Hare to become a dual-medium university was very slim. He believed that isiXhosa would have a role to play in his future job, and in this sense having studied some things in it would help him.

Ndumiso was a member of the SRC, but this did not seem to influence his views on the issue of dual-mediumship. He expressed a pragmatic point of view: he appreciated the usefulness of isiXhosa to explain things but he recognised the importance for students to speak English.

#### 4.2.6 Sivuyisiwe

Sivuyisiwe was an Honours student in Computer Science. She had chosen to study at Fort Hare because of the history of the institution and for financial reasons. Coming from a rural area, she started using English as a medium of instruction only in Standard 8, in high school. She considered this a disadvantage, and she thought that English should be introduced as early as possible in the study career. On this point she quoted the experience of her younger siblings, who she considered privileged because they had been able to attend English schools.

She thought that her level of English was not very good, since she had started learning it late and she was now in a Black institution, where English was never used outside class. She also remarked that even in class it was possible to just keep quiet and “pretend” to understand, without ever engaging in interaction in English. In spite of this, she reported that her level of English had improved considerably since she came to Fort Hare, because there she had more occasions to practice it and because, being at a higher level, she forced herself to read English novels and newspapers. She attributed her improvements in English to her personal efforts rather than to the demands of the institution. She appreciated the importance of English because of its usefulness in finding a job in South Africa.

She claimed to be proud to be a Xhosa and to speak isiXhosa, and she supported the use and study of the language for communicative, integrative and cultural reasons. She did not recall any change in her feelings towards isiXhosa since she came to Fort Hare.

In Sivuyisiwe’s experience, isiXhosa was never used during lectures because none of her lecturers was South African. The same happened in tutorials, and Sivuyisiwe herself discouraged the use of isiXhosa in her tutorials because students would later be tested in English and would have difficulty. In fact, in her view, only English should be used in the exams, otherwise students would have problems continuing their studies at other institutions. Interestingly enough, she mentioned that if she were learning things in isiXhosa and then she moved to another institution, it would be as if she had learned nothing. According to her it would also be impossible to translate English technical terms (such as *computer*) into isiXhosa or to use the language to teach Computer Science.

Ultimately, she thought that (fortunately, in her view) Fort Hare would never become a dual-medium university.

Although she showed the same integrative attachment to isiXhosa as the other students, Sivuyisiwe seemed to be very much in favour of an English-only policy at university, and of better English teaching at lower levels. After the end of the interview, she complained to me about the general level of English proficiency at Fort Hare. On a few occasions during the interviews, she seemed very uncomfortable with the idea of isiXhosa being used in the academic context.

#### **4.2.7 Tamara**

Tamara was a third year student of Social Sciences (Library and Information Systems). She had chosen to study at Fort Hare because it was a good university, recognised all over South Africa. She started using English as LOLT in primary school. She thought her level of English needed to improve to cope with university studies. She believed that her proficiency in English had improved since she came to university and that it was going to improve even further, since she was practising English a lot at university. She thought that English was a fine language, and that it was important to speak it because it was the medium of instruction at Fort Hare.

In Tamara's opinion, isiXhosa was a "good language", but not very useful. She said that isiXhosa was seldom used in class or tutorials, although sometimes tutors used isiXhosa to explain difficult English words. This was a good practice according to her and it helped the students. She thought that using isiXhosa materials (handouts, manuals and so on) would help the students understand as well and she felt that the way isiXhosa was used in tutorials was enough. She wouldn't like it to be used in the exams, because she wanted to learn more English. In her course she had many isiXhosa-speaking lecturers and most students were Xhosa. According to her, it was possible to discuss Library and Information Systems in isiXhosa, but technical terms would create problems.

Tamara doubted that Fort Hare would ever become a dual-medium university. In spite of this, she thought it would not be more difficult to find a job if she studied things in isiXhosa, and she was planning to use the language in her future job.

During the interview communication in English was not always easy and several questions had to be rephrased. Tamara was also attending a course in English for Special Purposes which probably put a lot of emphasis on learning English to cope with university studies.

#### 4.2.8 Thandile

Thandile was a third year student of isiXhosa. He felt that, coming from a rural area, his level of English was not very good at first and he had had problems communicating, but had eventually improved. He also believed his English was going to improve even further. He had positive attitudes towards English as a medium of communication, and saw Standard English as preferable to more “regional” varieties.

He enthusiastically supported the use and learning of isiXhosa, and he believed that the colloquial variety made communication easier, but that the “deep” isiXhosa he was studying had a higher status. He also claimed that males spoke a more “corrupt” isiXhosa, mixing it with English.

According to Thandile, studying isiXhosa at Fort Hare was not highly regarded. He reported that some of the students had questioned him about his choice, since “they already knew isiXhosa from home”. Thandile mentioned that some students, when coming back home from the university, would prefer to speak English even within the family and among friends. He explained his choice of subject in terms of having a great love for the language and an interest in learning how to teach it as a way to promote its use and the Xhosa culture. He recognised that his interest in isiXhosa had increased during his study career.

He warmly supported the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction, since most students were Xhosa anyway. In his opinion, if isiXhosa could be used in oral exams it would help the students to express themselves. Learning in isiXhosa would improve the marks of Xhosa students, not only in the Faculty of Arts but in all faculties. He also believed that any subject could be taught in isiXhosa.

In his view, the main problem if Fort Hare became a dual-medium university would be international students and speakers of other languages who, in spite of a general interest in learning isiXhosa, would not be able to follow lectures. Thandile thought that Fort Hare could eventually become a dual-medium university, but this would not change the role and attitudes towards isiXhosa in South African society.

Being a student of isiXhosa as a language, Thandile had a very different perspective to that of other students. Students of isiXhosa as a first language were, in fact, the only students at Fort Hare who actually used isiXhosa as a medium of instruction.

#### 4.2.9 Unati

Unati was a fourth year student of Agriculture. The good reputation of the Faculty of Agriculture at Fort Hare was one of the reasons why she had chosen this institution to continue her studies, together with the political involvement of the university and its prominent role as a traditionally Black institution. She started using English as LOLT in Grade 5 (Standard 3), which means, like most students in the interviews, that she went to isiXhosa-medium schools. She thought this was a good choice on the part of her parents, as it allowed her to get to know her language on a deeper level and not only for casual communication. Unati felt her level of English was very good, and perfectly suited for university studies. When asked how she felt about English as a language, she said, with a bit of sarcasm, ‘fantastic, especially for the English’.

When asked about isiXhosa, she responded enthusiastically that she associates the language with her culture. She recognised that isiXhosa did not enjoy a high status and needed to be developed, and she suggested the University of Fort Hare as a perfect *locus* for this development. Quoting her experience as a student of Agriculture, she argued that every concept could be easily translated into isiXhosa and, in this way, courses would make much more sense to isiXhosa speakers. Moreover, *isiXhosa-ised*<sup>24</sup> English words were already used in what she called “modern” isiXhosa and this could be an excellent way to develop the language for the academic context.

On the topic of how isiXhosa could be used at university to help students, she started by pointing out that many students had a very low level of English proficiency when they started university. Therefore using the language they knew best (isiXhosa) to learn would help them considerably. She also highlighted the fact that things taught in isiXhosa would make much more sense to the students and using it as a medium of instruction would facilitate the transition from high school to university. Unati seemed to think that isiXhosa should be used all the way through one’s study career up to postgraduate level and, whenever possible, both in lectures and exams. IsiXhosa being one of the official languages of the Eastern Cape, she indicated Fort Hare as the ideal institution to implement a dual-medium (English and isiXhosa) policy.

According to Unati, with the exception of some tutorials, isiXhosa was never used in the academic context at Fort Hare, at least in the Faculty of Agriculture. One of the reasons was that most lecturers were not isiXhosa speakers. On the issue of international students and speakers of other languages, Unati quoted the instance of RAU (Rand Afrikaans University), which still attracted international students in spite of its dual-medium policy. She seemed to suggest that Fort

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<sup>24</sup> Adapting English terms to the grammar and phonology of isiXhosa. The *Africanisation* of European languages is a common phenomenon all over Africa (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000).

Hare could still cater for speakers of other languages as a dual-medium institution, because English would not disappear.

According to Unati, Fort Hare should become a dual-medium institution and in this way actively promote the use and status of isiXhosa, especially for some subjects such as Language Studies or Social Sciences, where the staff was predominantly isiXhosa-speaking. Unfortunately, in her view, the university was taking a different direction, trying to internationalise rather than promoting regional interests which would include the development of isiXhosa.

Unati was a former member of the SRC and this definitely influenced her views on the issue of dual-mediumship. She expressed a somewhat radical point of view, wishing for Fort Hare to become a truly Xhosa university, following the model of European (i.e. Dutch, Portuguese etc.) universities where the mother tongue of the students was used. Her experience in the SRC probably gave her a better understanding of the position of Fort Hare in the South African and international context.

#### **4.2.10 Observations on the interviews**

Interviewees were chosen in different faculties and different years of study, and a roughly equal proportion of males and females were interviewed. Students in later years of study were slightly overrepresented, both because they were more willing to be interviewed and because they conveyed a more complex and interesting point of view, having already gone through the university experience.

Students did not seem particularly interested in talking about English as a language, maintaining a detached and instrumental attitude towards it. Most respondents, on the other hand, were enthusiastic about isiXhosa and emphasised the tie between the Xhosa language and culture (strangely enough, nobody made the same association for English). The belief that using English as a medium of instruction was a way to improve English proficiency came through quite strongly.

On the issue of the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes, most interviewees did not seem to see a problem, and some indicated Fort Hare as a perfect *locus* for the development of isiXhosa. The merits of isiXhosa in helping students to understand and the common practice of explaining difficult English words in isiXhosa by lecturers and tutors was recognised by almost all respondents. On the other hand, very few challenged the use of English as the only language in exams. As for the implementation of dual-mediumship, students seemed particularly concerned about speakers of other languages and about future difficulties in finding a job.

