LEARNERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER SUBJECT IN SWAZILAND: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MANZINI

By:

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ABSTRACT

Swaziland is one of many African countries that still accord a colonial language, English, hegemonic status over her own indigenous language, which is SiSwati. As a former British protectorate, Swaziland belongs to the Anglophone community. Despite the fact that many Swazi learners struggle to pass English as a Second language (ESL), due to an array of factors, chief amongst which is poor, disadvantaged backgrounds, it still remains a gatekeeper subject in the country. It is the most important, must-pass subject which either opens doors for one who has passed it or closes them if one has failed it. The study set out to establish Swazi learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in Swaziland. It also aimed to document learners' positions regarding the claim that English is a gatekeeper while also determining the learners' views on the use of English as the language of teaching and learning in Swaziland. This was a qualitative study in which six secondary learners were interviewed individually to solicit their constructions in as far as ESL is concerned. Moreover, through engaging focus group discussion, the learners came together to further discuss their perceptions of the role of English in the education system in Swaziland. The study found that Swazi learners view English as a gatekeeper subject which ultimately hinders them from proceeding further with their academic journeys in the event they fail to get a credit pass in it. For this reason, they viewed English as a basic requirement or a foundation for one's academic success hence their belief that English should remain the LoTL. The learners revealed their love for siSwati that it is indeed their mother tongue which they both love and hold in high esteem but without learning and passing English; they believed that one automatically stands to be less successful in the socio-economic circles hence excluded from the global community. The study also learnt that Swazi learners would love to have siSwati to be the LoTL, but because of the need to develop and enlarge its discourse, they saw this as a far-fetched dream. It was discovered that there is need for a continuous assessment of how English as a former colonial language can coexist with the local language siSwati in such a way that it stops being a hindrance to the learners' success in education. Secondly, the government has to provide the means for learners to do extensive reading in order to develop their linguistic competence in English language since it currently is the gatekeeper subject. Finally, the Swazi government should consider consolidating her resources in order to develop and empower siSwati thus making it to be attractive in the linguistic market.

DECLARATION

I, Siphiwe Monicah Dludlu declare that this dissertation is my own work. To the best of my knowledge, it has never been submitted for any degree before at any University.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

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My God, I dedicate this one to you. Thank you for the strength and the wisdom. I love you my Father, forever will. We have come too far.

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DEDICATION

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You have both made tremendous sacrifice for our schooling and general well-being. Each academic achievement reminds me of your unending love and dedication to help us all become better people in the future. I am forever grateful to God for giving me such selfless mentors.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ECOS -Examinations Council of Swaziland
- ECCD -Early Childhood Care and Development
- EDSEC - Education and Training Sector Policy
- EFA - Education for All
- EFL -English as a Foreign Language
- ESL -English as a Second Language
- FPE - Free Primary Education
- GCE - General Certificate in Education
- IGCSE -International General Certificate in Secondary Education
- JC - Junior Certificate
- LEPs -Language Education Policies
- LoI -Language of Instruction
- LoL -Language of Learning
- LoTL -Language of Teaching and Learning
- L2 -Second Language
- MoET - Ministry of Education and Training
- SAAEC -Southern Africa Association for Education Conference
- SADC - Southern African Development Community
- SCOT - Swaziland College of Technology
- SGCSE -Swaziland General Certificate in Secondary Education
- SPC -Swaziland Primary Certificate
- TSC - Teaching Service Commission
- UNESCO -United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNISWA - University of Swaziland
- WPTC - William Pitcher Teacher Training College

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

Former colonial languages such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese enjoy a hegemonic status when compared to indigenous languages in many African countries despite the fact that independence has long been attained in all these states. English in particular seems to have gained value that exceeds the value, (monetary or otherwise), of other languages in the world (Roux, 2014). Roux (2014) argues that if a person has English skills, they become a global citizen. In addition, it is claimed that such people are economically more successful. Now the question would be, does having the English skills automatically equal success? Is it a given that if one is competent in English language, then they stand to get better jobs and remain economically ahead of those who do not? The truth is that this is not always the case; but there is no doubt about the critical importance of learning English because it is the most dominant and powerful lingua franca in the world (Kamwendo, 2015a). In view of this line of thinking, Ferguson (2013:18) argues that "in many economies, English functions as a gatekeeper". It has the ability to either lock or unlock opportunities for those who are competent or not competent in it. As Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) argue, the mastery of English is a precondition for most professional employment in South Africa and other so called English-speaking African countries. This means that English is a language which has economic value in the sense that it offers opportunities of upward social mobility (Kamwendo, 2015a). English therefore is associated with increased chances of getting employment.

In Africa, these colonial languages are normally referred to as official languages whilst some indigenous languages are called national languages (Schmied 1991, Roux 2014). This has seen the official languages being used in what Kamwangamalu and Moyo (2003) call prestigious domains such as education, all the three arms of government and media. As a result, the indigenous languages have obviously been overshadowed and reduced into being languages of communication by the mother tongue speakers especially in the rural areas. This emanated from the colonial era when the former colonialists would spread their sphere of influence on the countries they have colonized. This is how the former colonial languages got to enjoy a higher status because even after independence had been attained, the status quo remained so partly because some groups prefer a second language because their own is at a disadvantage in comparison

with English (UNESCO, 1953). Some people have even gone to the extent of arguing that indigenous languages lack the academic discourse to handle subject material in higher levels of education (Bamgbose, 1991).

Learners across the African continent find themselves having to learn and be assessed in European languages such as English, French or Portuguese which many of them have not even mastered so well. The Language-in-Education Policies (LEPs) of a majority of African countries promote the use of a foreign language as a Language of teaching and learning (LoTL). Mwelwa and Spencer (2013:47) argue that an overview of LEPs in former colonial states in Africa reveals such striking similarities it almost "reads like a plagiarized story". This could not be further from the truth. In many African schools, the indigenous languages are normally used in lower primary with the switch to English (or any other European language as the case may be), normally between Grade 3 and Grade 4 (Schmied, 1991). As a result, LEPs in African states generally forbid the use of the Mother Tongue (MT) as the languages of instruction at the secondary level. This is against numerous research findings which have proved that when learners are not proficient in the language of assessment, their scores on a test will not accurately reflect their knowledge of the subject being assessed (Gandara et. al, 2003). Organizations such as UNESCO (1953, 2003) therefore promote using the MT for as long as possible because the learners are better able to express themselves in them.

Motions to remove the hegemonic status of former colonial languages especially English by empowering indigenous languages through LEPs are normally declared without being implemented (Bamgbose, 1991). This means that they are declared but they never get to the point whereby they are implemented. Rubdy (2008) argues that bringing about education change is often a long, complex, costly, anxiety and conflict-ridden operation with many unforeseeable obstacles and problems. Linguists across Africa and beyond are calling for the indigenous languages to be given value instead of being used just for communication purposes only. These languages need to be used in important domains of society in order for them to gain value and importance. This clearly shows therefore that the language of a country, its history and culture must form the background for educational change so as not to alienate the people through the education system that is adopted at that particular time.

In Swaziland, the Education and Training Sector policy (EDSEC, 2011) promotes the use of English as a language of teaching and learning (LoTL) from Grade 4 upwards. The situation of English being a gatekeeper in Swaziland, just like in the majority of other

African states, is such that English has been elevated into being a benchmark for academic success. The Swazi learners are therefore compelled to fight a war on two fronts in the sense that they have to grapple with mastering the content which is presented in a language that they struggle to master (Kamwendo, 2015a). Most of the learners in Swaziland come from disadvantaged poor social backgrounds hence they are not exposed to environments that allow competence in English as the second language. They only get exposure to English inside their classrooms at school (Khumalo, 2013). Kirkpatrick (2013:14) laments that even the "proficiency of the teachers themselves is inadequate for the task". This has made learning an uphill task for the majority of the learners because their own language, siSwati, is not the LoTL. As a result, they struggle with competence in English, yet also have to master content which is unpacked to them in English. Ferguson (2013:17) reiterates that "instruction in a home language eases the transition between home and school". Indeed, learning becomes a lot easier if the home language is the LoTL.

Secondly, apart from receiving instruction in English, it is a general basic requirement for colleges and universities in Swaziland that learners get a credit pass in English if they wish to enroll with them. There are learners who find themselves in the predicament of having passed other subjects well, only to be recorded as failures because they did not get a credit pass in English (Examination Council Analysis Report, 2009-2013). English therefore coerces learners to fight a war on two fronts as described above unlike their counterparts who use it as their first or home language.

Those who fail English have to repeat that class until they pass it in order to proceed with their schooling. This however is sometimes overlooked in the internal classes in some schools. Depending on the school's internal policy, it does happen sometimes that a learner may be 'promoted' to the next class even after they have failed English, if they have done well in the other subjects of course. There is currently no policy governing this practice hence it all depends on the rules and regulations of that particular learning institution or school to 'promote' students who have failed English to the next class. Even though to promote means to elevate a deserving person to a position of higher power, the word 'promoted' in the local school context, is used widely to refer to students who failed to meet the specified requirements of normal progression to the next class hence pushed or promoted to the next class.

What stands to be unchanging over the years however is that during external examinations, be it Grade 7, Form 3 or Form 5, no learner can proceed to the next level

of learning without getting a pass in English (Examination council report, 2009-2013). It goes without saying therefore that students who fail English, find it impossible to proceed with their academic endeavors. Normally, those who are determined to make it in the academic circle will pay and rewrite it in December each academic year so that they can get credit passes in English. Some prefer to go back to Form 4 and start afresh with the hope of getting better results.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The study was undertaken in the Manzini Region of Swaziland. This is one of four regions that make up Swaziland. The study was located in the context of curriculum changes in the education sector in Swaziland. During the 6th Annual Sothern Africa Association for Education Conference (SAAEC), held at Sibayeni lodge in Swaziland in 2012, it was noted that the Southern-Africa region is undergoing educational changes that in one way or the other impact on assessment techniques (Examination Council of Swaziland, 2013). In Swaziland for instance, free education was introduced in 2009 at primary level together with subsidized education at secondary level. Moreover, Mazibuko (2014) explains that there has been some transformation of the curriculum in the country which changed from O' Level (ended in 2007), through International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), from 2007-2009, to the current Swaziland General Certificate of Secondary Education (SGCSE), since 2009 to present.

This transformation has therefore necessitated some changes not only in the teaching approach but also in the assessment methods. One thing that has remained unchanged with each transformation is that English has remained at the core of the passing criteria. This is despite the fact that only about 13 % of the Swazi learners on average, manage to get credit passes in English each academic year (Mazibuko, 2014). English has remained both the LoTL and a yardstick to determine eligibility for those who wish to enroll with institutions of higher learning. This raises concerns because learners in Swaziland learn English, they do not acquire it. This means that many Swazi learners do not speak English at home but get to first have an encounter with it when they get to school either in preschool or in Grade 1 where it is learnt as a subject of study from Grade 1 to Grade 3 (Khumalo, 2013). In essence this implies that a majority of the learners are not competent in it because they start learning it at school and not at home. This is despite the fact that Swaziland is known as an English-dominant country. What then do the learners in Swaziland think about this very critical role played by English upon their academic success and life in general? How do the learners feel about the fact

that it becomes the LoTL from Grade 4 upwards? Do they believe this is a good thing that benefits them in some way or do they think they are disadvantaged by the current status quo? It is against this background that the study was undertaken.

1.2 SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Swaziland is one of the smallest countries on the African continent. It is a landlocked country located on the South-Eastern part of Africa, bordering South Africa and Mozambique. Swaziland falls under the Anglophone community by virtue of being a former British protectorate. The country gained her independence in 1968 which basically means that it has so far enjoyed 47 years of freedom. There are two official languages, English and siSwati, with siSwati being the dominant mother tongue. SiSwati is one of the Southern Bantu languages, belonging to the Nguni group. There are a few traces of isiZulu spoken by those who reside close to the border in the Lubombo and Shiselweni regions but these are only a minute minority. Both English and siSwati are used in the education system of the country. According to the EDSEC policy of 2011, which is the current document guiding the education system in Swaziland, siSwati remains the medium of instruction from Grade 1 up to Grade 3. English thereafter takes over as the language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 up until tertiary level. Whereas English is the LoTL from grade 4, the language of communication outside the school setting and in the rural areas is basically siSwati. Since siSwati is the only mother tongue, it is widely used for communication such that there is no need for English outside of the classroom environment.

Swaziland offers an education system that was previously modeled on the British education system (Khumalo, 2013). Primary education runs for seven years (Grade 1 to 7) which is then followed by three years of secondary learning (Form 1 to 3) and ultimately two years of high school (Form 4 to 5). Preschool learning or Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) has all along been provided by both private and government-aided institutions but a policy regulating it is still underway by the Ministry of education (EDSEC, 2011).

1.3 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SWAZILAND

As already mentioned earlier, the education system in Swaziland comprises 7 years of primary learning, 3 years of secondary school, and 2 years for high school, totaling 12 years in all (Khumalo, 2013). In all the three external examinations that learners go through during the schooling system, the Swaziland Primary Certificate (SPC), Junior Certificate (J.C), and the Swaziland General Certificate of Secondary Education (SGCSE), they only get to proceed if they have passed English, (ECOS, 2009-2013 report). At the end of the primary level, which is Grade 7, learners have to write an exit examination whereby they have to pass four subjects PLUS English in order to go to secondary school. This examination though is currently being reviewed for its relevance with a sense of removing it and replacing it with a suitable entry into secondary level. In Form 3, the learners have to write an exam whereby they must pass at least four subjects plus English in order to go to Form 4. Once again in Form 5, learners have to write another exit exam whereby they have to pass at least five subjects PLUS English in order to qualify for tertiary education (ECOS, 2013).

The education and training sector policy (EDSEC) of 2011 stipulates that English is one of the LoTL in Swaziland. This is due to the fact that Swaziland was once a protectorate under British rule. She only gained independence in 1968. English remains the LoTL beginning from Grade 4 upwards, with siSwati being used in the lower grades. It is imperative to note at this point that a majority of the learners struggle with English competence because they are not first language speakers. Learners use siSwati as the language of communication at home and only a minority use English outside of the classroom environment (Khumalo, 2013). Khumalo (2013) further argues that the majority of learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds. These range from child headed families to orphans and vulnerable children which are the consequences of the AIDS epidemic which has taken an extreme toll on the country's education system.

In 2009, the government introduced free primary education with subsidized school fees at secondary level (Morope, 2010). The government pays the learners' school fees and stationary to the primary school learners. At secondary level, the government pays school fees and examination fees for the learners. This saw the teacher-pupil ratio growing rapidly. Large enrolments are therefore common in public schools (Morope, 2010).

1.4 THE HISTORY OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SWAZILAND

In order to understand clearly the issues surrounding English being a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland, it is imperative to trace the history of the education system as a whole in the country. Swaziland is a landlocked country, sharing her boundaries with Mozambique and South-Africa. After the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, Britain assumed control of Swaziland (Mazibuko, 2014). She thereafter spread her sphere of influence to Swaziland through the British High Commissioner who was based in South-Africa (Mazibuko, 2014). Mazibuko (2014) describes the development of formal education in Swaziland as being characterized by three distinct periods: the Missionary, Pre-independence and Post-independence.

Khumalo (2013) states that missionaries built the first schools in Swaziland and they contributed immensely to the education system in Swaziland. Formal education began way back around 1880 when the Methodist church set up the first school in Mahamba. Mazibuko (2014) further highlights that the major aim of affording literacy skills to Swazis at the time was to enable them to develop reading skills so as to be able to read the bible. Very soon the Lutherans followed in 1887 and set up another school in Hhohho. Several other missionaries followed including the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Nazarene missionaries in 1904 and the Roman Catholics later in 1914 (Khumalo, 2013). It is crucial to highlight that missionaries played a very major role in affording literacy skills to Swazis.

Mazibuko (2014) marks the pre-independence period as lasting from 1946 to 1966. This period saw little involvement of the colonizer in the education system hence the missionaries still controlled the education system in the country. As mentioned earlier, the curriculum was designed to meet the needs of the colonizers and not so much to enhance the local citizens. This problem persists even today such that many African countries still have a curriculum that channels the learners into white-collar jobs such as being clerks, teachers, nurses etc. Titone, Plummer and Kielar (2012) argue that the education system in Swaziland is based on a British framework which is not culturally relevant to the learners here. In the same vein, Khumalo (2013) argues that since independence, Swaziland still grapples with challenges in delivering effective education services such as the lack of a relevant curriculum and curriculum innovation, dropout rates and lack of qualified teachers especially in Mathematics and Science. A majority of the African learners have been socialized to believe that their own mother-tongue cannot handle the academic discourse that goes with teaching and learning hence the perpetual need of former colonial languages (Bamgbose, 1991). It is for this reason that Ndamba

(2008) argues that the attitude of denigrating one's own language and the exaltation of European languages has not been easy to remove in Africa.

The Post-independence period began in 1968 until present (Mazibuko, 2014). This period has been characterized by marked development of formal education in the country. From the year 1973 to 1978, a post-independence national education committee was formed to drive the restructuring exercise on education (Khumalo, 2013). This resulted in great improvements in the education sector and the development of curriculum between 1979 -1983. Currently, the provision of education in the country is guided by the 1999 national policy statement on education which was reviewed in 2011, now called the education and training sector policy or EDSEC (Khumalo, 2013). The vision guiding this policy is as follows: To provide relevant, quality and affordable education and training opportunities for the entire populace of the kingdom of Swaziland in order to develop all positive aspects of life for self-reliance, social and economic development and for global competitiveness (EDSEC, p.1). The major goal of the EDSEC is the attainment of equality in educational opportunities for all pupils with the ultimate goal of enhancing their productive capacity thus improving the quality of their lives (EDSEC, p.1).

The EDSEC specifies that both English and siSwati are the official languages. SiSwati is the LoTL in the first three years of schooling after which English becomes the medium of instruction through-out the education system (EDSEC, 2011). One crucial aspect of this policy is that it encourages learners to converse in siSwati when they are in school as a way of preserving culture and language. It clearly states that as a way to promote the learning of siSwati in all schools; children shall not be punished for speaking siSwati within and outside the school premises, (p. 27). This goes much against the general belief that learners should converse in English especially within the school premises in order to sharpen their oral skills in the queen's language. The general feeling is that learners must communicate in English especially during school hours because it is the LoTL from Grade 4 onwards. Whereas this may be true, it is imperative to highlight at this point that over three-quarters of the learners in the Swaziland come from poor, rural social backgrounds (Khumalo, 2013); hence they often have weak literacy skills due to the poor quality of schooling. It goes without saying therefore that many find it to be an uphill task to converse in English at school. This then translates to their schoolwork which tends to deteriorate as argued by Adegoke and Ibode (2011) argue that learners' proficiency in English language definitely affect their performance in other school subjects.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

A majority of Swazi learners perform badly in English as a Second Language (ESL) each academic year. Mazibuko (2014) states that in Form 5, which is the highest grade in secondary education in Swaziland, only 13% of Swazi learners, on average, are able to get a credit pass in English each year. Mazibuko further notes that only a minority of Swazi learners are able to get at least four credits including English each year. This effectively means that a majority of the learners find themselves in a predicament whereby they are not eligible for admission into any of the academic institutions in the country. The University of Swaziland for instance, as with other colleges in the country, only admits learners who obtained a credit pass in English Language for undergraduate courses (Uniswa calendar, 2013). This shows that in Swaziland, English Language is a gatekeeper for selecting 'intelligent' learners because those who have passed it well are eligible for admission into universities and colleges while those who haven't done well in it are not. The fact that there is tough competition for the limited spaces in these tertiary institutions compounds the adversities faced by these young people.

There are some learners who fight against all odds and get good credits in their subjects, only for them to fail because they have failed ESL, a language that is foreign to them. A majority of the learners in Swaziland come from rural backgrounds with disadvantaged schooling experiences hence their competence in English is often very weak. Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) highlight that the norm is that learners who graduate from rural schools often have weak literacy skills, not only in English but their mother tongue as well, due to the poor quality of schooling they experience. In fact, even the term ESL is misleading because it presupposes that the learners are proficient in English as a Second Language yet that if far from the truth. English as a Foreign Language, or EFL, would be a more appropriate term to use. As a result, many learners are forced to take up survival jobs in the factories and elsewhere after completing high school, in order to provide for their families.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by Cobarrubias' (1983) four language planning ideologies. These are internationalization, linguistic pluralism, linguistic assimilation and vernacularization. Cobarrubias (1983) defines linguistic pluralism as the situation in a country whereby two or more languages are accorded official status. In the case of Swaziland, both English and siSwati are declared as the co-official languages. The EDSEC policy (2011) strongly

supports the use of siSwati by learners both within and outside of the school environment. In fact, the policy states categorically that learners are not supposed to be punished for conversing in siSwati within the school environment. On the other hand, the same policy clearly states that English is the LoTL from grade 4 upwards. Both languages therefore are official in the country but English then occupies a noble position when one studies the domains in which it is used. Apart from it being the LoTL, it is the language used in courts and by the government.

Cobarrubias (1983) further defines internationalization as a situation whereby an international language is used as a lingua franca. This normally happens in situations whereby there are several MTs and there is need for a language which can be understood by the majority across the different ethnic groups. Swazi's have a single dominant MT siSwati, with only some traces of isiZulu in areas which are close to the border in the Shiselweni and Lubombo regions therefore there is no need for internationalization. Linguistic assimilation according to Cobarrubias (1983) is when one dominant language is used in official domains without appreciating that other languages do exist. This case does not apply in Swaziland as mentioned earlier that both English and siSwati are co-official languages. The roles of each of the two languages are quite different in the sense that siSwati is used widely as the language of communication especially in the home environment yet English is used in more formal domains such as it being the LoTL. Lastly, vernacularization is the upgrading of a local language to make it to serve in official domains (Cobarrubias, 1983). In the African context, kiSwahili is a good example of vernacularization. KiSwahili is the only African language that is empowered enough to be used as the LoTL in the primary level, with a switch to English being made at secondary level. Many African languages including siSwati still need to be empowered in order for them to serve in official domains otherwise they currently remain languages of communication only and are not used as official languages.

1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research is guided by the concept of English being a bridge. The study looks at English as being a necessity for learners in Swaziland in the sense that they have to pass it if they want to have academic success. By this we mean that learners have to get a credit pass in English for them to access tertiary education and ultimately secure a good paying job. Ferguson (2013) highlights that there is definitely a link between having English skills and securing a job. Roux (2014) also argues that English is a gatekeeper. It is for this reason that English is viewed as a bridge which learners have to cross to get

into the land of opportunities and success. The conceptual framework is clearly explained and demonstrated in a drawing in chapter 2.

1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was based upon three objectives:

1. To establish learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in Swaziland.
2. To document learners' positions regarding the English as a gatekeeper claim.
3. To determine learners' views on the use of English as the language of teaching and learning in Swaziland.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was framed by three research questions:

1. What are learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in Swaziland?
2. What are learners' positions regarding the English as gatekeeper claim?
3. What are learners' views on the use of English as the language of teaching and learning in Swaziland?

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Studies which have been carried out by academics in Africa and across the globe indicate that learners perform better in schools if their mother tongue is used in teaching, learning and assessing them (Bamgbose 1991, UNESCO 1953, Kamwangamalu 2005, Kamwendo 2009, Ndamba 2008, Adegoke and Ibode 2011). Ndamba (2008) argues that the best medium for teaching and assessing a child is their mother tongue because they understand it better and express themselves more freely through it than in a second or foreign language.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, hereafter UNESCO, promotes the use of the mother tongue in education (Bamgbose 1991, Kamwendo 2009, Kamwangamalu 2005). To compound this stance, research has been done to prove that the pass rate among learners is generally higher if they are taught and assessed using

their mother tongue than using a second or foreign language (UNESCO 1953, Ndamba 2008, Bamgbose 1991).

Many education policies in countries across Africa only advocate for the mother tongue to be utilized at lower primary (normally Grades 1-3), with the rest of instruction being in a second language even though teachers normally switch between the official medium of instruction and the mother tongue in order to make their teaching meaningful (Titone, Plummer and Kielar, 2012). There are people including African learners who are still not convinced that African languages such as siSwati can be used as languages of teaching, learning and assessment. This is better explained by Ndamba (2008) when he argues that the, "attitude of denigrating towards one's own language and the exaltation of European languages has not been easy to remove in Africa". This is further compounded by what Kamwangamalu (2005) calls market forces that affect the choice people make on which language to utilize for specific purposes. Therefore it was important to conduct the study so as to find out the learners' views on the use of English, which is a second language, as the LoTL and ultimately a gatekeeper to tertiary education. Moreover, the study is crucial because it adds on the available literature which focuses on the hegemonic status English occupies in relation to indigenous languages in Swaziland.

1.11 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher strictly gathered data from learners only. The study aimed to solicit learners' views on English being a gatekeeper subject in school hence other stakeholders such as parents, teachers or even administrators were not identified as subjects from whom data would be collected. It is true that these stakeholders are also affected when the learners perform poorly in their academic work, however, the learners themselves are the ones best positioned to provide their views in the aforementioned subject.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to do a case study for two main reasons. First, a case study allows the researcher to get so much detail and information just by studying a single or few entities. The purpose was not to generalize the findings for the simple reason that contexts from which data were collected are not similar, hence what applies in one context may not necessarily apply in another. Secondly, a case study was more appropriate because of time constraints. It was more feasible to do a case study instead of, say, a longitudinal study which would require more time to complete.

1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study encountered some limitations. One such limitation for the study was the closure of schools at a time when data was being collected. As a result, only the individual interviews were done. Even so, it proved to be cumbersome to get the ideal time for the interviews because schools were about to be closed and the learners were preoccupied with their final examination preparations. As a result, weekends had to be used to interview the learners individually due to the fact that midweek was not conducive as explained above.

The focus group discussion had to be stalled until schools reopened in January 2015. Time constraints did not allow for the focus group to be held immediately after the individual interviews because final examinations had already commenced. As a result, the researcher had to wait for January 2015 to conduct the focus group discussion, something which delayed the analysis and compilation of the whole thesis.

As studies have proved, learners who are not first language speakers of a language are normally disadvantaged in that language's literacy skills (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014, Ndamba, 2008). This was evident during the data collection exercise as some of the learners struggled to express themselves clearly and freely in English. Others even requested to speak in siSwati or at least code-switch which was granted since the data were later to be translated during transcription. This, however, did not impede on the quality of the data collected because the researcher made follow up informal interviews with the research subjects in order to ascertain if what has been captured is exactly what they meant in the first place.

1.13 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Gatekeeper subject **:** A core subject that is key, one which a learner needs to pass in order to progress to the next level of schooling.

Mother tongue (MT) **:** The language that is acquired by a child from their mother when they are born.

First language (L1) **:** The language that a child acquires at birth and continues to acquire high literacy levels in it.

Second language (L2) : The language that a child learns after having acquired the mother tongue.

Learner's constructions: Learners' understanding, their views or perceptions on a particular subject.

Exoglossic languages : Former colonial languages, normally of European origin such as English, French, Portuguese and others.

Language-in-education policies : Policies that seek to establish what language or languages will be used as a language of teaching and learning at the various levels of education in the units of a nation.

Internal class : A class which at the end of the year, sits for an examination that has been set or prepared by the local teachers in that particular school or by a panel of inspectors for that particular subject. These are Grades1 to 6 (primary level) and Form 1, 2 and 4 (secondary level).

External class : A class which at the end of the year sits for an examination that has been set or prepared by the examination council of Swaziland, the national examining body in Swaziland. These include Grade 7 (primary level) and Form 3 and Form 5 (secondary level).

1.14 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine Swazi learners' understanding on English being a gatekeeper in the schooling system and in other domains in Swaziland. The United Nations education, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO), promotes the use of the mother tongue in education (Bamgbose 1991, Kamwendo 2009, Kamwangamalu 2005). To compound this stance, research has been done to prove that the pass rate is generally higher among learners when they are taught and assessed using their mother tongue instead of using a second or foreign language (UNESCO 1953, Ndamba 2008, Bamgbose 1991). There are people, however, including African learners who are still not convinced that African languages such as siSwati can be used as LoTL. This is better explained by Ndamba (2008:174) when he argues that the "attitude of denigrating towards one's own language and the exaltation of European languages has not been easy to remove in Africa". This is further emphasized by what Kamwangamalu (2005)

calls market forces which affect the choice people make on which language to utilize for specific purposes.

1.15 FORTHCOMING CHAPTERS

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents a background of the education system in Swaziland as well as the statement of the research problem, objectives of the study and its significance, theoretical and conceptual framework, delimitations and limitations of the proposed study. Chapter 2 is a review of the available literature on English being a gatekeeper subject in schools. It further discusses the LEPs of three African states namely; Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa and then examines what learners think of using indigenous languages in Education as well as the use foreign languages to assess non-native speakers. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks are explained further in chapter 2. Chapter 3 is a methodology chapter, presenting the design of the study complete with the population, sampling and instruments that were used when collecting data. It further discusses how the data were analyzed. The data is then analyzed in Chapter 4 which further discusses the findings. Chapter 5 presents the findings while chapter 6 makes a summary, conclusion and also outlines recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter starts off by outlining the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. Then a definition of the concept of a gatekeeper in general and that of English language being a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland is provided. Further, the chapter traces the history of English being an international lingua franca and ultimately a gatekeeper in many economies. The chapter moves on to highlight how English language came to be the gatekeeper subject in schools in Swaziland. The chapter then focuses on highlighting the current situation pertaining former colonial languages being gatekeepers in education in three countries in Africa namely; Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa. The chapter further discusses UNESCO's (1953, 2003) position in as far as mother tongue (MT) education is concerned, before discussing concepts of language which influence peoples' choices of a language. The chapter closes with previous research findings or results of learners and parents' attitudes towards English as a gatekeeper in education.

It is an undisputed fact that former colonial languages still dominate virtually all the formal domains of language use, enjoying a hegemony status in relation to indigenous languages in Africa and world over (Bamgbose 1991, Kamwangamalu 2005, Roux 2014). Education policies in African countries such as Swaziland, Malawi, Botswana, Ghana, Uganda, Lesotho and many more, largely confine the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction to the lower primary level in schools, with the transition to using English normally in Grade 4 up until tertiary level (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja 2014, Schmied 1991, Mazibuko 2014, Brock-Utne 2006). A language-in-education policy describes or seeks to establish what language or languages will be used as a language of teaching and learning at various levels of education in the various units of the nation (Chumbow, 2013). These policies tend to be glaringly uniform in many African countries with just a few exceptions such as in Tanzania, South-Africa and Nigeria which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. In fact, Chumbow (2013) argues that former British colonies have come to understand English as their heritage and an advantage for social advancement. English language is therefore extensively used as the language of wider communication in Africa and world over.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is Cobarrubias' (1983) four language planning ideologies. Cobarrubias (1983) identified four language planning ideologies; internationalization, linguistic pluralism, linguistic assimilation and vernacularization. These four concepts will now be defined. Linguistic pluralism refers to a situation whereby two or more languages are accorded official status (Cobarrubias, 1983). In Swaziland, both English and siSwati are recognized as official languages (EDSEC, 2011). The status of English however is elevated higher than that of siSwati when one studies the domains in which it is used, such as being the LoTL. SiSwati is the mother tongue of Swazis hence it is generally the language of communication for them. Djite (2008) in Kamwendo (2015a) argues that in Africa, the majority of the people have no competence in the official languages.