### **4.3 Summary and conclusions**

Students seemed to have positive attitudes towards English for instrumental rather than integrative reasons. Most respondents did not seem to have a high opinion of their level of English and seemed to have difficulties in their studies because of this. English was highly valued as a medium of instruction and especially as a language of examination.

IsiXhosa had high integrative value and was generally considered very useful to explain technical terms and supplement explanations in English in class and tutorials. Few students thought that the underdevelopment of isiXhosa for academic purposes was a real obstacle to dual-mediumship. Nevertheless, respondents expressed contrasting views on the possibility of using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction in class.

Most respondents thought that this would help students (especially those from the rural areas) understand and perform better in their first years, but a prolonged use of isiXhosa as LOLT would eventually create problems in finding a job or in continuing one's studies at another institution. The presence of students who could not speak isiXhosa was also a major concern.

In this chapter I have presented the findings of my research. In the next chapter I summarise and discuss them, trying to draw a more comprehensive picture and to explain inconsistencies. I also compare the data with the findings of similar research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter I interpret the data provided in Chapter 4. First of all, I give an overview of the language attitudes of isiXhosa-speaking students at the University of Fort Hare towards the use of their mother tongue as LOLT and towards some other relevant topics (attitudes towards English and isiXhosa, practical and pedagogical implications of dual-mediumship etc). I then explore possible differences in attitudes and opinions according to gender, year of study, subject studied, level of education when English was first used as LOLT and language of the version filled in. Whenever possible, I compare my findings to data from similar research.

### 5.1 The sample as a whole

In this section the data from both the questionnaires and the follow-up interviews are discussed according to different themes: *English at Fort Hare*, *isiXhosa at Fort Hare*, *dual-mediumship at Fort Hare* and *possible consequences of using isiXhosa as LOLT at Fort Hare*.

#### 5.1.1 English at Fort Hare

Confirming the findings of research conducted at similar institutions (see Dyers 1998), isiXhosa-speaking students at Fort Hare seemed to have an instrumental rather than integrative orientation towards English. Students seemed to emphasise the importance of English to communicate with other students and as a “tool” to participate in the advantages offered by higher education. English was generally recognised as the main language of international contact and as a necessary *lingua franca* for South Africa. Its importance in finding a job was recognised both at the national and the international level. The presence of non-isiXhosa-speaking students at Fort Hare was a main concern for isiXhosa speakers when considering using their language as LOLT. The fear that this would exclude or disadvantage speakers of other languages was openly expressed by at least one-third of the students.<sup>25</sup> Positive instrumental orientation towards English and concern for non-isiXhosa speakers if isiXhosa were used as LOLT were common to the comparable group of students in the research conducted by Dyers (1998).

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<sup>25</sup> An interesting consideration, partly related to this, is that the percentage of non-isiXhosa speakers at Fort Hare (approximately 20% according to the data from the Technology Support Centre, see Gardner 2003) was constantly overestimated by the respondents.

Only a small minority of the students (4%) expressed an enthusiastic attachment to English ('we want English', 'English for the best' etc.) in the questionnaires. In the interviews, it became clear that in the minds of some students English was strongly associated with tertiary education, and that it had become a marker of the social identity of university students. In fact, some interviewees claimed that they practised more English and started reading English books and magazines in their own time since they had come to university. Some students even reported going back from university to the rural areas where they came from and insisting on using English at home, as a marker of their prestigious status as university students. Interestingly, some of the students seemed to emphasise the central role of English at university to "mark the difference" from primary and secondary school, where English was less common. This is confirmed by the fact that first year students were generally the most enthusiastic about English, possibly because they saw its use as a way to distance themselves from their previous status as secondary-school students.

Students seemed somewhat reluctant to speak about their attitudes towards English outside the academic context, and the only symbolic value attributed to the language during the interviews was its function as the *lingua franca* of pan-African unity. Both in the questionnaires and in the interviews, English was commonly referred to as the language of the "real world" (probably implying a clear-cut distinction from the "traditional world" most students were still attached to). Unlike isiXhosa, English did not seem to be associated with any particular culture.

Early introduction to English as LOLT was associated with higher English proficiency, better instruction and improved life chances. This was evident in the questionnaires (88% thought that English should be introduced as LOLT in lower primary school) and was generally confirmed in the interviews.<sup>26</sup> In spite of this, some of the interviewees challenged the view that English-medium instruction was the best choice for Xhosa children, using both integrative and pedagogical arguments. On the one hand, it was argued that isiXhosa was the language with which such children identify. On the other, it was advocated that instruction in isiXhosa would make more sense to students and that a basic knowledge of one's mother tongue was necessary to learn a second language.

The interviews suggested that some students might have indicated that they started using English as LOLT in lower primary school because this reflected the official policy, but that English was effectively used as a medium of instruction only much later.<sup>27</sup> Late introduction to English as LOLT

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<sup>26</sup> Indications of a strong association, among the isiXhosa-speaking elite, between the use of English as a medium of instruction and better education had already been noted by De Klerk (2000).

<sup>27</sup> The common practice of using isiXhosa extensively in rural and township schools long after the introduction of English as LOLT was noted by Heugh (2000).

was generally associated with bad English proficiency. While most interviewees indicated that their level of English had not been satisfactory when they enrolled at university, it is quite clear that confidence in English improved during their study career.

Pronunciation did not seem to be a huge concern, as long as it did not hamper communication. In most cases, an “African” accent in English was proudly considered as a marker of social identity, especially among males.

### 5.1.2 IsiXhosa at Fort Hare

IsiXhosa was generally considered important, especially because of its strong connection with the Xhosa culture. Students were generally proud of being Xhosa, were eager to speak about isiXhosa in the interviews and the university experience seemed to improve their confidence in speaking the language. Self-assessed oral proficiency in isiXhosa was generally higher than written proficiency, possibly because of the perceived difference between the variety spoken by the students and the written standard.<sup>28</sup>

The vast majority of the students (79%) agreed that isiXhosa and other African languages had been neglected in the past. Although the underdevelopment of isiXhosa is one of the main reasons for its exclusion from the academic context (NCHE 1996; Alidou & Mazrui 1999; Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000), students did not seem to think it was a major issue when considering the introduction of dual-mediumship. Approximately one-fourth of the students (concentrated mainly in the Faculty of Agriculture) thought that isiXhosa could be used as it was to teach at tertiary level. Approximately half of the students believed in the possibility of developing isiXhosa for academic use, either by *isiXhosa-ising* English technical terms or by creating new terms in isiXhosa. Observation on campus clearly showed that code-mixing and the *isiXhosa-isation* of English words was common practice among students. English terms (like *computer* or *floppy disk* for instance) were often integrated into a conversation in isiXhosa, and English words such as *university* have been *isiXhosa-ised* into *eyunivesiti*. The University of Fort Hare was indicated by many students as the ideal place to carry out the task of developing new terms in isiXhosa.

At Fort Hare, isiXhosa was widely used as a language of informal communication among Xhosa students and also with some speakers of other languages interested in learning how to communicate in isiXhosa. In the academic context, isiXhosa-speaking lecturers often resorted to code-switching during lectures in order to explain difficult concepts and English technical terms in isiXhosa.

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<sup>28</sup> As noted by Barkhuizen (2001) the perception that Standard isiXhosa is a difficult language and as very different to the spoken variety, might be due to the way the language is taught in secondary school.

IsiXhosa was also used in some tutorials and study groups to help students understand and participate. This might account for the fact that 1% of the respondents seemed to believe that dual-mediumship was already a common practice at Fort Hare. The practice of code-switching, already observed at lower levels of education (see Heugh 2000) was considered particularly beneficial for first year students, as it facilitated the transition from school to university, and for students coming from the rural areas.

### **5.1.3 Dual-mediumship at Fort Hare**

While 59% of the students thought that Fort Hare should become a dual-medium university, only 49% thought this was both possible and a good idea. The discrepancy between these two figures was probably due to practical considerations that made dual-mediumship, though desirable, impossible to implement, according to some students. The main reason to oppose the introduction of isiXhosa as LOLT was the presence of non-Xhosa students. Practical problems such as the underdevelopment of isiXhosa, the costs of developing new material in isiXhosa and the lack of isiXhosa-speaking lecturers did not seem to concern a large portion of students. The fact that isiXhosa was not used at lower levels and that its introduction so late in one's study career would generate confusion was mentioned only by 1% of the students. The equating of instruction in isiXhosa with lower levels of English proficiency seemed to be deeply rooted in the minds of many students, although the relationship between the two was usually taken for granted and left implicit. The importance of speaking English was quoted by at least 10% of the students as a major reason to retain English as the sole medium of instruction.

On the issue of the possible implementation of dual-mediumship, the questionnaires yielded apparently contradictory data. Although 65% of the students agreed that using both English and isiXhosa would help them in the exams, when asked about the preferred language of a course and relative exam, 39% of the students indicated "the language of the majority of the students (isiXhosa in most cases) and 5% indicated both English and isiXhosa (an additional 5% indicated "the language of the lecturer", which might or might not be isiXhosa). While 76% indicated that isiXhosa should be used as a medium of instruction alongside English in at least one of the faculties, only 11% thought it should be used to teach some undergraduate courses and an even smaller percentage (6%) thought it should be used to teach at postgraduate level.

The interviews partly cleared up these inconsistencies by adding some depth and complexity to the picture. In fact, students preferred to restrict the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction to some faculties (generally Arts and Social Sciences) and to the first year of study. The use of

isiXhosa was considered more appropriate in tutorials than in lectures. Some of the interviewees strongly opposed the use of their mother tongue in the exams, but the idea of a translation of exam questions into isiXhosa was viewed favourably. The plain choice between a dual-medium and an English-only language policy, though considering the distinction between different faculties and undergraduate vs. postgraduate studies, did not allow students to express the complexity of the scenario they had in mind for the possible practical implementation of dual-mediumship. This generated the inconsistencies in the questionnaire data mentioned above, with many students supporting the use of isiXhosa alongside English in some of the faculties and particularly in tutorials, but not for the exams and not in all years of study.

Most students in the interviews seemed to react positively to the idea of using supporting printed material (wordlists, booklets, manuals and so on) in isiXhosa. As mentioned above, the interviews also revealed that the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction was considered appropriate mainly for first years. A slow transition to an English-only policy in subsequent years seemed to be the general preference. Only a few of the interviewees advocated that dual-mediumship should extend to postgraduate level.

#### **5.1.4 Possible consequences of using isiXhosa as LOLT at Fort Hare**

Just above 60% of the respondents agreed that using isiXhosa would improve the quality of teaching of isiXhosa-speaking lecturers, and that using both English and isiXhosa would help students in the exams. Most students in the interviews recognised the usefulness of isiXhosa in explaining difficult concepts or technical terms in lectures and tutorials. In spite of this, there was clearly a fear that too much isiXhosa would impede students from gaining sufficient English proficiency. 15% of the students were against the use of isiXhosa as LOLT, thinking that it would not help them or that it would make things worse. One of the reasons to oppose the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction was the belief that “if you study something in isiXhosa at Fort Hare and then you are tested in English at another institution or in the “real world” (the workplace), it would be as if you had learned nothing”. Such belief, though contrary to international research (Cummins 1986; see also Luckett 1995), was deeply rooted in the mind of some respondents.

On the issue of the possible consequences of the introduction of dual-mediumship for the university and its graduates, the sample was split in half. Students in favour of the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction seemed to think that this would allow more isiXhosa speakers to attend university and that Fort Hare graduates would have a better understanding of the subjects studied. Other positive consequences would be the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes and an

increased pride of the Xhosa people in their language, although students did not think that the status of isiXhosa in South African society would change. Dual-medium English and Afrikaans universities (such as Rand Afrikaans University, for instance) were often quoted as examples of institutions capable of delivering good education in two languages while still appealing to international students.

Students who opposed the introduction of dual-mediumship emphasised the risks of a decline in the international status of the university and a drop in the number of students. Students expressed concern about the possibility of finding a job and continuing their studies at another institution if dual-mediumship were implemented. Fear that the use of an African language in tertiary education would entail segregation and generate isolation and intergroup tensions was also expressed. Similar attitudes were recorded for Xhosa students at UWC (Dyers 1998). This seemed to indicate a fear of returning to Bantu Education and Apartheid which, as noted by Lockett (1995), heavily influences every discussion on mother-tongue instruction in South Africa. Concern for other practical aspects, such as drop in the teaching standards or difficulties in getting funding were not so relevant for the students.

## **5.2 The background variables**

In this section I describe the differences in the attitudes of different groups of students. In particular I focus on the differences according to *language of the version filled in, gender, year of study, subject studied* and *early vs. late introduction of English as LOLT in school*.

### **5.2.1 Language of the version filled in**

Students definitely preferred to fill in the English version of the questionnaire.<sup>29</sup> In fact, respondents showed a clear tendency to choose copies with the English version in front whenever possible and to fill in the English version at the back (thus actively looking for it) in copies where isiXhosa was in front.

Not surprisingly, students who filled in the English version of the questionnaire seemed to be significantly more confident about their level of English academic proficiency and to have much more positive attitudes towards English. These students also claimed to be comparatively less proud

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<sup>29</sup> In the first round of questionnaires, during which an equal number of copies with English and isiXhosa in front were distributed, 60% of the students filled in the English version. Overall, 80% of those who filled in the version at the back (thus actively “taking the trouble” to look for it) did so in order to chose the English version.

of their Xhosa accent. Students who filled in the English version were also more favourable to an early introduction of English as LOLT and less likely to think that English speakers had an unfair advantage in education.

Students who filled in the isiXhosa version, on the other hand, were more confident about their written isiXhosa proficiency (self-assessed oral proficiency was the same for both groups). They also considered the variety they spoke to be closer to the standard. Students who filled in the isiXhosa version also showed a much stronger integrative attachment to isiXhosa, were generally more favourable to the introduction of dual-mediumship and wanted to be involved in the decisions concerning language policy. Such students were also more confident about the pedagogical advantages of using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction. A possible explanation for the positive orientation towards isiXhosa and dual-mediumship of this group is the fact that students of Arts, where isiXhosa was taught as a subject, were overrepresented among those who filled in the isiXhosa version.

Students who filled in the English version, on the other hand, emphasised the possible negative consequences of dual-mediumship, such as drop in student numbers, difficulties in obtaining funding, lower teaching standards, negative consequences for the international status of the university and more problems finding a job after graduation.

### **5.2.2 Gender**

Males seemed to have slightly more negative attitudes towards English, especially because of its divisive potential, and appeared to be more proud of their Xhosa accent in English. Females, on the other hand, had more positive attitudes towards English in general and were more favourable to an early introduction of English as LOLT in school. Written and oral self-assessed proficiencies in isiXhosa were very similar for the two groups (with males expressing somewhat stronger positions). It was generally recognised during the interviews that males spoke a slightly less prestigious variety of isiXhosa, mixing it with English or with lower status varieties (i.e. *Tsotsitaal*). Both the tendency of males to be more sensitive to the covert prestige of lower-status varieties and the stronger support among females for the higher-status variety (in this case English) noted above are consistent with parallel trends in wider sociolinguistic research (see Milroy 1980).

While females expressed a more integrative orientation to isiXhosa as a marker of social identity, males valued its importance as an official language and were generally more favourable to its use as a medium of instruction. In spite of this, there was just a slight indication that males believed in the pedagogical advantages of using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction more than females. This

suggests that the comparatively positive attitudes of males towards dual-mediumship were not based on practical considerations, but had different (possibly ideological) reasons.

In the event of Fort Hare becoming a dual-medium university, females were significantly more concerned about a possible drop in the international status of the university, and in its graduates having more problems finding a job and continuing their studies abroad.

### **5.2.3 Year of study**

In this sub-section I give a brief description of the different attitudes of *first year*, *second year*, *final year* and *postgraduate students*. At the end, I make some general comments on the patterns of change in language attitudes and attitudes towards dual-mediumship across years of study.

*First year* students seemed more concerned with trying to achieve native-like pronunciation in English than students in the following years. First year students also preferred the borrowing of English technical terms as a way to develop isiXhosa for academic use. The interviews also seemed to suggest a much more enthusiastic approach to English as a language and as a medium of instruction. Probably, this group of students' positive attitudes towards English were part of a set of positive attitudes towards the university experience (new and, supposedly, exciting to most of them) with which the English language was associated.

*Second year* students were slightly more favourable to the introduction of dual-mediumship than other students, and seemed readier to start studying some things in isiXhosa. In spite of this, there was no difference from students in other years of study with respect to the belief that the implementation of dual-mediumship was actually possible. The interviews suggested that more favourable attitudes towards dual-mediumship among second year students might not be due to pedagogical considerations but to a slightly higher degree of confidence among these students. Second year students were in fact in a better position to experiment with new solutions, having passed the "stumbling block" of their first year and being still far away from the final examination and the eventual search for a job. Consistently with this interpretation, second year students seemed considerably less concerned than other students about a possible drop in teaching standards if dual-mediumship were implemented.

*Final year* students showed a higher integrative attachment to isiXhosa compared to other students, but did not seem to think that using it as a medium of instruction would help them

academically. Moreover, students in this group feared that, if Fort Hare became a dual medium university, teaching standards would drop. The interviews suggested that the concern with teaching standards was motivated by the prospective search for a job and relative competition with students from other institutions. It is reasonable to assume that, being about to enter the labour market, final year students were more sensitive to the issue of the quality of their education.

*Postgraduate* students expressed more positive attitudes towards English as the language of tertiary education and, more significantly, of public affairs. These students also reported slightly higher levels of self-assessed English academic proficiency compared to their undergraduate counterparts. No significant difference was noticed between postgraduates and undergraduates on the issue of dual-mediumship or concerning the pedagogical advantages and disadvantages of using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction. More postgraduate students than undergraduates seemed to have positive attitudes towards the study of isiXhosa as a subject, and more postgraduates than undergraduates indicated the Faculty of Arts (where isiXhosa was taught) as the preferred *locus* for the use of the language. Interestingly, postgraduate students did not seem to consider the use of isiXhosa any more or less appropriate to postgraduate studies than undergraduate students did. If isiXhosa were used as a medium of instruction, more postgraduate than undergraduate students thought that graduates would have a better understanding of the things they had studied, but also indicated that it would be harder to get funding.

As the year of study increased, students seemed to be more and more confident about their level of English academic proficiency. This is somehow inconsistent with the findings of the research carried out by De Klerk (1996) at Rhodes University, where students gradually lost their confidence in English as they faced the linguistic demands of the academic environment. In the case of Fort Hare students, improved confidence in one's English proficiency was attributed to more occasions to practice the language (both in class and outside) and personal efforts to learn it, rather than to the direct influence of the university. The research conducted by Dyers (1998) at UWC, where conditions were arguably more similar to those at Fort Hare, confirmed an increase in self-assessed English proficiency over the years.

Self-assessed isiXhosa proficiency (both oral and written) increased consistently over the years, while the perception that one's variety was different to the standard decreased. Stronger integrative attachment to isiXhosa in the later years of study suggests that the university experience somehow reinforced the students' Xhosa identity, although this was not consciously recognised by the respondents in the interviews. Attitudes of the students towards the use of isiXhosa as a medium of

instruction and beliefs about the possible consequences were relatively stable across years of study. Students in later years of study, though, expressed more concern about the international status of Fort Hare if dual-mediumship were implemented.

If only undergraduates are considered, the belief that using isiXhosa would improve one's marks decreased consistently during the study career, as did the belief that Fort Hare graduates would have a better understanding of the subjects studied if isiXhosa were used. This seems somewhat inconsistent with the finding that self-assessed isiXhosa proficiency increases over the years: respondents seemed to indicate that their isiXhosa got better and better during their study career, but that it would help them less and less if it were used as a medium of instruction. In my view, this inconsistency can be explained only by a steadier increase in self-assessed English academic proficiency which would make the use of this language more and more preferable to the use of isiXhosa as the years proceed. An alternative (and possibly more reasonable) explanation is that students in later years, having already gone through part of their university studies in English, did not see the point of switching to isiXhosa-medium instruction.