Swazis do not acquire English but learn it yet it is then adopted to be the major official language in the country, just like in a lot of other African states (Khumalo, 2013). So, even though both English and siSwati are recognized as official languages, it remains clear that English has more power over siSwati hence occupies a better linguistic position as a global lingua franca. The relationship that exists between English and siSwati therefore can be better described using the example of the currencies for South Africa, the Rand, and Swaziland, the Lilangeni. These two currencies are at par in value, which means that one would use E1 to buy R1. However, the South African Rand is widely recognized and used in other parts of Africa and internationally while the Lilangeni is used only within the parameters of Swaziland. Even worse, Lilangeni is not accepted in South Africa while in Swaziland the Rand is a recognized and usable currency. So, this shows clearly that even though these two currencies are at par, the Rand is actually more powerful when one studies the contexts in which it is used. Just like English and siSwati. They are both official languages but English emerges as the better recognized language when one studies the domains in which it is used in the country and in other parts of the world.

Internationalization on the other hand refers to a situation whereby an international language is used as a lingua franca (Cobarrubias, 1983). It is an undisputable fact that English is crucial in enabling people from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate. There are countries in Africa whereby there are several MTs such as in Nigeria hence the people there are divided along ethnic boundaries (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). As a result, Nigeria uses English as a lingua franca in order to iron out the linguistic differences caused by having different ethnic groups who all have their own mother tongues. We therefore cannot underestimate the importance of English as an international lingua franca which links people who would otherwise be divided due to language barriers. In Swaziland, just like in

many African countries, English is used as the LoTL. It is however, not used as the language of communication outside of the classroom environment due to the fact that Swaziland is not divided along tribal lines.

Linguistic assimilation is when one dominant language is used in official domains without appreciating that other languages also exist. For example, at the time of independence in Malawi, English remained the official language and two indigenous languages, Chinyanja (later renamed Chichewa), and Chitumbuka, were the auxiliary official languages (Kamwendo, 2010). However, during the Banda era in Malawi, Chichewa was chosen to be the official language at the expense of Chitumbuka and other MTs. It was used as the LoTL even in areas where it was not the mother tongue (Kamwendo, 2010). This is a perfect example of linguistic assimilation. Coming closer home, the situation is quite the opposite in Swaziland because siSwati is the dominant mother tongue hence there are no language barriers caused by the existence of having several mother tongues. With regards to the mother tongue issue therefore, one gets the impression that Swaziland is one of the few lucky countries in Africa who do not have to struggle with ethnic partitions caused by having diverse mother tongues. This however, does not imply that the language situation is any better in Swaziland compared to other African countries due to having siSwati as the only MT. The fact stands though that Swaziland has not had to struggle in choosing which languages to choose as the official and auxiliary language. Even though Swazis do not get to struggle over which mother tongue to use, they do have to use a second language which is English as the co-official language in important domains.

Vernacularization refers to a situation whereby an indigenous language is upgraded to serve in official domains (Cobarrubias, 1983). An example of vernacularization in Africa is the use of KiSwahili as the LoTL in primary schools in Tanzania (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). According to Mutembei (2014), KiSwahili is one language in Africa which continues to pave way for a realistic education system and the ultimate development of the African people. It is depressing to note however that drives to vernacularize more African languages are often slow and many times end up declared without being implemented (Bamgbose 1991, Kamwendo 2008). In his article “The Bumpy Road to Mother Tongue Instruction in Malawi”, Kamwendo (2008) observed that implementing language policies that aim to promote the use of indigenous languages in formal domains is often hindered by an interplay of factors which ultimately frustrate the efforts to vernacularize. It is for this reason therefore that in many African countries including Swaziland, indigenous languages remain too disempowered to penetrate into domains currently dominated by exoglossic languages. However, there are drives and motions which aim to give African languages a boost by raising their standard and making them to be recognized more in terms of the domains in

which they are used. The African linguistic renaissance is one such campaign that is aimed at empowering African languages and making them to be recognized more in the official domains (Kamwendo, 2015b).

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is an argument by scholars such as Ferguson (2013) and Roux (2014) that English is a gatekeeper. Ferguson (2013) argues that there is a link between English and getting a job. In Swaziland, English functions as the LoTL and it is also used as a yardstick which determines if a learner can or cannot be admitted to institutions of higher learning. Learning in a language that is not one's own has its own set of challenges because the learner has to first of all master the language before internalizing the content using the new language. It gets even worse in Swaziland because no matter the number of distinctions a learner gets, they will not get admitted into tertiary institutions without obtaining a credit pass in English. This research therefore regards English as a bridge which learners are compelled to cross in order to get access into the land of success. Due to the fact that English is a second language to them, the majority fail to reach the other side but fall into the river instead. The diagram below demonstrates this conceptual framework.

Diagram 2.1

Source: Researcher's own

The situation depicted in this drawing represents the gatekeeping role that English plays on Swazi learners. It actually depicts a scenario whereby English is equal to education in the sense that the learners' epistemological access to learning is restricted by their linguistic competence in English language. As can be seen, there are two contexts in the picture. There is context A on the left hand side. This is the siSwati zone. This is where a majority of the Swazi learners are. Now, the learners have got to cross the bridge by passing English in order to get into context B which is the English zone. This is what the researcher calls the land of success whereby there are ample opportunities such as tertiary education and jobs. The truth of the matter is that for multitudes of learners, crossing the bridge is a mammoth task. As supported by Mazibuko (2014), a large majority fail to pass English hence one would describe them as having fallen into the river and swept away after the bridge collapsed as they tried to cross. They are swept away into uncomfortable places whereby they have to look for survival jobs in order to help take care of their families especially from the factories in Matsapha, which do not pay much at the least.

English has the ability of being either a bridge or a barrier (Williams, 2006). An example of the Swazi context is depicted by the diagram of the conceptual framework to clarify this claim. As already mentioned before, this study regards English as a bridge in two ways. These two ways are explained in detail below. First, by virtue of it being a second language, English is not adequately mastered by a majority of Swazi learners. As a result, many of them struggle to grasp the content that is delivered to them in English. On the left hand side of the diagram, the picture depicts the multitudes of Swazi learners, a majority of whom fail to understand the content because it is presented in English which is a second language. Obviously there is no way these learners are going to pass or if they do, their results will be far less impressive as compared to the first language speakers of English. Glanz (2013) argues in this regard that students who learn in a LoTL which they do not master are hence disadvantaged in assessments.

Glanz (2013) continues to lament that most education systems in sub-Saharan countries focus on using international languages yet a majority of the learners are not fluent in them. The question is why should African learners be taught in international languages whereas it has been proven that African languages are well able to be used in all spheres of life, including education. As Brock-Utne and Hopson (2005) in Kamwendo (2013) argue that languages other than English can serve as the medium of instruction all the way up from preschool up to higher education. Kamwendo (2015b) provides some insight in this regard that one reason why many governments shy away from mother tongue education is because the African languages have little economic value. That is the reason why parents prefer to send their children to schools where English is the medium of instruction. In fact Kamwendo (2015b) argues that an African renaissance can inject a new lease of life into African languages because it aims to take these African languages to domains whereby their economic value will rise. It is only when these African languages have been empowered that they will start becoming income generators.

The second dimension that is being depicted by the conceptual framework is one whereby minorities of the Swazi learners have been able to grasp the content, regardless of the language barrier, and have managed to pass Form 5 which is the highest grade in high school in Swaziland. As proven by the results analysis availed by ECoS, only about 13% Swazi learners on average, manage to get credit passes in English in the IGCSE examination in Swaziland every year (Mazibuko, 2014). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue, the fact that secondary examinations are given in English presents an insurmountable barrier to graduation for many. The mere fact that all the subjects are taught and assessed in English except for siSwati is proof that the learners are disadvantaged as Gandara et.al (2003) argue that when learners are not proficient in the language of assessment, their

scores in a test or examination will not accurately reflect their knowledge and capability of the subject assessed. As depicted here, even after having passed Form 5, the learners' challenges are not over because when they get to tertiary, still they are instructed using English. So, in as much as they have fought a good fight and managed to cross the first bridge (grasping content and passing Form 5), their predicament is not yet over. Once again when these learners make an effort to get into the world of work, English once again determines their success in getting a job as studies have shown that those people with good English skills stand better chances of getting employment than those who do not (Rudwick and Parmegiani 2013, Kirkpatrick 2013).

2.3 ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

English language has over the years grown to become a formidable gatekeeper for people who use it as a second language (Pennycook 2008 in Roux 2014, Ferguson 2013, and Ndamba 2008). The language has gained more value and power world over, when one looks at the domains in which it is used. English dominates all spheres that involve knowledge and the dissemination thereof such as global news coverage, international trade, the internet, international sports events, technology, and scientific discovery are expressed in English more than any other exoglossic language (Roux, 2014). According to Roux (2014), the omnipresence of the English language has increasingly fueled academic debates concerned with the role that it fulfills in contemporary international society. One thing is undoubtedly true though, English has by far succeeded in attaining a significant degree of semiotic control in the modern expression of reality in comparison to other exoglossic languages such as French, Portuguese, Spanish or even Dutch (Roux, 2014).

English language is indeed an international gatekeeper in the simple sense that having English language skills puts one in an elevated position as compared to somebody who does not speak English (May, 2007). English is perceived as the language of the powerful elite as well as a tool for oppression and dehumanization (May, 2007). But how does a language such as English grow to dominate in all spheres of academia, technology, science, international business and in virtually every other area of humans' livelihood? It is undoubtedly the preferred language as revealed by the British Council in Roux (2014) which estimates that the speakers of English as a second or foreign language far outnumber those who speak it as a first language. This is largely because people have come to the realization that English provides means to better opportunities. Many people feel it is the path out of poverty and a sure entry to certain well-paying professions (UNESCO, 1953). In fact, colonial languages have more economic value as compared to indigenous languages. This

is the reason why the chances in the global dispensation that a student will choose to study a second, and especially a third language other than English is becoming less likely. Moreover, more than 700 000 people go to learn English in the United Kingdom each year (Roux, 2014). This is not the case with any of the other former colonial languages whether French, Portuguese, Spanish or even Dutch. Therefore this proves beyond any shadow of doubt that English language is a force to be reckoned with and that it is now impossible for any single group or person to stop its growth Roux (2014). As a result, there is a heavy appetite for English in some parts of the world such as in the African continent. People view English as a potential path to better job opportunities hence a better life.

The growth and spread of English in the world is popularly viewed in terms of two Diasporas: first, is the large scale migration of native speakers during the age of colonial expansion and secondly, the declaration of English as an official language in many countries (Roux, 2014). It is a general truism that migration leads to people having to communicate and they do that using language. It is true also that the former colonizing states such as Britain, France, Portugal, Spain or Germany would want to spread their sphere of influence on the colonies they had scrambled for in Africa and elsewhere (Walsh, 2008). So, the natives' language would actually take a secondary role and be a national language while English, French, or Portuguese, as the case may be, would become the official language (Schmied, 1991).

2.4 ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER IN SWAZILAND

A gatekeeper in a general sense refers to someone manning the gate. In a school setting, gatekeepers range from principals who are in charge of schools to other administrators who are entrusted with the duty of looking after whatever institution they are in. English serves both to unite and also to divide (May 2007). It serves to unite in the sense that it is an international lingua-franca that enables people from different parts of the world to communicate. It divides when those people who are none proficient in English language become sidelined and excluded from better job opportunities hence cannot succeed in life (Kamwangamalu, 2003).

In Swaziland, English has been used as a gatekeeper in the education system in the sense that it is the medium of instruction from grade 4 onwards. Moreover, students have to pass it before they can progress into more advanced levels of study. The education and training sector policy of 2011 recognizes English as the LoTL from Grade 4 onwards (EDSEC 2011). In as much as the majority of the learners are not competent in English, they have to receive instruction in it from grade 4 upwards. So, in Swaziland it does not matter if a learner has got

distinctions in all the other subjects, they will be categorized amongst failures if they did not pass English and this means they would have to repeat that class. English language therefore remains a gatekeeper for selecting those students who are suitable to go to the next level of schooling or even tertiary education. The term gatekeeper has been used for the purposes of this dissertation because it describes perfectly the role played by English language in the education system in the country because it determines if a learner is fit or unfit to proceed with their academic journey.

English therefore is the core subject for those learners who wish to make it in the academic circle. They have to pass it before they can be counted as eligible to pass to the next level of schooling. It is clear therefore that English is the deciding factor in passing or failing pupils as shown by the Exams Council of Swaziland analysis report (ECOS, 2013). Those learners who have not passed English are counted as failures even if they can get distinctions in the other subjects. They may be eligible to be admitted to universities and colleges through the number of credits they attained, however, with the absence of a credit-pass in English, they are forced to abandon their academic career plans. Many end up looking for survival jobs in the factories around Matsapha and elsewhere in order to help feed their families.

A majority of the population in Swaziland resides in rural areas where siSwati is predominantly used for communication (Khumalo, 2013). Learners in this context largely use English within the perimeters of school for learning purposes only which presupposes that they are not exposed to an English environment outside school. It is disturbing to note therefore that the very same language that learners are not proficient in is then used as a gatekeeper to gauge their level of intelligence. Glanz (2013) argues in this regard and says that students who learn in a language which they do not master are disadvantaged when it comes to assessment. The language barrier therefore is one of several factors that contribute to the low pass rate among Swazi learners as described by Mazibuko (2014). Babaci-Wilhite (2014) argues that children of all backgrounds perform better in school with the use of local languages. Kamwendo (2009) refers to these European languages as being a hindrance to African children's access and success in education.

In the majority of African countries, former colonial languages still dominate as gatekeepers in the education system even though independence was long attained in Africa. Bamgbose (1991) summarizes this situation in Africa by arguing that African nations remain prisoners of the past since they are so overwhelmed by established practices in the education sector to such an extent that it seems virtually impossible to break away from them. This is largely due to the fact that community attitudes were developed a long time ago when all that was European was viewed as excellent and worthy of imitation whereas all that belonged to the

local community was considered inferior (Ndamba, 2008). It is for this reason therefore that in many cases than not, African states will choose to use a European language as a LoTL instead of their own indigenous languages.

2.4.1 ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER IN TANZANIA, NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA.

The researcher deemed it necessary to study the LEPs of selected African countries in order to understand better the role of English in the education system in Africa. The LEPs for Tanzania, Nigeria and South-Africa will be discussed in more detail below. Tanzania has been selected mainly because of her LEP which is quite unique in Africa in the sense that an indigenous language, KiSwahili, is used as a LoTL throughout the primary level of schooling there. Nigeria is a multilingual society which has had to rely on English in order to minimize language barriers hence the researcher deemed it necessary to study her LEP as well. Apart from being Swaziland's neighbor, South Africa has been chosen because she shares a cross-border language with Swaziland which is siSwati. Moreover, her multilingual society which stems from an apartheid past made it crucial to study her LEPs.

2.4.1.1 TANZANIA

Tanzania has been selected for the purposes of this thesis because of its LEP which promotes the use of a national language in the primary level of schooling. It is only Tanzania that has an education policy which supports the use of an African language at primary level (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). It stipulates that Kiswahili shall be the language of learning through-out the primary level. The move to promote KiSwahili began in the 1930's and it was first introduced as a medium of instruction in Tanzania in 1967 (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). KiSwahili is one African language that has managed to withstand strong imperial forces to be the language that represents true Africanness (Ubuntu), which is the African philosophy of humanity (Mutembei, 2014). Mutembei (2014) further argues that KiSwahili continues to pave way for a realistic education system, freedom of expression, stimulation of innovative ideas and creativity and the ultimate development of the African people. The sad part however is that Kiswahili is then dropped at secondary school in preference for English, something which connotes that indigenous languages lack the academic discourse to handle higher levels of schooling as stated by proponents of exoglossic language education for Africa. This is much against the fact that a commission was set up to promote the use of Kiswahili in the secondary level by 1985 and in universities by 1991; this policy has not yet been implemented (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). Like many other instances of LEPs being formulated without being implemented, Bamgbose

(1991) refers to this practice of drawing up language policies without implementing them as declaration without implementation.

Tanzania therefore uses the late exit model which is when a mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction for six to eight years in addition to the teaching and use of a second language (Chumbow, 2013). Apart from reverting back to English at secondary school, what further jeopardizes or pours cold water to the efforts of promoting Kiswahili as a language of learning is that in Zanzibar, which is a part of Tanzania, a shift back to using English for teaching Mathematics and Science has been effected from Grade 5 upwards (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). The argument put forward by the government and policy makers here is on the grounds that Kiswahili lacks the scientific terminology that is used to teach these subjects. It is imperative to highlight that this has been effected despite that about 99% of the learners here use Kiswahili as their mother-tongue. Babaci-Wilhite (2014) labels this as a general racialized view that African languages lack the grammatical complexity or the lexicon to express complex systems of knowledge that are central to education especially with respect to Science, Mathematics and Philosophy.

2.4.1.2 NIGERIA

Nigeria is a country in West Africa. It is both multicultural and multi-lingual which makes it interesting to study its LEP. It has three nationally dominant languages which are Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Moreover, they use a unique English lingua-franca. Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2014) disclose that English is the medium of instruction from Grade 4 upwards. Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2014) also highlight that Nigeria uses one of these local languages as a regional language too. However, the 1989 constitution of the republic of Nigeria settled for the use of local languages in the first three years of schooling with English being taught as a subject. This is proof beyond doubt that African states teach their learners based on an inherited European curriculum which is not tailored for African children (May, 2007). These curricula are therefore mismatched and do not truly reflect the local thinking in teaching and learning (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). Currently however, Nigeria has a language development center called the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). At this center, a large body of scientific literature has been developed in the three dominant MTs in order to facilitate the use of appropriate scientific words (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). This is a commendable step in the right direction for Nigeria because as studies have shown, all languages can handle academic discourse whether African or European. African languages need such a boost so that they can be taken seriously and so that their value may rise once again. As they gain more value, indigenous

speakers will become proud of their languages and this may pave way for an African language industry whereby people will get employed.

What is worth noting also about Nigeria is that it has a flourishing African languages film industry which has not only provided jobs for the local people there but also proved that African languages are not good for nothing entities (Kamwendo, 2015b). The films are in indigenous languages but do provide English subtitles for the benefit of the non-native speakers. As one of the most populous countries in Africa, it is without a doubt that this film industry has greatly contributed to the economy of that country by providing employment to its citizenry. The African languages film industry in Nigeria therefore is proof that African languages, if managed, invested in and exploited properly, can generate employment opportunities (Kamwendo, 2015b).

2.4.1.3 SOUTH AFRICA

Apart from being Swaziland's neighbor, South Africa has been chosen for the purposes of this thesis because of its unique language policy that emanates from her apartheid past. The Bantu Education Act (Act 47 of 1953) was introduced to promote segregation in education (Khosa, 2012). The white learners were allowed to choose between English or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction whilst the black learners were compelled to learn in English and Afrikaans and further learn an African language which their white counterparts did not learn (Kamwangamalu, 2000). So, at the end of apartheid in 1994, the government transformed its language policy to accommodate all eleven languages (Afrikaans, English, siSwati, Sepedi, Sesotho, isiXhosa, Tshivenda, Setswana, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele and Xitsonga).

Currently, in South Africa, English is perceived to be "the language of power and prestige" (May 2007, 34). It remains the language of the elite and is perceived as the only means by which societal mobility is achieved (Kamwangamalu, 2000). In fact, de Wet (2002) sees English as the language of trade and industry, essential for economic empowerment such that upward mobility is impossible in South Africa without English. In as much as this is the undeniable current state of affairs, the reality is that such empowerment marginalizes multitudes of South African learners who are expected to learn in English which is not their mother tongue. Twenty years into her democracy, South Africa still sees indigenous languages as subservient to English and Afrikaans (Zondi, 2014).

The learners have the freedom to choose between two official languages (English or Afrikaans) as languages of learning from first grade. In one top school, the Grade 10 and 11

learners were actually expected to learn English as a first language and then choose Afrikaans or IsiZulu as a second language (Turner 2010 in Zondi 2014). This is much against UNESCO's position of using the mother tongue for as long as possible because it provides better learning environments since the learners are able to express themselves more freely in it. This clearly shows therefore that in South Africa indigenous languages are still accorded a subordinate status in relation to English or Afrikaans. There is a drive however by some tertiary institutions such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal, to empower local languages as it has introduced a compulsory course in isiZulu for all undergraduate students from the year 2014 onwards (Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize, 2014). This is a positive move when one looks at the fact that language policies in Africa are largely declared without being implemented (Bamgbose 1991, Thamaga-Citja and Mbatha, 2012).

2.5 UNESCO'S POSITION ON MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

The United Nations Education, Scientific and cultural Organization, hereafter UNESCO, is very clear when it comes to the use of the mother tongue in teaching and learning. UNESCO (1953) stipulated that the best medium of teaching a child, particularly in the early phases of education, is the mother tongue because they understand it better and express themselves more freely in it. Fifty years later, in 2003, UNESCO still maintained this stance by further highlighting that learning in a language that is not one's own, provides a double set of challenges not only in learning the new language but also having to grasp new knowledge contained in that language (UNESCO, 2003). Moreover, UNESCO (2003) states that mother tongue in education is essential and should be extended to as late a stage as possible hence the second language should not become the medium of instruction until the pupils are sufficiently familiar with it, (p.28).

As mentioned earlier, this is not what is happening in a majority of countries in Africa who normally use the mother tongue for the first three years after which they switch to English as a medium of instruction, with the exception of Tanzania who uses Kiswahili throughout the duration of the primary level (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). This should not in any way imply that UNESCO does not recognize the importance of being competent in an international language because we now live in a globalized society hence we need international languages to communicate with the wider world. As Kamwendo (2009) argues, it is possible to have MT instruction and at the same time have an international language such as English as a subject of study.

Article 29 0f the 1989 convention of the rights of the child explains succinctly that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the respect for the child's cultural identity, language and values (UNESCO, 2003). This article denotes that the learners should not be alienated from their culture by learning in a language that they do not understand because that automatically discriminates the child on the basis of language whereas principle 3 of UNESCO (2003) states that measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of gender, language, religion, national origin, age, disability or any other form of discrimination.

So, the choice of a language to be used as a medium of instruction should be carefully selected with the interest of the learner on the fore because a wrong selection not only affects them but also discriminates against them. UNESCO (2003) argues that the choice of a language in the educational system confers a power and prestige to it. Not only is there a symbolic aspect referring to the status and visibility, but also a conceptual aspect referring to shared values and worldview expressed through and in that language (UNESCO, 1953, 2003).

Research has proven that learners perform better academically if their own mother tongue is used as against a second language (UNESCO 1953, 2003, Kamwangamalu 2005, Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). The general truism is that learners are better-able to understand content and further express themselves in a much more succinct manner when they use their first language or mother tongue. Learners, who use their mother tongue for learning, are usually even more resourceful and better academically prepared than those who use a second or even foreign language (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). As a result, these learners are disadvantaged and they often perform poorly when compared to the first language speakers of the language of teaching and learning. Cole and Cole (1993) in Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2014) revealed a review of the United States Supreme Court pertaining to mother-tongue education and declared that children who are second language speakers are denied equality of treatment even if they are given the same facilities, textbooks and teachers. They are effectively foreclosed from meaningful education.

Using English, for instance, to teach a child who does not speak it as a first language, is in fact marginalizing that child. It disadvantages the child because research has proven that children learn better when they can understand the teacher and the material is presented to them in a language that they speak. Such a learner needs to grapple with instructional tasks whilst also trying to master the content itself. This means that the child should first use the mother tongue in order to be in a better position to grasp and become fluent in the second language, before it can be made into the language of instruction. Ndamba (2008) echoes

these sentiments when he argues that learners learn quickly through their first language than an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

There is a heavy appetite for English in many African countries (Kamwendo, 2015a). Many still see exoglossic languages as superior and better able to handle academic discourse as compared to their own indigenous languages. Swaziland is not spared from those countries that use an education system which was previously designed for colonial and missionary purposes. Mwelwa and Spencer (2013, 47) lament the daring similarities among African countries' LEPs policies which they describe as reading like a "plagiarized story". Almost all the policies promote the use of former colonial languages as LoTL and indeed this does sound like a broken record. Mazibuko (2014) points out that the curriculum in Swaziland does not meet the needs of the country because thousands of school graduates are unemployed and hundreds more tertiary graduates are also unemployed. There is an urgent need of revamping the LEP in Africa in order to provide the learners with a relevant education system. Glanz (2013) laments the excessive overdependence on former colonial languages in most education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. He further argues that curricula needs to be socio-culturally relevant such that it is never going to be academically acceptable to use an international or official language as a LoTL yet a majority of the learners are not fluent in it. May (2007) discovered in a study he undertook on language being a gatekeeper in South Africa that the fact that secondary exams are given in English presents an insurmountable barrier to graduation for many learners. Even though siSwati is taught as a subject and further used as a LoTL in Swaziland, especially in public schools, it seizes to be the LoTL from Grade 4 onwards and this poses an overwhelming barrier for many Swazi students to make it in the academic circle.

2.6 CONCEPTS GUIDING THE CHOICE PEOPLE MAKE ON A LANGUAGE.

Language is a very important commodity to mankind. It is perhaps the most important function of the human body because it allows us to relate our feelings, thoughts and concerns. McQuown (1982) describes it as the principal tool through which one man passes on his personal and social integration, his cultural ways of behaving to his offspring and through which he induces his peers to share his culture. May (2007) defines language as a set of tools and instruments that enable us to cope and deal with the world in one way or another and to pursue happiness, needs and wants. In the same vein, Roux (2014) looks at language as an important element of human development, crucial for information flow and the financial market in the contemporary world.

There are numerous languages and dialects of languages in the world and some of the widely spoken thus popular ones include Chinese (Mandarin), English, Portuguese, French, Arabic, Hindustani, Spanish, Russian, Bengali and many more. It needs no interpretation for one to see that African languages do not make the cut of the worlds' most popular languages. Kiswahili is perhaps the only African language which may appear to trail the list.

When people have to make a choice of which language to learn, there are guiding principles that drive them. According to Kamwangamalu (2005), there are mainly four concepts which guide the choices people make on which language to use. These are; the language industry, commodification of language, language and globalization, and language and internationalization. These are explained below.

2.6.1 LANGUAGE INDUSTRY

Heller (2003) in Kamwendo (2015b) defines language industry as a situation whereby a language becomes an economic commodity or becomes a product or service that can be placed on the market. In short, the language industry concerns itself with multilingual communication, both oral and written, transcribing, translating, editing, proofreading, interpreting, dubbing, and subtitling (Marginson, 2007). The European language industry limits the sector to translating, localization, internationalization and globalization. The languages that tend to dominate in the language industry are the exoglossic international languages such as English. According to Kamwangamalu (2005), the language industry operates the same way as a market whereby those languages with higher value are the preferred goods as opposed to indigenous languages which are less attractive hence do not sell well. This is largely because the stronger nations' languages systems such as English, offer means to better job opportunities hence people are more likely to choose to study in them than their own indigenous languages which often do not lead to well-paying jobs (Matsinhe, 2013). In the language industry therefore, the international languages are the major players while minor languages especially African indigenous languages, do not feature.

Linguist scholars such as Kamwendo (2015b) argue that just like the lucrative English Language Teaching (ELT) industry, an African language industry can be developed whereby African languages are revived so that they are able to penetrate formal domains which they did not before. Advocating for the rebuilding of an African language industry is by no means meant to be a threat to the ELT industry because both African and exoglossic languages exist on the African continent hence these should complement one another instead of one

being subordinate to the other. There is a need therefore for an African linguistic renaissance whereby indigenous languages will be revived and empowered in order for them to start being used in domains which were previously reserved for exoglossic languages (Kamwendo, 2015b). This is because for a long time now, indigenous languages have largely been used for communication purposes without any significant role in the official domains. This is possible when one notes that other language industries other than the English language industry are gaining momentum and rising sharply in benefit of the indigenous speakers such as the Chinese, French and the Portuguese. Kamwendo (2015b) reveals that the Chinese for instance, are building a lucrative language industry involving English and Chinese. As a result English-Chinese bilingual competence is becoming a big business. It is for this reason therefore that an African linguistic renaissance is deemed possible to help rebuild and give more value to African languages.

2.6.2 COMMODIFICATION OF LANGUAGE

Kamwangamalu (2005) describes languages as having economic value as commodities in a linguistic market. Heller (2010) in Kamwendo (2015b) argues that since language has become a commodity, it needs to be produced, controlled, distributed, valued and constrained. As already alluded to above, European languages have more economic value than indigenous languages. Matsinhe (2013) argues in this regard that African languages do not lead to jobs that attract good remuneration hence the belief that they do not have economic value. On the other hand, languages such as English are actually a passport to a better life. Ferguson (2013) is in total agreement with Matsinhe when he states that without English, one is more often than not definitely excluded as English skills are seen as a potential path out of poverty. He argues that English has a firm foothold in many African economies and is widely perceived as offering socio-economic opportunities and conferring some prestige on the user. So, whereas it is a terrible mistake to assume that English is knowledge, (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014), it is however, an open secret that mastery of English is a precondition for most professional employment in South Africa and other African countries (Rudwick and Parmegiani, 2013). For this reason therefore, many people will definitely choose English instead of an African language as the choice may be, for its economic value and promise of a better life. Many people are thus unwilling to 'buy' indigenous languages even though they have a 'fair' price on the linguistic market.

A lot of work still needs to be done in order to promote the value of African languages. Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) use the allegory of biblical David and Goliath, to describe the uphill task of uplifting indigenous languages to be at par with their European

counterparts. It is a heavy but possible task. Kirkpatrick (2013) even contends that governments throughout the world are trying to find means and ways in which English and other languages can work as complementary to each other instead of one language superseding the others. So, local languages need to be promoted with profound economic and cultural values to enhance their market value and to fashion them into avenues of economic and social opportunity hence spur their learning. There currently are a number of organizations which are aimed at promoting African languages such as the Academy of African Languages, (ACALAN), which took over from the OAU-BIL (Inter-African Bureau of Languages) in the 1980's, (Matsinhe, 2013). Moreover, Kamwendo (2015b) argues for an African languages renaissance which will revive and further empower African languages so that they can gain more value and be seen as important instead of being devalued currencies.