#### **5.2.4 Subject studied**

In this sub-section I discuss the different attitudes of students of *Agriculture, Arts, Economics, Law, Science* and *Social Sciences*.

*Agriculture* students seemed particularly favourable to the use of isiXhosa as it was to teach their subject or to the creation of new technical terms in isiXhosa. As noted by one of the interviewees, in fact, 'Agriculture dealt with a lot of things that are part of the Xhosa tradition', and therefore isiXhosa already had appropriate terms for them. Students of Agriculture seemed to think that using isiXhosa would improve the quality of teaching of isiXhosa-speaking lecturers, but also expressed a particular concern for non-isiXhosa-speaking students if dual-mediumship was implemented. An analysis of the data provided by the university (Gardner 2003) revealed that the Faculty of Agriculture had the highest percentage of non-isiXhosa-speaking students. This might explain the particular concern for this category of students in this faculty.

*Arts* students seemed to have slightly less favourable attitudes towards English, especially as the language of tertiary education, compared to the rest of the sample. Students in this faculty reported a surprisingly lower level of self-assessed English academic proficiency compared to students in other faculties. Arts students, on the other hand, expressed positive attitudes and a stronger

instrumental orientation to isiXhosa (thinking it would help them get a job). They also seemed more favourable to the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes and claimed to be more proud of their Xhosa accent in English. Arts students seemed to favour the introduction of dual-mediumship, especially because of generally positive attitudes towards bilingualism and an integrative orientation towards isiXhosa. They believed in the pedagogical advantages of studying and teaching in isiXhosa and seemed particularly eager to be involved in the decisions concerning the language of instruction. All of the above might be explained by the fact that most respondents in the Faculty of Arts were students of isiXhosa as a first language. It is important to note that these students were the only ones at Fort Hare to effectively use isiXhosa as a medium of instruction.

Arts students seemed to think that, if dual-mediumship were implemented, more isiXhosa speakers would have the chance to attend university and graduates would have a better understanding of the subjects studied, while the international status of the university would not be affected.

*Economics* students seemed to be less favourable to the introduction of dual-mediumship and to the idea of studying some subjects in isiXhosa than students in other faculties. Students in this group expressed a particular concern for the international status of Fort Hare and the possible difficulties of continuing one's studies abroad if isiXhosa were used alongside English as a medium of instruction.

*Law* students expressed a middle-of-the-road position on the issues covered by the research, apart from a slight tendency not to be particularly proud of their Xhosa accent in English. The follow-up interviews and informal conversations on campus suggested that this was the result of the peculiar condition of students of Law with respect to language issues. On the one hand, as pointed out by Stewart (2003), it was reasonable to expect most Law students to be animated by ideals of social justice and equity, and therefore have more positive attitudes towards the use of a previously disadvantaged language such as isiXhosa. On the other hand, many students in this faculty aspired to work in a court of Law, where English and Afrikaans were still the dominant languages. This put Law students in a particularly difficult position with respect to the ideological and practical implications of dual-mediumship.

*Science* students indicated a slightly higher level of self-assessed academic English proficiency and expressed considerably more negative attitudes towards the use of isiXhosa at university compared to students in other faculties. Science students did not believe that using isiXhosa as a

medium of instruction would help them academically and they expressed particular concern for the international status of the university if dual-mediumship were introduced. In spite of this, self-assessed isiXhosa proficiency and attitudes towards the language were the same as for the rest of the sample. The interviews revealed that, for most Science students, it was difficult to imagine using isiXhosa as LOLT since they had never been taught by isiXhosa-speaking lecturers. The technical nature of the subject taught in this faculty might make the issue of the (under)development of isiXhosa even more contentious for these students.

Students of *Social Sciences* did not display any particular differences to the rest of the sample, apart from a slightly higher level of self-assessed English academic proficiency. Students in other faculties indicated the Faculty of Social Sciences as the ideal place for the implementation and experimentation of dual-mediumship, but respondents in this faculty did not show any particular enthusiasm for it. Students of Social Sciences thought that isiXhosa would have a role in their future job, but did not seem particularly eager to use it as a medium of instruction at university.

While attitudes towards English as a language were the same across the board, self-assessed English proficiency was not. Students of Science and Social Sciences reported higher levels of self-assessed English proficiency, while Arts students did not seem particularly confident about their levels of academic English. Arts students (and probably students of isiXhosa as a first language in particular) were the most favourable to the introduction of dual-mediumship, while Economics and Science students seemed to oppose it the most. The Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences were often indicated as the most appropriate for the experimental implementation of dual-mediumship and, together with Agriculture, as those for whose subjects it was easier and more sensible to develop isiXhosa. The attitudes of students of Agriculture and Law (and, to a lesser extent, Science) seemed to be heavily influenced by the presence of non-isiXhosa speakers in class. Law students also had to take the conditions and requirements of their future employment into consideration.

### **5.2.5 Early vs. late introduction of English as LOLT**

Students who started using English as LOLT in pre-school or lower primary school did not seem to have different attitudes towards English as a language compared to students who started using English later in their study career. An exception to this is that early introduction to English as a medium of instruction seemed to make students more confident about their academic English (consistently with the findings in De Klerk 1996), as well as strengthen the belief that the sooner

children started using English in school, the better. In the interviews, instruction in English was usually equated with privileged education, especially by those who had had little access to it.

Self-assessed isiXhosa proficiency, as well as attitudes towards isiXhosa and the introduction of dual-mediumship, were similar for the two groups but, surprisingly, students who started using English earlier appeared to have more positive attitudes towards the possible advantages of using isiXhosa at Fort Hare. In particular, they seemed to be more likely to think that using isiXhosa would improve their marks and the quality of teaching of isiXhosa-speaking lecturers. They were also less likely to think that if Fort Hare became a dual medium university its graduates would have more problems finding a job. A possible explanation for this is that students who started using English as LOLT earlier in their study career were more confident about their level of academic English, and were therefore more willing to leave some space to isiXhosa.

### **5.3 Summary and conclusions**

Attitudes towards English were generally positive, especially because of its instrumental value. Because of the importance attributed to the language, students seemed to favour an early introduction to English instruction in school and were afraid that using isiXhosa as LOLT at Fort Hare would affect English proficiency negatively.

Students seemed to have a predominantly integrative orientation towards isiXhosa, but the language also performed the important pedagogical function of helping isiXhosa-speaking lecturers to explain difficult concepts and English technical terms in class. IsiXhosa was also used as a language of discussion in study groups and tutorials. The use of isiXhosa as LOLT was considered more appropriate to the first years of study and to the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, while its use in exams was not supported.

On the issue of dual-mediumship and its possible consequences, the sample was split in half. The language of the version filled in seemed to be a good predictor of general attitudes: students who filled in the English version were generally more favourable to English and to the retention of the existing English-medium policy. Students who filled in the isiXhosa version, on the other hand, seemed to be more attached to isiXhosa and to support the introduction of dual-mediumship. The comparison between genders reproduced the somewhat “classic” scenario of females supporting the higher-status variety and males seeming to be more attached to the lower-status variety. Interestingly enough, this did not seem to be based on practical considerations such as, for instance, the pedagogical advantages of mother-tongue instruction. First year students seemed particularly enthusiastic about English and its use as a medium of instruction, possibly because of its strong

association with tertiary education. Second year students seemed to be more open to the possibility of using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction , while students in their final year were concerned that this would jeopardise their opportunities of finding a job after graduation. Arts students were by far the most favourable to isiXhosa and to the introduction of dual-mediumship, followed by students of Agriculture and Social Sciences. Law students, whether favourable to dual-mediumship or not, had to take the specific conditions of their future employment into account. Those least favourable to the introduction of dual-mediumship were Economics students and, because of practical considerations such as lack of technical terms and isiXhosa-speaking staff, students in the Faculty of Science.

In this chapter I have explained and interpreted the data. I have tried to provide a coherent and comprehensive picture of the situation at Fort Hare by integrating the findings from the questionnaires and the interviews. In the next chapter I draw some conclusions and venture some speculations based on the findings of the present study and make some suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I summarise the trends in the students' attitudes (pro and contra) towards the retention of the existing English-medium policy as opposed to the use of isiXhosa as a parallel medium of instruction. I then make some suggestions for the possible implementation of dual mediumship and for future research.

### 6.1 Trends in favour of the existing English-medium policy

In this section I give an overview of general levels of support for English in terms of its functions and the attitudes of the students towards the language. I then discuss the levels of support for its continued use in education.

#### 6.1.1 Functions of English and English-functional arguments

English plays a major role in South African society: it is the main language of intra-national and international communication and it works as a sort of "access key" to upward mobility (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). The informative and participatory functions of English were explicitly recognised by at least half of the subjects of the present survey. Fort Hare isiXhosa-speaking students, in fact, emphasised the importance of English in communicating with non-isiXhosa speakers at all levels: on campus, nation-wide and internationally. The participatory function of English was deeply intertwined with its communicative value: English was considered an important *lingua franca* and, as such, it was recognised as an important prerequisite for getting a good job. Both beliefs seem to be supported by the findings of recent research on the role of English in South Africa (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000).

Although seldom mentioned explicitly by the students in the questionnaires, the instrumental value of English in education is evident: English is officially the only medium of instruction in school for most of the study career and it is the main language of tertiary education, gaining more and more ground even in traditionally Afrikaans institutions (Titlestad 1996). At tertiary level, English proficiency is of paramount importance for good academic performance. This constitutes a big problem for many African students, especially from the rural areas, who have little access to English and rare chance to practice it outside school (Webb 1996; Heugh 2000). English, therefore, functions as a "gatekeeper" for many African students, who would have the qualities necessary to succeed academically but lack proficiency in the medium of instruction.