2.6.3 LANGUAGE, GLOBALISATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION

Globalization and internationalization are interconnected in the sense that internationalization is the implementation of specific measures to tackle the global context (Doiz et.al, 2013). Cobarrubias (1983) defines internationalization as the use of an international language such as English as a lingua franca whereas Marginson (2007) defines globalization as a geo-spatial process of growing interdependence and convergence in which different spheres of action are enhanced. In other words globalization is the widening, deepening and speeding up of world interconnectedness (Marginson 2007). English as a lingua-franca has enormous effects on the people world over. It is a global language that acts as a unifier to people across the world, people who would otherwise be divided by ethno-linguistic lines (May, 2007). When people from different social backgrounds converge, one of the main tools that they will use is language. When people of different cultural backgrounds come into contact, there are bound to be economic and cultural changes (Marginson, 2007). In the linguistic context, Marginson (2007) further argues that whenever there is cultural diversity, the stronger nations' language systems, particularly English, dominate that context hence in higher education; English has turned into a lingua-franca. Yet also, English tends to divide and provide those with English skills better opportunities than those who do not have them. There is thus a huge benefit in learning such a language hence people will definitely choose it over African languages which do not have this benefit. In a globalized world therefore, International languages such as English are generally valued higher than indigenous languages (Kamwendo, 2013).

We live in a globalized society hence we need to use a language that removes barriers and offers opportunities for societal upward mobility. For this reason therefore, English continues to be the preferred choice. Language and internationalization is more evident in places of higher education where it is often driven by three things namely; student mobility, staff mobility and off-shore delivery (Hughes, 2008). The trend has been that Anglophone institutions dominate when one looks at the enrolment of higher education students including post-graduates (Kwiek, 2008). For example, more than 40% of students studying abroad go to English speaking countries, with the United Kingdom having the highest number of international post-graduates while USA recruits more PhD students than the rest of the OECD countries put together (Hughes, 2008). OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, with a membership of over 30 European countries including Australia, Canada, France, Italy, UK, USA, to mention but a few (Hughes, 2008). The proportion of foreign students in tertiary enrolments therefore provides a good indication of the magnitude of internationalization in different countries.

Hughes (2008) argues that internationalization is bringing with it both benefits such as revenue generation and migration of skilled labor but also new challenges to governments and institutional policy-makers world over. Internationalization seems set to grow by the day as projections estimate that by 2001, there were only slightly above 2 million students studying abroad, but by 2020, 6 million students will be studying outside their home countries (Hughes, 2008). This proves that countries that teach in an influential lingua franca, plus have a stronger economic muscle such as USA and the UK, will continue to pull students towards them as compared to countries such as China which widely use their indigenous language for teaching and learning. It is an open secret therefore that even the economies of these countries hugely benefit from the revenue generated by external students.

2.7 ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

UNESCO promotes the use of the MT as the medium of instruction in contexts across the world (UNESCO, 1953). As already alluded to earlier in this chapter, UNESCO supports the notion of using the MT as the LoTL to as late a stage as possible in schools. However, the situation on the ground is such that there are varying attitudes towards the use of the MT as the LoTL in different contexts across the globe. European countries for instance, tend to use their own MT at the media of instruction. The French, British, Spaniards, Chinese and other great European nations employ their MT in the education sector. This works hugely in benefit of the learners who are not compelled to learn in a language that is not their own. As

a result their academic performance is enhanced since it is not obstructed by the language barrier. This part of the dissertation will unpack more on attitudes towards mother tongue education in the African context.

2.7.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION IN AFRICA

A majority of African countries still use LEPs which favor L2 as the LoTL and are still classified as third world countries (Adegoke and Ibode, 2011). Matsinhe (2013) laments this common practice in Africa that years after the attainment of liberation, African countries still continue to practice linguistic policies inherited at the time of independence. Using the learners' MT as a LoTL puts them in a better position to perform well in their studies (UNESCO 2003, Gandara et.al 2003, Kamwangamalu 2005, Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize 2014). This is purely because these learners do not have to struggle with understanding the language through which content is delivered, unlike those students who are taught through a L2 who have to grapple with understanding both the content and the language of instruction. Research has proven that learners who are taught through L1 perform far much better as compared to those taught using a L2 (Gandara et.al, 2003). This is because studies have shown that we think best and can articulate our perceptions even better through using our MT as opposed to any other language we may learn later in life.

The tendency of using exoglossic languages as LoTL dates back to colonial times when European countries came to colonize Africa and spread their linguistic influence on the countries that they had colonized. At the time, all that was European was seen as better and deserving to be emulated (Schmied, 1991). It came as a natural practice therefore to use these exoglossic languages as LoTL even after independence had been attained by most African countries because they were seen to be better and capable of handling academic discourse as compared to the indigenous languages that existed prior to the colonization by European states. The most common practice in African countries is to use indigenous languages in the lower levels of schooling (normally Grades1-3) and then from Grade 4 onwards, there is a switch to English (Schmied, 1991). Ndamba (2008) argues that this practice has greatly contributed towards indigenous languages being regarded as less important. They were pushed into the back seat while European languages occupied the important domains of language use such as the academia, government and legislature etc.

The reality now therefore is to resuscitate them by assigning them higher value in the entire educational system, from primary level right through secondary to tertiary levels (Rudwick and Parmegiani, 2013, Kamwendo 2015b). It is upon the speakers of these African

languages to revive and promote them because the promotion of a language cannot happen without the support and mobilization of its speakers (Rudwick and Parmegiani, 2013). Bamgbose (1991) summarizes the issue of LEPs in African countries by saying that African countries remain prisoners of the past since they are so overwhelmed by established practices to such an extent that it is virtually impossible to break away from them.

Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2013) argue that no society in the world has developed and flourished in a sustained and democratic fashion on the basis of a foreign language. For instance, European countries such as Britain, America, France, Spain, Russia, Germany, Italy and many more, have developed into first world economies using LEPs that favor the use of the MT as the LoTL (Ferguson, 2013). Studies about attitudes towards L1 instruction in the African continent show appalling results-to say the least. Generally, the African community has a negative attitude towards their own languages. In a study on attitudes towards MT instruction done by Setati (2005) in Ndamba (2008), it was discovered that learners in Tanzania actually preferred English to Kiswahili. A majority of the students who participated in the study were actually proud of Kiswahili as their MT, however they were not in a position to choose it over English which is the global language that opens doors and brings more opportunities as compared to Kiswahili. In a similar study in South Africa, learners actually preferred to learn Mathematics in English as well instead of isiZulu or any of the indigenous languages (Adegoke and Ibode, 2011). Adegoke and Ibode stipulate that there have been longstanding sentiments to the effect that African languages lack the capacity to handle academic discourse, especially with the science subjects including Mathematics hence the reason for their use especially with these subjects.

A similar conclusion was reached in another study done by Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2012. In the study, most students preferred to be instructed in English instead of IsiZulu. In fact it was evident in the study that even though the students were strongly in favor of promoting African languages in principle, they would not necessarily choose to be educated in their MT. All the participants in this particular study preferred to be taught in English except one who pointed out that reading and writing in isiZulu made him feel more in touch with his Zuluness. This is the general feeling among students in the African context: they are not necessarily most comfortable using exclusively their MT in any given situation yet studies have proven beyond doubt that people learn faster and better in their first language.

This was also proven in a study which started in 1970, based at the prestigious Institute of Education at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo Univesity) in Nigeria. The general assumption in Nigeria is that literacy is the ability to speak and write English (Babaci-Wilhite

and Geo-Jaja, 2014). This fallacy is strongest among the southern Nigerian elite who propagate for the use of English from the earliest grade in primary school. In this study, primary school learners who used Yoruba, a local language, proved to be more resourceful and better academically prepared (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). This experimental group performed highest in tests of all subjects including English. This was evidence that people learn faster in their MT. They read better too. It goes without saying therefore that learners in the African context have negative attitudes towards their own MT yet these better equip them for better academic success.

Research has proven that using a second or even foreign language to teach learners disadvantages them and sees them perform poorly as compared to their peers who are taught using their L1. Ndamba (2008) describes three challenges faced by L2 learner. First, the learner has to make sense of the instructional tasks, and further attain linguistic competence in the L2 while also struggling to master the content itself. This has proven to be a mammoth task to a majority of the learners especially because they still have to struggle with other life challenges such as poverty as many of them come from poor social backgrounds. Ferguson (2013) echoes these sentiments when he argues that instruction through a home language improves the quality and quantity of interaction between the learner and the teacher. This therefore allows the learner to be in a better position to understand concepts and enquire more about them should the need arise because they have the advantage of using a home language. Moreover, the students are more at ease thus free to voice out their thoughts because there is no linguistic barrier which is going to impede on their grasping and comprehension of content.

Another study by Moyo (1991) in Ndamba (2008) came up with the conclusion that even parents have these negative attitudes towards local languages and that they naturally pass these to their children. Parents believe that getting a job is the learners' ultimate goal hence to be able to achieve that; they must be proficient in English. According to Kamwendo (2013: 105), the parents argue that learners need an international language such as English and not the so called "good-for-nothing African languages". Indigenous languages still need to be promoted in order for them to have value and to bring such negativity to a halt. Ferguson (2013), argues in this regard that English language functions as a gatekeeper not only in upper secondary and higher education levels but also at the space of work in the civil service, service industries such as banking and tourism. Ferguson (2013) reveals in this regard that in most cases, jobs which remunerate well require one to possess adequate English language skills. So, without English, one is definitely excluded as English skills are seen as a path out of poverty.

Community attitudes in Africa were developed a long time ago when all that was European was viewed as excellent and worthy to be imitated whereas all that was African was considered inferior (Ndamba, 2008). Africans taught themselves to like everything white to the extent of even bleaching their skins to look whiter thus more beautiful. Ndamba argues that the attitude of denigrating towards one's own language and the exaltation of European languages has not been easy to remove in Africa. In Nigeria for instance, Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2014) reveal that there is an assumption especially among the southern Nigerian elite that literacy is the ability to speak and write English which is downright fallacy.

In order to overturn such negative attitudes towards indigenous languages in Africa, the parents, learners, educators and the wider society need to be sensitized about the true value of these languages. Moreover, the indigenous languages need to be revamped and completely overhauled in order for them to be valuable and attractive in the linguistic market as discussed earlier on in this chapter.

People, naturally, will fear a drop in the standard of education if the MT is used instead of L2 but there is no need for such fears as Kamwendo (2013) clarifies that there is a distinction between English as a subject of study and English as a medium of teaching and learning. African students therefore can still learn English as a subject instead of the former being a gatekeeper in their schooling experience. We cannot pretend that we do not need English skills as Africans because it is, after all, the international language but, English should be learnt for communicative purposes and not be a hindrance to the success of learners in the schooling system.

2.7.2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION IN SWAZILAND

The education system in Swaziland is currently guided by the Swaziland education and training sector policy (EDSEC) that came into effect in April 2011. The policy stipulates that English language shall be used as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards whilst siSwati shall be used in the lower Grades. In light of this clause therefore, one expects that English takes a superior role as it is accorded the crucial status of being the LoTL. The policy, on the other hand, strongly illuminates the importance of learners being allowed to converse in siSwati in order to safeguard its heritage and the culture as it were. One clause stands out in support of siSwati, "as a way to promote the learning of siSwati in all schools, children shall not be punished for speaking siSwati within and outside the school premises. (p. 27)". As a result, there is a dispute about the LoTL in Swaziland (Van der Merwe and Schenck, 2014). Teachers find themselves encouraging the learners to communicate in

English in order to improve their skills in the language while the government expects that learners should not be punished for conversing in siSwati and this does create some sort of conflict.

Many schools have internal rules and regulations which encourage learners to converse in English at least within the school parameters, even going to the extent of punishing those learners who speak vernacular. One primary school in the Hhohho region has the following rule in connection with the use of English around the school premises: **"English should be spoken at all times. Offenders of this rule will be subjected to disciplinary actions and learners who obey the rule shall be rewarded".** This is just an example of many school regulations across the country which glorifies the use of English amongst learners. In this example, the rule even comes with a promise of being rewarded for the wanted behavior. The teachers' expectations stand on a vantage point because research has proven that learners fail to acquire academic literacy and that their deficiency is compounded by poor competency in English as the language of teaching and learning (Prestorious 2002 in Thamaga, Chitja and Mbatha, 2012). A majority of the learners' poor socio-economic backgrounds and contexts create more constraints for them as they often struggle with weak English mastery (Boughey 2000 in Thamaga, Chitja and Mbatha, 2012). This is one reason why some Swazi parents, especially those who can afford it, prefer to send their children to English medium schools so that they can become competent English speakers which they in turn believe will enhance their learning (Khumalo, 2013).

A study by Van der Merwe and Schenck (2014) reveals that the children in Swaziland can no longer express themselves properly in English due to the argument for siSwati instruction. The study further reveals that the language debate in Swaziland is purely a political argument that is not in the pupils' best interest. So, there is ultimately some confusion on the role of siSwati in the education system in Swaziland. As a result, it is confusing that the teachers are currently not clear on whether to use siSwati or English as a LoTL because the education policy favors the use of siSwati at all times by the learners. The fact however stands that English for now, is the language of the wider world and that it enables access to a range of national and international resources, with world mobility access for pupils (Van der Merwe and Schenck, 2014).

Linguists have come to the conclusion that the time has come for indigenous languages to be given the long-overdue recognition that they deserve. However, overhauling the current pro-colonialism LEPs also requires a great input from the people. Do the people wish to support the transformation that needs to be done on LEPs? Mtenje (2013) argues in this regard that if the people are not involved by simply imposing the revised LPEs on the

masses, the policies will surely remain declared without being implemented as has been witnessed in some contexts before.

2.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the issue of former colonial languages, particularly English, remaining gatekeepers even after independence has been discussed. The LEPs for Swaziland, Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa have been discussed to show how they promote exoglossic languages yet denigrate towards indigenous languages. Lastly, the concepts guiding people and attitudes that they have whenever a language choice is to be made, have also been defined and discussed. The next chapter will concentrate on the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology for the study. The design of the study will be described, followed by the population and instruments used to collect data. Lastly, the chapter will focus on how data collected during interviews and the focus group will be analyzed.

3.1 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This study was aimed at ascertaining learners' constructions of English as a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland. The study concentrated strictly on learners as research participants because as Mazibuko (2004) argues, the student perspective on teaching and learning is too often neglected or underrated in educational research. Therefore studies that concentrate strictly on the learners as research participants are quite limited proving that this may be a neglected area of study. The research followed a qualitative approach. This is because the objectives and research questions for this study required the learners to provide their own individually constructed responses as to how they felt with the current phenomenon of English being the gatekeeper subject in schools in Swaziland.

3.1.1 THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This study employed the qualitative approach mainly because the aim was to obtain learners' views on English language being a gatekeeper subject in the schooling system in Swaziland. Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations for social phenomena (Joubish et.al, 2011). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe the qualitative approach as one that is based on some form of positivism and constructivism which assumes that multiple realities are socially constructed. This presupposes that in a qualitative study, participants craft their own point of view in relation to the subject under discussion and that these will always vary from context to context since contexts are never the same. This means that any two persons at any particular time will interpret information differently in relation to their unique settings or contexts. Golafshani (2003), therefore, states that qualitative research use a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context. Contexts are never the same hence a qualitative study does not aim to generalize the findings because what applies in context A may not be relevant in context B. It aims to

help us understand how people feel and why they feel as they do in that context (Joubish et.al, 2011).

Furthermore, a qualitative approach requires the researcher to diversify the methods of data collection which will yield detailed, narrative accounts instead of numerical data (Mcmillan and Schumacher, 2010). This is basically done in order to capture as much data as possible. The reason for using various methods of data collection is so that if one method failed to bring about certain information, then the other method will be able to capture it so that no crucial data may be lost. In a qualitative study, the data is collected from a smaller number of people because what is important in this kind of a study is actually the "depth" rather than the "breadth" (Joubish et.al 2011, Mcmillan and Schumacher 2010, Brink 2003). This means that in qualitative research, a small sample provides such rich information because they are studied in a deep and intense manner. Due to the fact that this was a qualitative case study, the researcher opted to use two methods of data collection which were semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. These shall be explained in detail later in this chapter.

3.1.2 CASE STUDY

The study further employed the case study methodology since the main aim of the research was to develop an in-depth understanding of learners' views in relation to English being a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland. Brink (2003) defines a case study as an in depth study of one individual, a group of individuals or an institution. It is in-depth in the sense that the researcher concentrates on a specific entity that has been chosen for purposes of that study, gathering as much data as possible and further analyzing it without generalizing the findings due to the fact that the social reality that exists in other contexts will never be the same. In a case study therefore, the researcher focuses on the entity and studies it in so much detail hence offering a wealth of knowledge (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). There is no need to generalize the findings obtained from a case study.

3.1.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Every study that is undertaken has to be located within a paradigm or theoretical framework in order for its validity to be tested (Golafshani, 2003). A paradigm is a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimates or first principles (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It is a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

The current research followed an interpretivist paradigm which is based on constructivism with descriptive and interpretive knowledge. This approach is also known as a constructivist paradigm (Guba and Lincoln (1994). The interpretivist paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhere Dilthey's and other German philosophers' study of interpretive understanding called Hermeneutics (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Interpretivists seek to understand the world of human experience; hence they rely upon the participants' views of the situation being studied. In other words, interpretivists believe that knowledge is socially constructed within a specific context by the individual's interpretation of the subject under study.

An interpretivist seeks to understand phenomena while relying on the participants' views of the situation being studied (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). This was the appropriate paradigm to be used for this research because the study was focused on establishing learners' constructions on English being a gatekeeper subject. The findings and recommendations were purely based on the learners' views which they constructed themselves individually.

3.2 POPULATION

Any particular research or study is dependent upon a specific population from which data is collected. Population comprises all the possible cases that constitute a whole (Brink, 2003). It is the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions (Mcmillan and Schumacher, 2010). Population therefore is the large pool from which a sample is taken. Examples of population may be teachers, college students, disabled war veterans, learners (as is the case with this particular research study), parents, community members and many more. A researcher is guided by his/her objectives and research questions to use either a homogenous or heterogeneous population.

3.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sampling is the process of selecting the sample from a population in order to obtain information regarding a phenomenon in a way that represents the population's interest (Brink, 2003). For the purposes of this research, purposive sampling was used to sample the population. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define it as the careful selection of information-rich participants for the study. The participants were selected because they have some specific information which they would provide. The six learners were selected because they are currently learning English language which is further used as the LoTL hence they stand on a good vantage point to provide information on English being a gatekeeper subject.

These learners were suitable participants for the study because the study concentrated strictly on learners' views or constructions of English as a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland.

3.3.1 POPULATION SAMPLE

A sample is a part of a whole, the most basic unit from which information is collected (Brink, 2003). A sample is taken from the population which has been identified by the researcher as being appropriate for that particular study, in line with the research objectives and objectives. A sample should therefore be representative in nature of the larger population from which it was taken. If, for example, the population is secondary school learners, then the sample should comprise of those learners only and not college or primary school learners because that would amount to a biased sample. Qualitative case studies normally use small samples from which to collect data. This does not impede on the quality of the findings in any way because the sampled participants are studied in so much depth and detail resulting to a rich and meaningful conclusion arrived at by the researcher.

Furthermore, a researcher may observe a characteristic of interest in all the members of a population after which he/she can confidently base conclusions about the population on these observations (Frankel and Siang, 1999). Although this method can prove too costly and time consuming, its findings can be generalized as a reflection of the true picture among that particular population. This is called perfect induction. A sample on the other hand is drawn during imperfect induction whereby the whole population cannot be observed due to an array of factors such as being expensive and time consuming. At times the population may be too scattered to observe all of them at once hence imperfect induction is then used. A handful of the population is thereafter selected using systematic criteria. Ultimately, inferences can be drawn from the findings on this sampled group pertaining to the population from which it was sampled.

The population sample for this study consisted of six secondary learners, three boys and three girls selected from Luthela high school in Manzini. The sample was chosen on the basis of academic performance hence two high achievers (70% and above) were selected. Two average students (50%-69%) were also chosen and lastly, two below average learners (49% and below) added up the sample population to a total of six. The reason for selecting the learners according to the mixture of their abilities in English language subject was to enable the researcher to extract rich and meaningful responses from which inferences can be drawn. Moreover, the academic performance range has been used as a yardstick to select the sample so as to get a truly accurate and balanced account of the views learners have towards English as a gatekeeper. This comes from a point of view that some students

may naturally have a negative attitude towards English because they do not perform well in it. Others may have a liking for the subject and have only good things to say about it. So the balance of the sample population is meant to get a balanced outlook from the learners on English being a gatekeeper in Swaziland.

The learners were themselves given numbers such as L1 for the first learner, L2, L3 and so on and so forth. Since this was a case study research, the population was 481 secondary school learners in a mixed school in the Manzini region of Swaziland. On average, the school learners range between 12-18 years of age. There are learners who are younger or older but most of them fall within this age bracket. The learners come mostly from low to middle income families. The school itself is semi-urban in the sense that it is located in a rural community. The learners are basically poor with a handful coming from well-to-do families. Most of them come to school on foot while a small number use public transport on a daily basis.

Table 3.1 Learners' biographical profiles:

Learners	Age	Gender
L 1	17 years	Female
L 2	16 years	Female
L 3	16 years	Male
L 4	21 years	Male
L 5	18 years	Female
L 6	17 years	Male

Source: Researcher's computation

The six learners were selected on the basis of gender such that there was a balance of three boys and three girls. This was to ensure that both males and females were equally represented in order to reduce biasness in the outcome or findings of the research. The study was done towards the end of the year when schools were busy preparing for their final examinations. Forms 4s do not sit for a public or exit examination hence their final examination commences later than Form3s and 5s. So, it made sense to use learners from the Form 4 class since they would begin their final examination at least a month later hence the researcher could have more time to gather the data.

3.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

The participants in a research study have to be protected and also have their privacy and confidentiality protected (Brink, 2003). The researcher undertook specific steps in order to protect them from any harm which could range from embarrassment, lowered self-esteem and even threats to their integrity. The researcher first sought for ethical clearance from the Univesity of Kwa-Zulu Natal to collect data from the participants. Furthermore, the researcher applied for informed consent from the principal of the school where data was collected. A formal letter was written to him explaining in detail about the study and how learners from his school would be needed to partake in the study. After getting the green light from the principal, another letter was written directed to the learners asking for their permission to be participants in the study before the study could be undertaken. After working with the class teacher to identify the participants, the researcher then addressed the ethical considerations of the study. Some copies were also addressed to their parents since four of them were below 18 years of age. Once again the letters explained in detail how this was a voluntary exercise and how the learners were free to pull out at any time during the data collection exercise should they feel the need to do so. It is unethical to collect data without the knowledge of the participants and their expressed willingness and informed consent (Kumar, 2005). Deceiving the participants is discouraged at all costs, and if this had to be done, they have to be told the truth as soon as the research is over.

As Frankel and Siang (1999) argue, there are basically three components of the informed consent; first, relating the information to the participants, secondly, ensuring that they understand the information and thirdly, obtaining voluntary agreement from them. The parents' letters were written in siSwati in order to ensure maximum understanding. All six were given their own letters and another letter in each case to take home to their parents or guardians. The researcher further engaged them to explain more and to address any questions they might have had. Obtaining voluntary agreement from the participants was the last step. The participants were assured that their identity would be protected through using pseudo names instead of their real names.

3.5 TARGET SCHOOL

A pseudonym, Luthela High School, has been used in order to protect the identity of the school from which data was collected as per research ethics. The school was chosen for its convenience in access. It has an average enrolment of 450-550 students each academic year and it caters for both boys and girls. There currently are 481 students, 41 teachers and

six support staff members. There are three classes for each stream at the secondary level (Form 1 to 3) while the high school level (Form 4 and 5) is double-streamed. The school starts lessons at 07:55 every Monday to Friday, knocking off at 15:30. There are teachers who do conduct extra lessons on Saturdays but this is purely done voluntarily. Several teachers also conduct these extra lessons when schools are officially closed but again, no teacher is forced or incentivized for doing this. It uses the Swaziland General Certificate in Secondary Education (SGCSE) syllabus which is currently followed in every government and public schools in Swaziland. It is one school that is average in its academic performance, not amongst the top performers yet not amongst the worst performing schools as well.

3.6 INSTRUMENTATION

Instrumentation simply refers to the tools that are going to be used to collect data during research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that in qualitative research, two instruments tend to dominate the data collection exercise. These are observation and interviews. Other instruments such as artifact collection, focus group discussions and questionnaires may be used in qualitative research in line with the requirements of the research objectives and questions. Golafshani (2003) states that using triangulation, which is a combination of instruments in a single research, yields more rigorous results. The section below defines triangulation then discusses more on the two instruments that were used to collect data for this study which are focus group discussions and interviews. A pilot study was conducted first before the actual data was collected in order to test if these instruments were properly structured to yield the required results.

3.6.1 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

There were six interviews because each of the six learners was interviewed separately in order to find their views and experiences on English being a gatekeeper subject as well as the issues and factors that shaped these views that they had. They ranged between thirty to forty minutes. These were conducted in an isolated classroom where the possibility of being interrupted was minimal. Rapport was created with the learners by first asking them general questions about themselves and explaining to them what the whole session was all about. Throughout the whole conversation, the learners were allowed, at their request, to code-switch between English and siSwati. This request was granted because they stated that they wanted to be free in expressing themselves. The conversation was recorded using an

audio-recording instrument. After the session the researcher listened to the recording to ensure that the learner's views had indeed been captured. The data was then translated and transcribed.

There are mainly three types of interviews for qualitative research; structured, semi-structured and unstructured (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, Welman et. al. 2005). Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010) further argue that interviews result in a much higher response rate than, say, questionnaires, especially for studies that concern personal qualities or negative feelings. Interviews, especially semi-structured and unstructured allow for probing and discussion of content hence result in a richer data for the study. Interviews were used to get the learners' experiences and the issues and factors shaping those experiences in learning and being assessed using a L2.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one with the six participants in the school library. The researcher made prior arrangements with the librarian to use the library in order to reduce interruptions in the month of November 2014. The sessions were held during the students' lunch break so as not to interfere with their tuition time. An arrangement was made prior in relation to these interviews and the learners agreed to use their lunch breaks for the interviews. According to Kreuger and Casey (2000), it is crucial during interviews to start with opening questions which are quite easy to respond to and then make a transition to questions which delve into key concepts as the interview progresses. The researcher started off each interview with a set of brief warm up questions which allowed the learners to talk about themselves and their backgrounds. This was done in order to create rapport with the participants while also reducing nervousness thus making them feel comfortable and at ease. Some of the learners requested to be allowed to code-switch as the interview progressed so that they can express themselves better. When the researcher enquired where this request was coming from, the learners revealed that they were not adequately proficient in English language. They felt that speaking exclusively in English would not allow them to express themselves freely. Their wish was granted because the researcher was to translate the data during transcription. The researcher learnt here that indeed some learners are quite challenged when it comes to the use of English language. Learners were not comfortable at all to converse exclusively in English because they felt this would distort the meaning of their views on English as a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland. This is validated by a study that was done by Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) who concluded that using English often in conjunction with their mother tongue made it easier for African learners to carry out certain communicative tasks.

The researcher explained briefly to each participant the logistics of the interview. Due to the fact that the learners had to provide their own constructed responses, the interview questions were not given to them in advance instead, each participant was given a few minutes to acquaint themselves with the questions before the interview could proceed. This was done in order to prevent a situation whereby the learners would caucus their responses and eventually not give their own individual responses to the questions at hand. The interviews were audio-recorded using audio-recording equipment which was charged on the night before the interview to ensure that it was battery full hence not causing any disruptions as the recording was underway. The researcher also made brief notes during the interviews but these were kept to a minimal so as not to distract the students.

The interview questions were open ended thus allowing the learners to express themselves freely. Open ended questions allowed the learners to be wide in their responses and not feel restricted in the manner in which they were supposed to attempt the questions. During the interviews, the learners proved to express their views on English language being a gatekeeper subject quite freely. Even though some were quite shy and unsure about the whole interview idea, they ultimately opened up and even enjoyed the discussion. The researcher used probing as much as possible in order to get much clearer responses. Each session lasted about 20 minutes on average.

3.6.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus groups are a research method used to gather feedback and opinions from a small group on a particular subject. Focus group discussions are not just random discussions but they are pre-planned and the questions are predetermined by the researcher. Krueger and Casey (2000) observed that focus groups are less threatening to many research participants, and this environment is helpful for participants to discuss perceptions, ideas, thoughts and opinions.

The focus group interview was held in an isolated room in order to minimize interruptions. There were six learners in all. The researcher first welcomed the learners and explained the purpose of the focus group discussion. moreover, the researcher clarified that responses could be random and be in no particular order since some learners would need more time to come up with responses. The important thing here was that every single learner was supposed to share their view or feeling in each of the questions that would be asked. So, the researcher asked the questions and the participants responded to them in no particular order. The researcher was alert to probe the learners to explain more and give clarity

whenever necessary. Krueger and Casey (2000) warn that when conducting a focus group discussion, it is important for the researcher to be very alert because some participants may end up in the background, overshadowed by more active ones who would then dominate the discussion. The gist of a focus group is to actually get the views from each and every member of the group hence it was very important to monitor those who were too silent and those who dominated the discussion especially because the participants in this study were learners who can easily become uncomfortable sharing their views amongst their peers.

Using a focus group to find more about what learners think of English being a gatekeeper subject was ideal especially because some learners tend to be shy and nervous when interviewed individually. The focus group on the other hand, is helpful in dealing with the nerves because the setting is quite relaxed and responses come from different participants not solely from one participant as was the case with the interviews. In a focus group, learners are free to discuss opinions in a group setting hence a more relaxed manner. Since there were six participants for this study, they were all brought together for a single focus group discussion on a Saturday at the school library. It is a norm in Swaziland for the secondary learners to come to school on Saturdays for their study sessions which last anything from two to three hours. The researcher thought this time was ideal to hold the discussions because interruptions would be greatly minimized in the sense that the larger student body would have finished their study session and left the school premises. There were three boys and three girls. The discussion lasted slightly above an hour. The advantage of using focus group discussion is that participants' responses stimulated and influenced the thinking and sharing of ideas. In fact, some participants even changed their opinions and thoughts during the group discussion.