Students at Fort Hare did not seem to have the same enthusiastic orientation to English found at other institutions (i.e. Rhodes University, see De Klerk 1996). Nevertheless, the interviews in the present study seem to suggest that English was considered a marker of status and an important component of the identity of university students, and that it was strongly associated with tertiary education (as recognised by at least one-fourth of the respondents to the questionnaire). One of the interviewees claimed that some students, coming home from university, insisted on speaking English even with family and friends. If true, this would support the fear, expressed by Phillipson (1992), that English is replacing African languages rather than becoming an “additional” language. Ansre (1975) and Alidou and Mazrui (1999) argue that the use of English might contribute to the alienation of the (educated) African elite from the rest of the community.

Surprisingly, only a small minority (9%) of the respondents recognised the symbolic value of English as the language of liberation and of the struggle against Apartheid, mentioned by Reagan (1986) and Webb (1996). Nevertheless, an equally small portion (7%) expressed negative attitudes towards English as a language of oppression and division (see Barkhuizen & Gough 1996: 458). According to the NCHE (1996), such negative attitudes would be a consequence of the hegemony of English in education. The possibility of solving the problem by promoting the use of Black South African English (Gough 1996; De Klerk 2002), though interesting in its own right, was not relevant to the present study. Nevertheless, an interesting consideration with respect to the integrative function of this variety of English was that 50% of the students seemed to be proud of their Xhosa accent in English, as long as it did not hamper communication.

At least one-half of the students seemed to endorse the English-functional arguments (intrinsic, extrinsic and functional) described by Phillipson (1992). Unlike isiXhosa, which was clearly associated with the Xhosa culture and world view, English was not considered to be linked to any particular culture. This view of English as non-culturally-loaded contrasts with the constant reference to English as the language of the “real world” (the workplace and, presumably, the Western economic system). The incongruence between a view of English as non-ethnic and its association with Western ideals of success is highlighted in Phillipson (1992). As noted above (subsection 2.2.2), Webb (1996) refutes the view of English and of its use in African education as culturally neutral. In line with the arguments put forward by Annamalai, Jernudd and Rubin (1986), one of the interviewees noted that, for isiXhosa speakers, English is not the language of their cultural heritage and of intense personal feelings. In my view, the main reason why students supported the use of English as a “neutral” language was the fear (expressed by at least one-third of the respondents) that the use of isiXhosa would create tensions with speakers of other African

languages (see below). In other words, English was not considered “neutral” in itself but rather “equally distant” for all speakers of an African language.

Students seemed to value the resources English gives access to. The respondents acknowledged the dominant role of English in education in South Africa and most of them subscribed to the belief that English-medium education, current in South Africa, was of a better quality. This is confirmed by the fact that, according to 88% of the students, English should be introduced as a medium of instruction by lower primary school. What Phillipson (1992) calls the *immaterial* resources that English gives access to (knowledge, know-how and practical skills) were considered to be a strong argument in favour of an English-medium policy in education particularly in those academic fields, such as Economics and Science, in which the dominance of English and the importance of international research is more evident. The fact that most textbooks are in English and that teaching staff have been trained in English was not a crucial concern for the students, and only a small minority (1%) considered these as the main reasons to retain an English-only policy. The possible additional costs of a more extensive use of isiXhosa as LOLT were mentioned by 3% of the students as a reason to retain the *status quo*. Heugh (2000) and the CHE (2001) also refute cost-effectiveness as an argument in favour of the existing English-mainly policy.

The function of English as a *lingua franca*, already mentioned above, seemed to be the main argument (mentioned by more than one-third of the respondents) in favour of the use of English as a medium of instruction. At Fort Hare, English was considered crucial for communication with non-isiXhosa-speaking lecturers and students. As far as communication with lecturers was concerned, it is important to note that, not surprisingly, the introduction of dual-mediumship was opposed mainly by those students who had never been taught by isiXhosa speakers (such as students of Computer Science, for instance). The presence of a high percentage of non-isiXhosa-speaking and international students, as in the case of the Faculty of Agriculture (where approximately 40% of the students were not isiXhosa speakers), seemed to predict negative attitudes towards the use of isiXhosa as LOLT. The fear that using an African language such as isiXhosa would create tensions with speakers of other African languages, common to students at similar institutions (see Dyers 1998), seems to be influenced by the *politicisation* of the African languages mentioned by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:12), a legacy of Apartheid’s divisive policy (Herbert 1992; Lockett 1995).

### **6.1.2 Myths and beliefs about English in education**

With respect to the pedagogical advantages of using English as a medium of instruction in education, students seemed to endorse three commonly-held (mis)conceptions: *the sooner Xhosa*

*children start using English as LOLT in school, the better; mother-tongue instruction impedes the development of English proficiency and knowledge acquired in one language cannot be transferred to another.* It is interesting to note that students seemed to take these three beliefs for granted, and hardly felt the need to express them in an explicit form. Thus, the importance of English proficiency was mentioned by approximately one-tenth of the sample as an argument against mother-tongue instruction, seemingly implying that if students were taught in isiXhosa, they would not become proficient in English and their knowledge would be useless in an English-dominated workplace.

*The sooner Xhosa children start using English as LOLT in school, the better.* An overwhelming majority (88%) of the students indicated that English should be used as LOLT from the early stages of the school career. Although this does not necessarily mean that English should become the sole medium of instruction, data from the interviews suggest that the belief that English-medium instruction was of a better quality and that it led to better English proficiency was deeply rooted in the minds of the respondents. As pointed out by De Klerk (2000), this might be a consequence of the underfunding of isiXhosa-medium schools, which makes English-medium schools a preferable choice not simply because of the medium of instruction, but because of the general conditions of teaching. The cognitive advantages of bilingual education over monolingual education and (especially) over education in a second language have been highlighted both internationally (Cummins 1986; Baker & Jones 1997) and in South Africa (Sweetnam-Evans 2001). With specific reference to the South African situation, MacDonald (1990) and Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) note that the early switch to English as the sole medium of instruction might be one of the causes of underachievement among African students. Luckett (1995) also notes that the early transition to English seemed to prevent the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in either language, and that this would impede the transfer of knowledge between English and the mother tongue (and vice-versa).

*Mother-tongue instruction impedes the development of English proficiency.* Although one-fourth of the students agreed that the introduction of dual-mediumship would not affect the English proficiency of Fort Hare graduates, the fear that using isiXhosa as LOLT might entail lower levels of English was one of the reasons for opposing the introduction of dual-mediumship. The fact that self-assessed English academic proficiency improved since the time of registration at university (where English was the sole medium of instruction) seemed to support the argument that using English as LOLT improved English proficiency. The fact that, as noted by Heugh (2000), African languages were widely used in rural areas and township schools at lower levels of education might

explain the fact that most students considered their level of English quite poor when they had started university, in spite of having (officially) used English for most of their study career. Moreover, both De Klerk's (1996) and the present study confirmed that the later students start using English as LOLT in school, the worse their self-assessed English proficiency. These three considerations seem to support the belief that being taught entirely in English improves English proficiency while using the mother tongue as LOLT impedes its development. Dlamini (2001) also points out that it is harder to gain proficiency when English is taught as a subject than when it is used as a medium of instruction. In spite of this, Sweetnam-Evans (2001) argues that, while students who are not taught entirely through English perform better across the board (also in English as a subject), being taught solely through English does not seem to guarantee better English proficiency. International research (Cummins 1986) also contradicts the belief that mother-tongue instruction impedes the development of proficiency in a second language, provided that students are sufficiently exposed and are willing to learn the target language. In my view, the increase in self-assessed English proficiency during the students' stay at Fort Hare was due both to more exposure to English (both in and outside class) and to their personal efforts to improve. I also suspect that positive attitudes towards English as a marker of their status as tertiary-level students might play a role in the improvements of the respondents' self-assessed proficiency in English.

*Knowledge acquired in one language cannot be transferred to another.* This belief was mentioned explicitly in the interviews as an argument for not using isiXhosa as a medium of instruction. This seemed to be based on the fear that learning some things in isiXhosa would create problems in finding a job or continuing one's studies at another institution. From a strictly linguistic point of view, as argued by Cummins (1986:20), once academic proficiency is developed in one language, it can be transferred to another. Provided that students develop sufficient English proficiency, knowledge acquired in isiXhosa could therefore be transferred into English if this was the main language at work or at a new institution. As mentioned above, Lockett (1995) argues that the inability to transfer knowledge from one language to another would be due to lack of development of CALP in either language, caused by the early transition to English as a medium of instruction. This might account for the students' concern that they would not be able to transfer knowledge acquired in their mother tongue into English.

Dlamini (2001) highlights the difficulties encountered by African students in acquiring a new set of English terms for every new subject studied, and the fact that a prospective employer would hesitate to employ someone who had studied through the medium of an African language (possibly thinking that this person would be unable to work effectively in English). In my view, while the

difficulties connected with learning a new “technical” vocabulary in another language are real, they represent a minor concern compared to the stigma attached to the use of African languages in education, which constitutes the main basis for the (mis)conception that knowledge cannot be transferred across languages. The widespread code-switching to isiXhosa during lectures and tutorials at Fort Hare to explain difficult concepts (that lecturers and tutors have supposedly studied in English) and English technical terms seems to support Cummins’s interdependence hypothesis.

## **6.2 Trends in favour of the use of isiXhosa as LOLT**

In this section I discuss the views of students who favour the use of isiXhosa at Fort Hare. I also summarise the arguments of the debate on the use of African languages in the academic context (with special attention paid to the issue of the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes).