3.7 PILOT STUDY

A pilot test was conducted in October 2014, before the collection of the actual data in order to check for bias in the procedures, interviewer and the questions themselves (Mcmillan and Schumacher, 2010). Basically, pilot testing was all about finding out if the interview and focus group discussion questions would work in the real situation by trying it out first on a few people. The pilot test provided the means of assessing the length and depth of the actual data collection exercise well in advance. The pilot test was done in a neighboring school. One of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it forewarns the researcher about instances whereby the actual research could be a failure, where research protocols may not be followed or whether the proposed methods or instruments are too inappropriate or too complicated (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

The pilot study enabled the researcher to adjust the questions and also get a picture of the responses to be gotten. Some of the questions were adjusted in order for them to be clearer hence easier to respond to. The pilot study also helped to approximate the duration of the interviews. It was established during this test that thirty to forty five minutes would be appropriate for each individual learner. The researcher was also able to practice establishing rapport with the participants. This was crucial because ultimately, the learners needed to be free and comfortable enough in order for them to be able to give their real experiences not what the researcher wanted to hear as a teacher. Moreover, the learners needed to feel that this study was worthwhile in order for them to give it their best shot hence the researcher first explained the purpose of the interview and how it would benefit other people and the society in the future. This created confidence in the learner that what they were about to do was of a worthy cause.

The pilot study also helped the researcher to gain competency in probing the participants and to ensure that the learners were not uncomfortable during probing. Since the participants of the study were learners, it was crucial to establish during the pilot test any signs of discomfort and address them before the actual research could get underway.

3.8 TRIANGULATION

Research is a systematic process or steps used to collect data and analyze information in order to increase knowledge or our understanding of a particular issue. Research therefore requires that data be collected first and then analyzed in order to make inferences or conclusions based on the findings of the research. The trend is that the researcher should combine the methods of data collection resulting in what is known as triangulation. According to Golafshani (2003), triangulation is typically a strategy for improving validity and reliability in that it strengthens a study by combining different methods in order to arrive at a conclusion in a study. Bryman and Teevan (2005) define it as the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. They further state that the term was derived from surveying, where it referred to the use of a series of triangles to map out an area. According to them, there are four forms of triangulation namely; data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical and methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation, which is the use of more than one method to collect data, has been used in this study.

There are various instruments that a researcher can use in order to collect the data that they need for their qualitative study. Examples are interviews, observation checklist, field notes,

audio-recording, documents, video recordings etc. A researcher is not confined to using any particular research instrument but is in fact guided by his or her objectives and research questions to choose whichever method to use. To collect data for this research, two instruments were used namely; semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Data collection for this research was undertaken between the months of November 2014 and May 2015. See table 2 below.

Table 3.2: An outline of the data collection schedule employed in this research.

Data collection instrument	Time frame for data collection
1. Pilot study	October 2014
2. Semi structured Interviews	November 2014
3. Focus group discussion	May 2015

Source: Researcher's computation

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Cohen et.al (2007:461) define data analysis as "making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation. As mentioned earlier on in the previous chapter, it is the process of systematically applying statistical and or logical techniques to describe and evaluate data. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) concur and explain that qualitative data requires coding and categorizing which does not involve assigning numerical codes like in quantitative studies but instead themes and patterns are identified which are then organized into coherent categories that summarize and bring meaning to the text. This means that the researcher should engage with the data extensively by reading and re-reading or listening to audio tapes in order to be able to draw conclusions from it.

Data analysis therefore is the breaking up of something complex into smaller manageable parts and explaining the whole in terms of the properties of and relations between the parts (Brink, 2003). After the data has been collected, the researcher must then use laid down procedures to 'interact' with the data otherwise data by itself would not mean anything. One of the fundamentals of using the grounded theory is that data should be collected and

analyzed simultaneously (Brink, 2003). The researcher looks for patterns, commonalities and variations as they constantly compare between the new data and the data that has already been collected. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), state that one approach of analyzing data would be to use an exhaustive approach. This means the researcher has to interact with the content by listening to and also reading the notes in order to find common themes and categories and variations. This is done until no new themes emerge hence the name exhaustive approach.

3.10.1 ANALYSING INTERVIEW DATA

In order to analyze interview data, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified a system of code-category which can be used as one way of analyzing the data. This process identifies themes, concepts, behaviors and ideas that are typically related to the research questions. First of all, the researcher collected interview data through the use of an audio-recorder and minimal field notes. The recording equipment was charged the night before the interviews were conducted in order to prevent cases where the battery would die in the middle of the interview. After the data had been recorded, the researcher began the process of listening and re-listening to the audio-recordings in order to ensure that no information was left out during transcription. The third step was that of transcribing and translating the data from the audio recorder to word format. All the six transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were then read and re-read with a critical and analytical eye in order to familiarize self with the collected data. The researcher was then able to come up with codes, categories and common themes that emerged from the data collected. Responses were grouped according to the questions that were asked such that responses for each interview question were grouped together. These were then documented in computer files which were created in order to store them.

3.10.2 ANALYSING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Onwuegbuzie et.al (2009) identified four methods with which to analyze focus group data. These are constant comparison, classical content analysis, keywords-in-context and discourse analysis. Definitions for these methods shall be given first. For the purposes of this study, constant comparison was used to analyze the focus group data. Constant comparison allows the researcher to chunk the data into smaller units which are then grouped in order to develop themes. This method was used for the purposes of this study because it enabled

the researcher to group together the learners' views and opinions and to find emerging themes from the data. The researcher first listened to the recording that was taken during the discussion. After that, the researcher transcribed the data which was then read and re-read in order to find common emerging themes from the transcripts. These themes were chunked into smaller units which were more manageable and easier to analyze. The learners' responses were chunked together according to each question that was asked.

The other three methods of analyzing focus group data shall now be defined. They were not however used to analyze the data in this study but only constant comparison was used. Classical content analysis also chunks data into smaller units but the difference here is that the data is not then studied for emerging themes but simply counted. This method is suitable for a study of a quantitative nature and not a qualitative one so it was not used. Keywords-in-context analysis involves determining how words are used in context with other words therefore this method puts more emphasis on the word meaning (Onwuegbuzie et.al (2009). Finally, discourse analysis involves selecting representative or unique segments of language use and then analyzing them in detail to examine how versions of elements such as society, community, institutions, experiences and events emerge in discourse (Onwuegbuzie et.al (2009).

3.11 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter was focused on discussing the research methods and the methodology used in collecting and analyzing data. The qualitative approach was used as a frame for the study because it aimed at documenting learners' constructions of English as a gatekeeper. It was imperative to begin by locating the study within an appropriate paradigm in order to ensure validity (Golafshani, 2003). The description of the sample and sampling procedure was outlined while also describing the research instruments, data collection procedures and finally, how the data would then be analyzed once collected.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter presents the findings of data collected from learners on what their views were regarding English being the gatekeeper subject. The data was collected using face-to-face interviews with six individual secondary school learners and also through the means of a focus group discussion. Six learners were sampled for purposes of data collection and the numbers L1, L2, L3 and so on and so forth were used to identify them. Due to the fact that this was a case study, data was collected from one secondary school in the Manzini region and once again, the name of the school has been concealed as per research ethics. The data collected was in line with the following objectives;

1. To establish learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in Swaziland.
2. To document learners' positions regarding the claim that English is a gatekeeper.
3. To determine learners' views on the use of English as the language of teaching and learning in Swaziland.

4.1 FINDINGS FOR OBJECTIVE 1: LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF ENGLISH IN EDUCATION AND OTHER DOMAINS IN SWAZILAND

There are as many languages in the world as the people who speak them. The trend has been that people attach some value to certain languages which they believe are of benefit to them whether economically or otherwise. Indigenous languages are often not highly appreciated as compared to former colonial languages which are often believed to lead to better economic opportunities hence a better life in the future. During this study, the learners were asked to give their views on the value and importance of English in Swaziland. They responded to this question twofold. First, they defined the value of English as a LoTL and a subject which they learn in class. Secondly, they explained their understanding of the value of English as an international language.

4.1.1 LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF ENGLISH IN EDUCATION AND OTHER DOMAINS IN SWAZILAND

Learners were asked the question "How important is it for secondary learners to be competent in English language in Swaziland?" These were the learners' responses:

L1 believed, *"Well, I think it is important for us to know English and to write it well because most of our subjects are taught in English, only one subject is taught in siSwati. It is a subject that can stop you from proceeding to the next class or from being admitted to colleges and universities around the world. English is a basic, it's easy to learn and most of the subjects are written in English in order for everybody to understand...so English is a very good subject, it helps us easily understand any text that is written."* (Focus group interview).

According to L2, *"I think English opens a lot of opportunities for us. For example when we do research here at school, we need to search the web, it is written in English so it is very important. I think English is a necessary subject. I understand that English has been made to be super important, it is one subject that we should pass whether we like it or not in order for us to be able to proceed with our studies."* (Individual interview).

L3 viewed English as, *"English is very important....without English I can do nothing. English in Swaziland.....ok....even if you may pass all the other subjects but if you fail English, you do not qualify to go to university, so your life then is greatly disturbed. If you speak English, it opens opportunities. So, there are more challenges if you don't speak English."* (Focus group interview).

L4 believed, *"I think it is important because it widens your capability of understanding in all subjects because most are taught in English…. English is a gatekeeper subject because without passing English you cannot go to the next class. For example in colleges they require you to get a pass in English, at least you must get a C or more than C, maybe B or A....so English is very important, according to my understanding, it is a basic that you need in order to pass and succeed in life or in your educational studies."* (Individual interview).

L5 said, *"If you are capable in English, you are going to excel in your subjects such as Home Economics and be able to carry out research in subjects such as Geography, you are going to be able to collect data and access the internet which provides information in English. Moreover, English is a passing subject. It is a must pass subject; you cannot make it to any institution without having got credits in it."* (Focus group interview).

L6 carried the same sentiments when he maintained that, *"English is a passing subject which can prevent you from going further with your studies. You fail and repeat a class if you*

do not know English… I like English because it is an interesting subject. Apart from that nowadays we use English to converse with our friends, family and other people we meet along the way. It is important to know English better because it is a failing subject, most people fail English. (Individual interview).

All the learners' responses suggested that English is that subject which is a hindrance, which can stop them from proceeding further with their studies. The gatekeeping role of English as a subject here was evident as learners revealed their frustration of having to pass it if they want to continue with their academic journey. If they fail siSwati or Geography or even Home Economics it is not as bad as failing English because English determines the learners' future. English was therefore seen as a basic subject for success, which means it is a foundation for one's academic success in Swaziland. But again, English is learnt as a second language and not acquired by Swazi learners. The majority of learners cannot even speak it with much ease. This is precisely what is implied by the conceptual framework for this research. The fact that learners do not have adequate skills in English means that they will not be able to cross the bridge because their epistemological access to learning has been hampered by their limited linguistic skill in English. As a result of this limitation, many learners find themselves unable to proceed with their academic journey because English has obstructed their efforts to get an education. The end result as depicted in the conceptual framework is that only a handful of learners manage to get into the English zone which is also the land of success whereby they get to find jobs, tertiary education and the opportunities to better their lives through learning. The majority remain in the siSwati zone where there are limited opportunities for personal growth and advancement.

What Cobarrubias (1983) calls linguistic pluralism only exists in theory in Swaziland. Linguistic pluralism refers to a situation whereby two or more languages are accorded official status (Cobarrubias, 1983). As aforementioned in chapter 2, the EDSEC policy recognizes both English and siSwati as official languages however, English assumes a superior status because as the learners revealed here, it is English and not siSwati which is the LoTL. Moreover, it is English and not siSwati that determines whether a learner should proceed to the next level of education or not.

The participants' responses revealed that in Swaziland, English is a super important subject which if they fail to pass, will definitely cut short their academic success. They are well aware of the crucial position of English in relation to other subjects. Knowing English therefore proved to be advantageous for the learners because this helps one to understand the content of the subjects which are all taught in English except for siSwati. The conceptual framework for this study proved to be in line with the learners' constructions as it portrayed

English as a bridge which the learners have to cross in order to acquire knowledge which is presented in English as it is the LoTL. It is a bridge because those learners who have adequate English skills stand a better chance to understand the content delivered to them in English. On the other hand, the lack of proper skills in English acts as a barrier because the learners face difficulties in internalizing the content. The learners revealed during the interview sessions that not knowing English hinders one from understanding the content hence will find it a cumbersome task to pass not only English but the other subjects as well since they are all taught in English except siSwati. Kamwendo (2008) argues in this regard that this is purely the reason why some parents would want their children to learn through English because it is the language that is associated with upward socio-economic mobility.

When the colonial powers came to colonize Africa, they aimed to also introduce their languages to the countries they had colonized because they shared a common belief that they were culturally and linguistically superior to Africans (Kamwendo, 2010). Even though missionaries, on the other hand, saw indigenous languages as the best media for evangelizing especially in the British colonies, this went only as far as the lower primary schools, with a switch to English permanently after that (Kamwendo, 2010). The trend has always remained the same with many African countries preferring to use an exoglossic language instead of their own indigenous languages in formal domains such as in the education sector. In fact, African languages in many African countries are not considered worthy as media of education, subjects of advanced study or critical vehicles for national development (Kamwendo, 2010). Swaziland is no exception. The EDSEC policy clearly spells it out that English is the LoTL from Grade 4 upwards.

The glaring truth is that Swazi learners are not adequately exposed to English-rich environments which could enable them to have better English skills. Most of them only get to converse in English when they are in school. When asked the question, “How often do you get to be exposed in English-rich environments and how does this help you in your quest to have improved competence in English?” They had this to say.

L1 highlighted, “to be frank madam, when we are just around the corner with our friends at school, we converse in siSwati but when we are close to the administration block, we speak English”. (Focus group interview).

L2 said “I think I am a little bit exposed to English here at because here at school, the principal encourages us to speak in English yet some other people are reluctant to adhere to the instruction”.(Focus group interview).

L3 believed, *"some people believe you are making yourself better if you speak English". (Focus group interview).*

L4 also shared similar sentiments, he said*, "We have a challenge of speaking English at home because some people then think you are more learned if you start speaking English at home such that it seems like you have pride. Therefore they will never see the good side that you are only trying to enhance your competence in speaking English. Otherwise it's only when we are communicating with our friends on whatsaap, that's the only time we get to speak English." (Focus group interview).*

L5 went further to say, *"In the Swazi culture, speaking English when you are talking to an elderly person is a sign of disrespect, so speaking English at home, you may find that you end up getting an attitude from the other family members." (Focus group interview).*

L6 stated emphatically that, "*No... I speak siSwati at home with my family, nobody speaks English at home."* (Individual interview).

The lack of exposure to English language especially when they are outside of the school environment was found to definitely impact negatively on the learners' quest to become skilled English users because the language of schooling is different from the learners' home language. Kamwendo (2015a) calls this fighting a war on two fronts in the sense that the learners have to grapple with mastering the content which is presented in a language which they struggle to master. Their level of exposure definitely disadvantages these learners who however, still think highly of English despite their circumstances. As Adegoke and Ibode (2011) argue that a learners' proficiency in English is speculated to affect his or her performance in other school subjects such as Mathematics. The learners therefore find themselves in a situation whereby the LoTL is a gatekeeper preventing them from accessing knowledge because of their lack of fluency in it. As a result, such a learner will always be disadvantaged when compared to other learners who speak English as a L1 because he cannot freely converse and express himself in it (UNESCO, 1953).

Moreover, the learners' responses also revealed a cultural aspect to their lack of exposure to an English rich environment. As revealed by L5 that in Swazi culture, speaking English to an elderly person may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect! This may emanate from the fact that Swaziland has a single mother tongue, siSwati, hence there is basically no need for English in a home environment. There are some well-to-do families who use English even at home especially in the urban areas but these are only a small minority. It is clear then that a Swazi learner who speaks English as a second language is disadvantaged when it comes to the whole teaching and learning process. This is compounded by research which concludes

that learning in a second or foreign language poses greater challenges for the learner who has to first attempt to understand the language in which the content is delivered before understanding the content itself. Compared to a learner who acquired English at birth, they are no match (Adegoke and Ibode, 2011).