### **6.2.1 Functions of isiXhosa**

Respondents seemed to have very positive attitudes towards isiXhosa, to be proud of being Xhosa and to be eager to speak about their language and culture. This is consistent with the findings of Dyers’s (1998) research at UWC. Positive attitudes seemed to be stronger in the later years of study (e.g. support for the belief that isiXhosa was important for integrative reasons increased by 14% over the study career), suggesting that the university experience somehow reinforced the sense of *Xhosa-ness* in the students. An alternative explanation is that students in their early years of study were somehow more eager to distance themselves from the “traditional world” they formerly belonged to, with which isiXhosa is strongly associated. Females expressed a more integrative orientation towards isiXhosa (63%, as opposed to 49% for males), while the instrumental value of the language was recognised mainly by students of Arts, most of whom were students of isiXhosa as a first language and prospective language teachers. Consistent with modern sociolinguistic research (Milroy 1980), males seemed to speak a less prestigious variety than females, with widespread code-mixing with English and *Tsotsitaal*. At Fort Hare, isiXhosa was by far the main medium of informal communication on campus. Three of the interviewees reported that, possibly because of this, some non-isiXhosa speaking students had started learning the language for casual communication.

Consistent with the findings of research on language attitudes in South Africa (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000; Barkhuizen 2001), the use of African languages was reported to be restricted mainly to informal domains. In the academic context, though, isiXhosa played a very important role in

supplementing explanations in English both in lectures and tutorials. Although this topic was not covered in the questionnaire, the fact that both English and isiXhosa were commonly used was mentioned by approximately 1% of the respondents, and five interviewees out of nine (all of those who had isiXhosa-speaking lecturers in their faculty) reported that code-switching and code mixing were taking place in lectures and/or tutorials. These respondents unanimously seemed to regard this practice as beneficial. In my view, the fact that, although actively discouraged by the official language policy of the university, code-switching is still widespread and isiXhosa is used whenever possible as an aid to teaching and in study groups, indicates its usefulness as a parallel medium of instruction. The instrumental value of isiXhosa in the academic context, though, is not enough to challenge the dominance of English in the most formal aspects, such as exams.

### **6.2.2 Arguments in favour of the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction**

The development of isiXhosa and other African languages for academic purposes is considered a crucial issue in the academic debate on their use as LOLT at tertiary level (NCHE 1996; Alidou & Mazrui 1999; Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000). Most respondents (79%) agreed that African languages had been neglected in the past, confirming the view expressed by Lockett (1995) and Alexander (2001). At least half of the students seemed confident about the possibility of developing isiXhosa to be used as LOLT, while an additional one-fourth seemed to think that no development was needed. The University of Fort Hare, being situated in a traditionally Xhosa area, was mentioned by one of the interviewees and by half a dozen respondents to the questionnaire as the ideal place for such a task. This was consistent with the PanSALB's decision to place its centre for the development of isiXhosa at this institution (Mini 2003).

According to 43% of Agriculture students, no development is necessary to use isiXhosa as LOLT in their faculty. Support for the development of isiXhosa was particularly strong in the Faculty of Arts (63% of the students) and, not surprisingly, it was weaker in more "Westernised" and "technical" faculties such as Economics and Science, where approximately one-fourth of the students were openly against it. As students moved across years of study (and their self-assessed isiXhosa proficiency increased) their confidence in the possibility of creating new technical terms in isiXhosa increased, while reliance on English borrowings was typical mainly of first year students.

In my view, the students' belief that isiXhosa could be used or developed for academic purposes was reinforced by their daily experience both in and outside class. In class, code-mixing and switching was clear proof of the possibility of using isiXhosa to convey academic ideas. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that positive attitudes towards isiXhosa was stronger in faculties

where code-mixing and switching were more frequent (e.g. Arts) and weaker in faculties where they did not take place at all (e.g. Science). In informal communication and study groups, the borrowing and *isiXhosa-isation* of English technical terms to fit them into discussions in isiXhosa was common practice. Attitudes towards the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes seemed to be a particularly complex and interesting phenomenon, and I believe that this topic requires further investigation.

While Alexander (2001), Sweetnam-Evans (2001) and the CHE (2001) stress the crucial role of the university in leading the switch towards a more extensive use of African languages in education, a few respondents (3%) pointed out that it made no sense to use isiXhosa as LOLT at university while English was used at previous levels. In my opinion, if we consider the extensive code-switching that takes place in primary and secondary school (see Heugh 2000), it seems debatable whether English is effectively the sole medium of instruction at lower levels of education or, rather, African languages play a subsidiary role all throughout the curriculum. Having said this, I think that the present study shows that it makes no sense, at the present stage, to present students with a rigid choice between an English-only and a dual-medium policy *tout court*. I think that the important role of African languages in education as auxiliary media of instruction should, first of all, be recognised and made official. In my opinion, the tertiary level is the only one with the means and flexibility to produce support material (wordlists, booklets, manuals etc.) in the African languages and promote its use (in tutorials, for instance). This would provide the basis for the creation of textbooks in the African languages and prospective teachers could receive at least part of their training in their mother tongue. I think that these are pre-requisites for a radical transformation of the education system towards a more extensive use of the African languages as LOLT. Because of its history, its location and its relative linguistic homogeneity (compared to other South African institutions), Fort Hare seems to be the ideal place for initiating the use of an African language (isiXhosa) as LOLT. Such a programme must be carefully planned, taking into consideration, among other things, the attitudes expressed by the students on the issue.

### **6.3 Suggestions for the future**

In this section I make some suggestions for the possible use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction at Fort Hare, based on the attitudes expressed by isiXhosa-speaking students and on the current academic debate on the issue. I then make some suggestions for future research on this and related topics.

### 6.3.1 Suggestions for the future role of isiXhosa at Fort Hare

As noted in sub-section 5.1.3, the term *dual-mediumship* did not seem to be appropriate when discussing the attitudes of Fort Hare students towards the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction. As suggested by the research conducted by Barkhuizen (2001) at lower levels of education, students seemed to have in mind a more complex relationship between the roles of English and isiXhosa in education. The possible role of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction changed according to different domains, years of study and subjects studied. First of all, within the academic context, the use of isiXhosa seemed more appropriate in some domains than in others. While in informal study groups isiXhosa was widely used, only some tutors used isiXhosa in their tutorials and, during lectures, isiXhosa was used only to supplement explanations in English. I think that the use of the students' mother tongue in tutorials, advocated by Sweetnam-Evans (2001) and acknowledged by the NCHE (1996), should become an official policy of the university. The possibility of creating separate tutorials for isiXhosa speakers, co-ordinated by an isiXhosa-speaking tutor and carried out mainly in isiXhosa, should be carefully considered by the university. Following the suggestions by Lockett (1995), printed material in isiXhosa (wordlists, booklets, manuals etc.) should be produced to support students in study groups and tutorials and to help them follow lectures. The combined use of material in isiXhosa and the existing material in English would help students understand, while supporting the creation of a subject-specific English proficiency.

In my view, the situation at Fort Hare contributed to a kind of "negation" of the use of isiXhosa which, although offering a very valuable contribution, seemed to be tolerated rather than positively encouraged in the academic context. This seems to be confirmed by the exclusion of isiXhosa from the most formal domain: the exams. With respect to this, some of the interviewees expressed support for the translation of exam questions into isiXhosa, but generally insisted that students should still answer in English. An alternative would be the use of isiXhosa in oral exams to overcome language problems. Both these options would avoid the problems of translation and marking that lecturers would have to face if exams were written in isiXhosa (as suggested by Sweetnam-Evans 2001).

It is quite clear that the use of isiXhosa as an additional LOLT was considered more appropriate for the first year than in following years of study. This partly reflects the common practice of using code-switching in lectures and tutorials mainly with first year students, in order to help the transition from secondary school to university. In spite of higher levels of self-assessed isiXhosa proficiency, students in later years of study believed less and less that using isiXhosa as LOLT

would help them. This seems to suggest that the later isiXhosa is introduced as LOLT, the less it will benefit students. A possible problem with using isiXhosa to teach first year students is that, as mentioned above, these students were the most enthusiastic about the sole use of English.

IsiXhosa seems to be more appropriate for teaching some subjects than for others. The Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences seem to be those in which the use of isiXhosa as a medium of instruction should be implemented first. The reasons are that their graduates will probably have more contact with the isiXhosa speaking community (think, for instance, about graduates in Social Work) and that it seems to be relatively easy to develop new isiXhosa terminology for the subjects taught in these two faculties. Almost one-half of Agriculture students seemed to think that isiXhosa could be readily used to teach their subject, but the presence of a high percentage of non-isiXhosa-speaking students made this issue particularly contentious. The presence of non-isiXhosa speakers probably influenced the attitudes of students in all faculties, and it might pose many administrative and organisational problems if dual-mediumship were implemented. Students of Economics and Science seemed to oppose the use of isiXhosa as LOLT the most, both because of the difficulties connected to its underdevelopment and because of a generally more “international” orientation. For students of Science, an additional reason to be suspicious about the use of isiXhosa as LOLT was that, hardly having had any isiXhosa-speaking lecturer, they had never enjoyed the advantages of code-switching experienced by other students. In my opinion, it is interesting to note how this creates a vicious circle which prevents isiXhosa from being used to teach very empowering subjects (such as Computer Science, for instance), which as a result still remain exclusive domain of English.

In summary, it is my view that the implementation of isiXhosa as an auxiliary medium of instruction should begin with the first years of (some selected subjects in) the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences. The first step would be to encourage and render official the use of isiXhosa in tutorials and to create printed material (wordlists, booklets and manuals) in isiXhosa, to be used alongside the existing material in English. A translation of the exam questions into isiXhosa should be provided, but exams should still be written in English. At a later stage, consistent with the suggestions of the NCHE (1996), the university should consider providing students with the option of following courses taught entirely in isiXhosa. At this point, whenever the conditions allow (i.e. whenever the lecturer and the majority of the students are isiXhosa speakers), exams could be written either in English or in isiXhosa, or replaced by an oral interview in which both languages could be used. In this latter phase, specific English courses designed to meet the demands of each faculty should be organised to make sure that students acquire the English academic proficiency relevant to their subjects.

### 6.3.2 Suggestions for further research

As is often the case with academic research, the present study yielded more questions than answers. These new research questions led to the formulation of some suggestions for further research.

Before any plan is made for the use of isiXhosa as LOLT at Fort Hare, extensive research should be carried out on how to cater for non-isiXhosa speakers. This seemed to be a crucial concern for many respondents in the present study and should be given priority in any discussion on possible changes to the language policy of the university. First of all, the use of isiXhosa should not be enforced in courses in which the percentage of non-isiXhosa speakers is above a given threshold (for instance, the relative figure for the whole university). The attitudes of non-Xhosa students towards isiXhosa and its use as LOLT, as well as their disposition to learn it, should be thoroughly investigated. In the case of some courses eventually being taught entirely in isiXhosa, strategies to guarantee the participation of non-Xhosa students should be developed. Based on my personal experience at Scandinavian universities (where English was widely used but was often not the official language of a course), these might include the possibility of substituting or integrating attendance of the course with an essay in English, more frequent contacts with the lecturers in consultation times and the possibility of writing the exam in English.

Research is also needed on the feasibility of the plan. This would include research on the availability of isiXhosa-speaking lecturers and tutors for each subject and year of study, and on their disposition to take part in the plan. The development of printed material would constitute a further research topic in itself. The main problems that, it is reasonable to expect, one would encounter are the costs and the difficulties connected with the underdevelopment of isiXhosa.

I feel that more research is needed on students' attitudes towards the development of isiXhosa and other African languages. The students' orientation towards different ways of developing isiXhosa (borrowing and/or *isiXhosa-isation* of English technical terms vs. development of new terms in isiXhosa) should be carefully analysed. Such research should include assessing attitudes and opinions about the proposal, put forward by Alexander (1992) of developing a Common isiNguni based on isiXhosa and isiZulu. The similarity with isiZulu, another major South African language, could be of advantage if both languages were used in higher education (i.e. books in isiZulu could be used to teach isiXhosa speakers and vice-versa).<sup>30</sup> The relationship between spoken

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<sup>30</sup> Based on my personal experience, this is what happens with Norwegian and Swedish in some Scandinavian institutions.

and written (“deep”) isiXhosa and the way the language is taught in school as a subject are just two of the many topics related to the issue of the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes.

While analysing the data, I noticed an interesting contradiction: although males seemed to report slightly higher levels of isiXhosa proficiency and to consider the variety of isiXhosa they spoke to be closer to the written Standard, two (male) interviewees indicated that males spoke a somewhat less prestigious kind of isiXhosa than females. The reason for these inconsistencies might be the fact that males are usually socialised into being more confident, and therefore ranked their proficiency in isiXhosa higher and the variety they spoke closer to the standard than females did. In direct comparison, instead, the variety spoken by females was considered to be of higher status, possibly because of the tendency of males to mix isiXhosa with other varieties (English and *Tsotsitaal*). As noted by Dyers (1998), in fact, code-mixing is often viewed unfavourably by Xhosa students. Regardless, I think that more research on the gender stratification of attitudes towards different varieties of isiXhosa is needed.

During the survey, some additional minor topics for further investigation emerged: the stratification of language attitudes according to area of provenance; the relationship between language attitudes in education and a general “international” orientation among students (prospects of working abroad, importance given to international research etc.); the relationship between language policy in education and social change and the tendency of some students to speak English at home when they come back from university.

## **6.4 Summary and conclusions**

The present study did not intend to be an opinion-poll of students towards the introduction of dual-mediumship at Fort Hare. Its intent was to provide a pioneer study of the complex and sometimes contradictory scenario students have in mind for the use of their language at tertiary level. As such, it partly confirmed the results of similar research, and yielded some new findings.

The main reasons provided by the respondents for retaining the existing English-medium language policy were the fear that using isiXhosa as LOLT would result in lower levels of English proficiency and that it would create tensions with non-isiXhosa-speaking students. The costs involved in reconverting Fort Hare into a dual-medium university and the underdevelopment of isiXhosa for academic use, often cited in the literature as reasons to oppose the use of the language at tertiary level, did not seem to be a major concern among students. Respondents were strongly attached to isiXhosa, but expressed mainly integrative attitudes towards it. In spite of this, isiXhosa played a major role as an auxiliary teaching language in some faculties through code-switching. The

majority of the respondents were in favour of the development of isiXhosa for this kind of academic use.

My suggestion is that the university should carry on with the development of isiXhosa for academic use, and at the same time it should produce some support material in isiXhosa or in both English *and* isiXhosa. As a first phase, some first-year tutorials in selected faculties (Arts and Social Sciences) should be carried out mainly in isiXhosa (whenever both tutor and students are isiXhosa speakers). At this stage exams would still be written in English, but a translation of the questions into isiXhosa could be provided. Students trained in isiXhosa tutorials and supported by printed material in isiXhosa would eventually become the ideal lecturers in courses taught entirely in isiXhosa. At this point isiXhosa could also be optionally used in exams alongside English. I do believe that such a plan would in itself contribute to the development of isiXhosa for academic purposes, and once this cycle begins to work, it could be applied also to typically English-dominated subjects, such as Economics and Science. It is important to remember that, in order for the trial use of isiXhosa as an auxiliary LOLT to be successful, subject-specific English courses should be provided for isiXhosa speakers and that non-isiXhosa-speaking students should be catered for.

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## Appendix A: English version of the questionnaire

### INTRODUCTION

My name is Lorenzo Dalvit and I am doing my Master's in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Rhodes University, in Grahamstown. This questionnaire is part of my research and I would be really grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete it.

The University of Fort Hare, like many other South African universities, is currently developing a new language policy. This questionnaire is aimed at finding out what Xhosa students think and how they feel about using isiXhosa, together with English, to learn and teach at university level. Filling in the form should take approximately 20 minutes. Your help is deeply appreciated!

#### PART 1: Personal data (please tick the appropriate box)

1) **Gender:** male  female

2) **Year of study:** 1<sup>st</sup>  2<sup>nd</sup>  3<sup>rd</sup>  4<sup>th</sup>  Honours  Masters  PhD

3) **What are you studying?** \_\_\_\_\_

#### PART 2: Kindly tick only one of the available options

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4) I speak isiXhosa well					
5) I write well in isiXhosa					
6) I read well in isiXhosa					
7) My English is good enough to cope with university studies					
8) In education, mother-tongue English speakers have an unfair advantage over African language speakers					

Please turn to the next page

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9) IsiXhosa and other African languages have been neglected in the past					
10) Written isiXhosa is very different to the type of isiXhosa I speak					
11) IsiXhosa-speaking lecturers would be better lecturers if they could teach in isiXhosa					
12) Students who speak English well are more likely to leave South Africa once they graduate					
13) If either English or isiXhosa could be used in the exams, that would help students overcome their language problems					
14) At university, I'd rather study some things in isiXhosa and learn how to translate my knowledge into English, than study everything in English					
15) Fort Hare should become a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university					

**PART 3: Kindly tick only one of the available options**

**16) I started using English as the language of learning and teaching:**

- in pre-school
- in lower primary school
- in higher primary school
- in secondary school
- at university

**17) English should be introduced as the language of learning and teaching:**

- from the very beginning
- during lower primary school
- during higher primary school
- in secondary school
- at university
- never (it should just be studied as a subject)

**18) I think that for Fort Hare to become a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university is:**

- possible, and it should be done
- possible, but it shouldn't be done
- impossible

Please give reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

Please turn to the next page

**19) When I speak English to an English native speaker:**

- I try to sound like a mother-tongue speaker of English
- I am proud of my Xhosa accent and I stick to it
- I don't care about my accent

**20) The most important language problem at Fort Hare is:**

- that most students don't speak English well enough
- students are forced to study in English which, for most of them, is a second language
- there is no language problem at Fort Hare
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**21) The language of a course, including the exam, should be:**

- the mother-tongue of the lecturer
- the language of the majority of the students in the course
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**22) The language of a course, including the exam, should be decided by:**

- a meeting between the students and the lecturer at the beginning of each course
- the university
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**23) If isiXhosa were used to learn and teach at Fort Hare:**

- it would not be a problem: isiXhosa can be used to express academic ideas
- new technical terms in isiXhosa should be developed
- English technical terms could be fitted in isiXhosa explanations
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART 4: If you wish, you may tick more than one of the available options**

<b>24) IsiXhosa is important:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• as an official language</li><li>• because it will help me to get a job</li><li>• because it is the language of my people</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• other: _____</li><li>_____</li><li>_____</li><li>• it is not important</li></ul>
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Please turn to the next page

<b>25) To study <i>in isiXhosa</i>:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• would make me feel more confident</li> <li>• would help me understand things better</li> <li>• would help me get higher marks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other: _____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>26) At Fort Hare, isiXhosa should be:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• studied as a subject</li> <li>• used only to teach the language itself</li> <li>• used to teach some of the undergraduate courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used to teach some of the postgraduate courses</li> <li>• other: _____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>27) English is the language of:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• international contact</li> <li>• division</li> <li>• public affairs</li> <li>• ambition</li> <li>• liberation</li> <li>• tertiary education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• corruption</li> <li>• oppression</li> <li>• national unity</li> <li>• other: _____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>28) At Fort Hare, isiXhosa should be used alongside English as a language of learning and teaching mainly in the faculties of:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Arts</li> <li>• Economic Sciences</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Social Sciences</li> <li>• none</li> </ul>
<b>29) If Fort Hare becomes a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the standard of teaching will decline</li> <li>• it will be harder to get funding</li> <li>• the number of students will decrease</li> <li>• more Xhosa students will be able to go to university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it will affect the international status of Fort Hare negatively</li> <li>• other: _____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>30) If Fort Hare becomes a dual medium (English and isiXhosa) university, its graduates:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will have a better understanding of the topics they have studied</li> <li>• will still speak English as well as they do now</li> <li>• will have more problems finding a job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will have more problems continuing their studies abroad</li> <li>• other: _____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>

Feel free to use the blank sheet at the end of the questionnaire if you have any additional comments or suggestions to add. Please leave your details if you want to be contacted for an interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone nr: \_\_\_\_\_

e- mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Address in Alice: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**

## Appendix B: isiXhosa version of the questionnaire

### INTSHAYELELO

Igama lam ndingu Lorenzo Dalvit, ndenza izifundo ezikwinqanaba lokugqibela ufundonzulu ngeelwimi eRhodes Yunivesithi, eRhini. Le mibuzwana yinxalenye yophando ndingavuya kakhulu ukuba unokuthatha imizuzwana uyiphendule.

IYunivesithi yaseFort Hare, njengezinye iiyunivesithi iququzelela ukuqulunqwa komgaqo-siseko omtsha wolwimi. Olu shicilelo lwemibuzo lujonge ekubeni kukhangelwe indlela abafundi abasisebenzisa ngayo isiXhosa nesiNgesi, ukufunda nokufundisa kwinqanaba leyunivesithi. Ukuphendulwa kwale mibuzwana kufanele ukuthatha imizuzu engamashumi amabini. Uncedo lwakho luyathakazelelwa.

#### ICANDELO 1: Iinkcukacha (nceda chonga ibhokisi efanelekileyo)

1).Isini: indoda  ntombi/ umfazi

2) Unyaka wezifundo: 1  2  3  4  Honours  Masters  PhD

3) Yeyiphi ikhosi o yenzayo? \_\_\_\_\_

#### ICANDELO 2: Nceda khetha lube lunye kwezibokisi zilandelayo

	Ndiyavuma kakhulu	Ndiyavuma	Andazi	Andivumi	Andivumi konke
4) Ndisithetha kakuhle isiXhosa					
5) Ndisibhala kakuhle isiXhosa					
6) Ndisifunda kakuhle isiXhosa					
7) IsiNgesi sam asiphucukanga ncam kangangokuba ndingalungelana neyunivesithi					
8) Emfundweni abantu abathetha isiNgesi ababalungiseleli abathetha ulwimi lwesiNtu					

	Ndiyavuma kakhulu	Ndiyavuma	Andazi	Andivumi	Andivumi konke
9) Ulwimi lwesiXhosa nezinye iilwimi zesiNtu bezingahoyekanga kwixesha elidlulileyo					
10) IsiXhosa esibhalwayo sahlukile kweso ndisithethayo					
11) Abahlohli besiXhosa bebeya kuhlohla kakuhle xa bebenokufundisa ngesiXhosa					
12) Abafundi abathetha isiNgesi kakuhle bangalishiya eli loMzantsi Afrika befumene izidanga zabo					
13) Ukuba isiNgesi okanye isiXhosa sinokusetyenziswa kwiimviwo abafundi bangazoyisa iingxaki zolwimi					
14) Eyunivesithi ndingaske ndifunde ezinye izinto ngesiXhosa ndifunde nokuguqulela ezinye izifundo kunokufunda ezinye izinto ngesiNgesi					
15) Ifort Hare mayibe yiyunivesithi evumela ulwimi lwesiXhosa nesiNgesi					

### ICANDELO 3: Nceda khetha lube lunye kwezi zimvo zilandelayo

#### 16) Ndaqala ukusebenzisa isiNgesi njengolwimi lokufunda nokufundisa:

- ekuqaleni
- kumabanga aphantsi
- kumabanga aphezulu
- esekondari
- eyunivesithi

#### 17) IsiNgesi masaziswe njengolwimi lokufunda nolokufundisa:

- ekuqaleni
- kumabanga aphantsi
- kumabanga aphezulu
- esekondari
- eyunivesithi
- unotshe masifundwe njengesifundo

#### 18) Ndicinga okokuba iFort Hare ingayiyunivesithi ekusetyenziswa kuyo ulwimi lwesiNgesi nesiXhosa:

- ingenzeka, kwaye mayenziwe
- ingenzeka, kodwa mayingenziwa
- ayinakwenzeka

Nceda nika izizathu: \_\_\_\_\_

Tyhila

**19) Xa ndithetha isiNgesi nomntu osithethayo esilulwimi lwakhe lwemveli:**

- ndizama ukuthetha njengaye njengomntu esilulwimi lwakhe
- ndiyazingca ngendlela endivakala ngayo xa ndithetha isiNgesi
- andikhathalelanga kusithetha ngendlela efanelekileyo isiNgesi

**20) Eyona ngxaki yolwimi ibalulekileyo eFort Hare:**

- abafundi abaninzi abakwazi ukusithetha kakuhle ncam isiNgesi
- abafundi banyanzelekile ukuba bafunde ngesiNgesi, esilulwimi lwabo lwesibini
- akukho ngxaki yolwimi eFort Hare
- enye: \_\_\_\_\_

**21) Ulwimi lwekhosi noviwo kufuneka:**

- lube ulwimi lwemveli lomhlohli
- ibe lulwimi loninzi lwabafundi kwikhosi leyo
- okunye: \_\_\_\_\_

**22) Malunga nolwimi lwekhosi nokunxulumene noviwo kufuneka izigqibo zenziwe ngaba:**

- intlanganiso phakathi kwabafundi nomhlohli ekuqaleni kwekhosi
- yiyunivesithi
- okunye: \_\_\_\_\_

**23) Ukuba isiXhosa besisetyenziselwa ukufunda nokufundisa eFort Hare:**

- ibingazokuba yingxaki isiXhosa sinokusetyenziswa njengokuphucula amacebo kwezingqamene nezemfundo
- isigama sobugqi esiXhoseni masiphuhliswe
- isigama sesiNgesi sinokufakelelwa ekucaciseni isiXhosa
- okunye: \_\_\_\_\_

**ICANDELO 4: Ukuba uyanqwena khetha ngaphezulu kwesinyekwezi zimvo zifumanekayo**

<b>24) IsiXhosa sibalulekile:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• njengolu lwelwimi ezichongiweyo nezivumelekileyo</li><li>• kuba siza kundinceda ekufumaneni umsebenzi</li><li>• ngoba lulwimi lwabantubam</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• okunye: _____</li><li>• asibalulekanga</li></ul>
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<b>25) Ukufunda ngesiXhosa:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kungandenza ndiqiniseke ngaphezulu</li> <li>• kungandanceda ndiqonde izinto ngcono</li> <li>• kungandanceda ekufumaneni amanqaku aphezulu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enye: _____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>26) EFort Hare isiXhosa simele ukuba:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sifundwe njengesifundo</li> <li>• sisetyenziswe ukufundisa ulwimi qha</li> <li>• ukufundisa kwiikhosi ekungazukuthwesa zidanga kuzo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ukufundisa oochwephetsha bezinye izifundo</li> <li>• enye: _____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>27) IsiNgesi lulwimi lo:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loqhagamshelwano namazwe apshesheya</li> <li>• lwemicimbi</li> <li>• ebhekiselele kuluntu</li> <li>• lweyantlukwano</li> <li>• lokuzingca</li> <li>• lwemfundo ephezulu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lobuqhetseba</li> <li>• lwengcinezelo</li> <li>• lobunye bobuhlanga jikelele</li> <li>• okunye: _____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>28) EFort Hare isiXhosa masisetyenziswe kunye nesiNgesi njengolwimi lokufunda nokufundisa kula manqanaba ezifundo:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ezolimo</li> <li>• ezobugcisa</li> <li>• ezoqoqosho</li> <li>• ezemfundo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ezomthetho</li> <li>• ezobugqi</li> <li>• ezoluntu jikelele</li> <li>• nanye</li> </ul>
<b>29) Ukuba i Fort Hare inokusebenzisa zombini ezilwimi:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• izinga lokufundisa lingehla</li> <li>• kuya kuba nzima ukufumana uncedo lwemali</li> <li>• inani labafundi liya kwehla</li> <li>• abafundi abaninzi baya kukwazi ukuya eyunivesithi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• isidima seFort Hare siya kwehla kwakunye nomgangatho</li> <li>• ezinye: _____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>30) Ukuba iFort Hare inokusebenzisa isiNgesi nesiXhosa abathweswa izidanga:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• baya kuba nolwazi olungcono nokuqonda izihloko ezo zifundwayo</li> <li>• baya kusithetha phucukileyo isiNgesi kunokuba besithetha ngoku</li> <li>• baya kuba nengxaki yokufumana umsebenzi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• baya kuba nengxaki ekuqhubeleni izifundo pshesheya</li> <li>• ezinye: _____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>

**Uvumelekile ukuba usebenzise elinye iphetshana elisecaleni ukuba ngaba unezinye iibono ofuna ukuzifakelela okanye amacebiso onawo. Sixelele ke iindlela esinokuqhakamshena ngazo nawe ukuba uyafuna ukuba siphinde sixoxe.**

Igama: \_\_\_\_\_ Inombolo yomnxeba: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Idilesi eDikeni: \_\_\_\_\_

ENKOSI KAKHULU!

## **Appendix C: interview questions**

- 1) Which year are you in?
- 2) What do you study and why did you choose Fort Hare?
- 3) When did you start using English as LOLT? Do you think it was a good choice, would you recommend it?
- 4) What do you think about your level of English? And about your pronunciation?
- 5) Do you think your level of English has improved during your study career?/ Do you expect it to improve in the future?
- 6) How do you feel about English as a language?
- 7) How do you feel about isiXhosa? Has this perception changed since you are here?
- 8) How would you define the present role of isiXhosa at Fort Hare? Where is it used and how (both in and outside the academic context)?
- 9) How could isiXhosa be used to help students in the academic context? (in which years of study, for which subjects, in lectures/practicals/tutorials). (Would it be possible to translate manuals, or study on English books and write in isiXhosa?) (What about oral exams with isiXhosa as well?)
- 10) Can your subject be taught in isiXhosa?
- 11) How many Xhosa lecturers do you have? And how many non-Xhosa students are there in your classes? Do you think they would like to learn isiXhosa?
- 12) Do you think that Fort Hare will ever become a dual-medium university? Why? What would happen if it did? Would it change the role of isiXhosa in society?

(Some additional questions were asked about the stage of one's study career where it would be more appropriate to use isiXhosa as LOLT and one's prospective job according to the subject studied, and possible role of isiXhosa in it)