In concluding this section therefore, one may summarize the learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in the following manner. First, the learners believe that English language offers them opportunities which make their lives better hence the need for them to learn it. Learners view English as being more important than siSwati and therefore a necessity in their lives because English enables them to get better paying jobs and opens a lot of opportunities for them. In fact, the learners highlighted that life is difficult without English skills because even when they get into the world of work, they will need English skills in order to be effective in their work. Even though faced with challenges in learning English such as not being adequately exposed to English-rich environments which could enhance their English skills, learners still believed that English is a basic requirement in their lives without which their lives are doomed. This was the main driving force which compelled them to strive to attain better grades in English against all the odds they may face in learning it.

4.1.2 LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

The learners were very clear of the position occupied by English in relation to other world languages. When they were asked the question, "What are your views regarding the fact that English is an international language?" These were their responses.

L1 said, "English is an international language so if you know English, it is easier to communicate with people from different parts of the world." (Focus group interview).

L2 was of the view that, *"English is important because it allows us to communicate with people from different parts of the world but it must stop being the passing subject, we should just learn it like all the other subjects."* (Focus group interview).

L3 strongly believed that, *"English is important because it enables us to communicate with foreigners, to be able to understand them when they speak to us."* (Focus group interview).

L4 looked at English as very important when she said, *"I am able to communicate with people worldwide. Nowadays we are mostly engulfed by industrial relations which are very*

important in our lives and even to the country because Swaziland needs industries." (Focus group interview).

L5 looked at English as, *"it is a universal language. You can only understand different people and their cultures because they can write in English. You can learn more using English because it is a universal language.*" (Focus group interview).

L6 revealed that, *"English is used extensively in Africa, especially the developing countries. Developed countries such as Italy and Germany use their own languages instead of English."* (Focus group interview).

Once again here, the learners' responses allude to the bridging role that English plays in contexts whereby people do not share a common linguistic competence. English allows people of different linguistic backgrounds to communicate thus acts as a unifier in that way. In other words, the learners viewed English as the language of the wider world in that it connects people who would otherwise be divided due to their different linguistic backgrounds. In his book entitled *BRIDGES AND BARRIERS: LANGUAGE IN AFRICAN EDUCATION and DEVELOPMENT,* Williams (2006) argues that in Anglophone Africa, English acts both as a bridge and as a barrier. This means that English can either be a bridge to a better life or an obstacle to a successful future. As revealed by the learners, English can open communication lines among people from different parts of the world but at the same time, it can hinder processes of learning and understanding in contexts where people lack effective English skills. Through English, they are able to converse with people from different global contexts and this generally helps to improve even their position of being world-wise because it enables them to understand other peoples' cultures better.

The position of English as the most dominant and powerful lingua franca in the world, cannot be doubted (Kamwendo, 2015b). It is associated with increased employability, facilitating international mobility, unlocking more development opportunities, accessing crucial information and acting as an impartial language in contexts where other available languages would not be acceptable (Coleman 2010, 2011, in Kamwendo 2015b). English enables the world to communicate. This on its own led the learners to believe that English language is very important as an international lingua franca hence the need for them to be conversant in it. This is in line with the argument by Roux (2014) who contends that in any given context, learners are more likely to choose English than any other language as a subject of study because it offers upward social mobility.

One learner, L6, highlighted that many European countries are known for using their mother tongues as the LoTL be it English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and many

more. On the other hand, this cannot be said for many African countries. Africans have a strong liking for exoglossic languages and this is revealed mainly through their LEPs which favor the use of exoglossic languages on average from Grade 4 upwards (Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize, 2014). The common occurrence for the majority of African countries is that upon independence, the language of the former colonizer is adopted and made to be the official language. Schmied (1991) argues in this regard that exoglossic languages such as English have the potential of deracinating the African child and alienate them from their own cultural backgrounds. Former colonial languages therefore occupy superior official statuses as opposed to the indigenous languages which are taken to be of less value. It is against this background that an African linguistic renaissance is necessary in order to revitalize African languages and make them to be entities of value which the native speakers will love and be proud of (Kamwendo, 2015b).

Currently, many African languages, with the exception of kiSwahili are not used in official domains but are overshadowed by exoglossic languages which are believed to be superior and appropriate for such formal domains. This was also revealed through five of the learners here who, though English is a second language to them, showed a strong liking for English. However, the reasons why they liked it varied. Only one learner, L2, did not enjoy English. The learners had been asked to respond to the question, "Do you like English? Why? Why not? These were their responses.

L1 finds English interesting as she said, *"Well I like English because it is an interesting subject. Apart from that nowadays we use English to converse with our friends, family and other people we meet along the way."* (Individual interview).

L2 was the only learner who did not like English, he argued, *"English is very problematic for me. Sometimes I try my best but still fail to pass it. The compositions, those are my worst nightmare."* (Individual interview).

L3 claimed that, "*My favorite subject is History.....eh...and English of course."* (Individual interview).

L4 really loves English; she stated, *"I really like English because I'm able to communicate with people worldwide.... I really like English because it helps us even in school, you pass because you have passed English and most of the subjects like Science are written in English."* (Individual interview).

L5 enjoys learning more about other peoples' cultures as he said, *"Personally I like English, because first of all it is a universal language. You can normally understand different cultures*

from different people because they can write in English their culture. You can learn more using English because it is universal." (Focus group interview).

L6 claimed, *"I Love English very much because I can't....I can't escape from the fact that English is an International language. Everywhere it is used for communication."* (Individual interview).

L2 here lamented that he failed English more especially the compositions, which is continuous writing. Continuous writing is all about expression – being able to express oneself in writing hence if a learner's English language skills are below average, then they won't be able to express themselves well in writing. This could be one of the reasons why L2 does not like English language as Thamaga-Chitja and Mbatha (2012) argue in this regard that many African learners dislike writing essays, where lacking the confidence to elaborate an argument, they simply copy chunks of text from a reference without understanding it and just changing a few words here and there. Thamaga-Chitja and Mbatha (2012) are making reference to academic essay writing whilst the learner is merely talking about creative writing in high school. However, the common factor here is English without which a learner cannot succeed in such a task without having good skills in English. Moreover, thinking and trying to express yourself in a second language is not as easy as doing this in your own mother tongue. Research has proven that we think best and are able to express ourselves better in our mother tongue as opposed to a second or foreign language. Once again the notion of the bridge comes to be at play here. L2 is just one of the numerous Swazi learners who for them, English has remained a barrier instead of a bridge. With the lack of adequate English skills, L2 is sure to fail to cross the bridge but to fall into the river instead.

As explained above, five of the learners expressed their liking for English and their reasons bordered around the fact that it is an international language which, obviously, is widely used for communication purposes and the fact that it is a language that is capable of opening opportunities for the skilled user. One respondent, L4, denoted that she regarded English as the language of education because all the other subjects except siSwati are written and taught in English. The connotation here is that as a student, you should like the subject and hope for the best because if you do, there are 'perks' that come with this. For instance one respondent, L3, said *'my favorite subject is History'*, however, she quickly adds, *'and English of course'*. By saying 'of course', the participant gave connotations that it is a given that she has to like the subject no matter what because if she doesn't, then she will be doing injustice to herself. As the LoTL, the learners believed that a skilled English language user is better placed to pass even the other subjects at school. However this may not always be true because English is not knowledge (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2013). This means that

knowing English does not translate to knowing the content and concepts of other subjects such as Mathematics or Science. This however is not meant to underestimate the importance of having good English language skills and the benefits this may have on the African learner as he trudges on in his or her academic journey.

Ndamba (2008) argues that generally, students have a negative attitude towards their own indigenous languages and that the attitude of denigrating towards one's own language and the exaltation of European languages has not been easy to remove in Africa. In a study by Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013), it was discovered that students are not necessarily most comfortable using exclusively their MT in any given communicative structure. There are learners who love their indigenous languages but are clearly aware of the benefits of being fluent in English. This could not be further from the truth, without English, one is more often excluded as English skills are seen as a potential path out of poverty (Ferguson 2013, Matsinhe 2013, Kamwendo 2013).

When one looks at the statistics availed by ECOS, the examinations council in Swaziland, it is appalling to see that the majority of Swazi learners fail English. ECOS results analysis for 2014, for the SPC (Swaziland Primary Certificate) and JC (Junior Certificate) reveal that indeed English language is the learners' worst nightmare. For instance, whereas 88.04% of the SPC learners passed, 11.96% failed and of these, 10.17% failed because of English (Exams council of Swaziland report 2014). It is appalling here that almost all the learners failed because of English. These are learners who would have otherwise passed had it not been for the L2 which is used to teach and assess them. Furthermore, the J.C. results show that whereas 78.78% learners passed in 2014, 21.22% failed J.C. Amongst the failures 9.36% failed because of English. In the senior secondary exit exam SGCSE in 2013, only 23.36% of the candidates managed to pass English with a credit pass (A*, A, B, C). Of these, 66.54% got between grades D-G, which are bad grades that cannot enable the candidate to be admissible at college or University (Exams council of Swaziland report 2014).

A study by Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) on divided loyalties amongst UKZN students, revealed that given a choice, many students still chose not to study in isiZulu because they consider it more advantageous to learn in English thus improve their English proficiency for their future professional careers. As L6 revealed, *"...a majority of learners are affected especially because English is not our language as Swazis....moreover many people have adopted English ways at the expense of their own culture and this destroys them".* L6 here revealed that even though as learners they didn't have much choice when it came to the LoTL, they still deliberately adopted English ways at the expense of their own culture,

something which destroys them. It becomes the obvious choice to make therefore for many African learners that even though they may strongly be in favor of promoting indigenous languages in principle, they would not necessarily choose to be educated in their MT (Rudwick and Parmegiani 2013). On the other hand, Mgqwashu (2008) strongly argues that successful engagement with English literary texts depends entirely on a certain level of competence in the language of instruction and without such a level; it is unlikely that students will attain the kind of knowledge with which the study of English literature is concerned. This means that the learners will never be able to make a good impression in their learning if their level of competence is below average.

The UNESCO Committee of 1953 states that the best medium for teaching a child is the mother tongue through which children understand better and express themselves freely. The basic position of the 1953 report, which shows that children learn quickly through their first language than an unfamiliar linguistic medium, is supported by research evidence from African nations (Mwamwenda, 1996). The common practice in many African nations is to use the language of the former colonizer as the LoTL (Knagg, 2013). Even after independence has been long attained, it is common to find that the language policy remains unchanged. Out of many research findings, Bamgbose (1991) cites the six year primary project started in 1970 in Nigeria to establish the effectiveness of the first language as compared with English L2. Results of the experiment clearly showed that the indigenous languages facilitated more meaningful learning than English. However, promoting local languages especially as the LoTL is misinterpreted as rejection of the exoglossic languages by the proponents of using a L2 instead of the MT (Knagg, 2013).

In another research carried out on the effectiveness of the L1 over English L2 in several schools in Kenya, it was also found that important ideas were more easily conveyed when teachers did not stick to the requirements of the English-only language of instruction. Bamgbose (1991) argues that indigenous languages facilitate more meaningful learning than English. This is compounded by Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2013) who argue that 'learning in a foreign language makes learners not to internalize facts but only to regurgitate information during tests and exams'. They discovered this in a study in Nigeria which revealed that many children learn a little or nothing in class and fail at the end of the year because they cannot interact through the imposed language of interaction which is English. This proves that English poses threats to the learners who are not L1 speakers because children learn better when they can understand the teacher and the material is presented in a language that they speak. However in the last two or three decades, English has grown tremendously as the language of the wider communication (Rubdy, 2008). L2 learners are therefore disadvantaged as compared to the L1 speaker.

4.2 FINDINGS FOR OBJECTIVE 2: LEARNERS' POSITIONS REGARDING THE CLAIM THAT ENGLISH IS A GATEKEEPER

The learners were further asked the question, "There is a claim by language scholars and researchers that English is a gatekeeper on two levels; as a LoTL and as a passing subject which ensures entry into tertiary institutions, what are your views on this claim? Here were their positions.

L1 stated that, "*well, according to me English is a gatekeeper subject. Without English you cannot go to the next class, for example in colleges they require you to get a pass in English, at least you must get a 'C' or more than C, maybe B or A....so English is very important, according to my understanding, it is a basic that you need in order to pass and succeed in life or in your educational studies. Our parents try to train us to know English better because it is a failing subject, most people fail English."* (Individual interview).

L2 seemed to be in pain as he explained that*, "one has to pass English, if you haven't passed it you are as good as useless, one who has failed even if you can pass all the other subjects."* (Individual interview).

L3 observed that, *"without English, we are nothing…..if English was not taken as a gatekeeper, nearly all of us could qualify to go the university...then after that I don't think there would be enough space....ok the services won't be enough for all of us. On the other side, it affects a lot of people and that results in poverty in that they will be jobless."* (Individual interview).

L4 believes, *"English is that subject which everybody must do well in, in order to succeed. …. it is a subject that can stop you from proceeding to the next class or from being admitted to colleges and Universities around the world."* (Focus group interview).

L5 painted a grim picture of the role of English in the lives of Swazi learners when he said *that, "...yes, it is the passing subject but it has pulled many Swazis into a drain....like.... Many Swazis cannot make it without passing it. A gatekeeper subject is a subject that is a passing subject. It is a must pass subject; you cannot make it to many institutions without having got credits in it. In Swaziland, the gatekeeper subject is English…it came to be the gatekeeper subject because Swaziland was once colonized by the British...and when the British introduced education to the Swazis.....the only way they could have introduced education is by their MT which is English. They introduced English together with the education because they once colonized us and it was the way of communicating with the Swazis."* (Individual interview).

L6 was of the view that, "when you fail English, you cannot be admitted to the University of Swaziland….a gatekeeper subject it is a passing subject which can prevent you from going further with your studies….like when you fail English you cannot be admitted to the University of Swaziland and other colleges….in Swaziland the gatekeeper subject is English. Well I'm not really sure how it came to be the gatekeeper subject but I think it's because English is an International language so if you know English it is easier to communicate with people from different parts of the world." (Individual interview).

All the learners felt that they are left with no alternative with regards to English, if they want academic success, then they ought to pass English because if they don't, they end up in the "drain" whereby they are completely sidelined in life. The participants concurred that English was indeed a gatekeeper. They actually even connoted the use of force in as far as learning English is concerned in that they cannot choose to delete English language and not do it because it is a core subject. Moreover, this is because mastery of English is a precondition for most professional employment (Rudwick and Parmegiani, 2013). English therefore functions as a gatekeeper not only to Secondary and higher education; but also to work especially in the civil service and service industries such as Banking, Tourism and elsewhere (Ferguson, 2013).

English language (ESL) was therefore seen by the learners as a gatekeeper subject. This is puzzling when one notes that linguistic pluralism (see theoretical framework), was long achieved in Swaziland. The question one cannot find an answer to is why does English have to remain the gatekeeper in Swaziland yet siSwati is also accorded official status? Even the EDSEC policy clearly states that learners should not be punished for speaking siSwati inside and out of the school environment. Why then do we have to assimilate to a European language forty-seven years after gaining independence? Whether we are aware of it or not, this translates to linguistic assimilation in the sense that one language, which is English, is used in official domains without appreciating that another language, siSwati, also exists (Cobarrubias, 1983). This study is in no way aimed at down-scaling the importance of English as an international language however, as Kamwendo (2014) argues, indigenous languages need to be vernacularized (see theoretical framework) so that their value may rise resulting to more people finding them significant to learn and to also use not just for communication purposes but in official domains as well.

Learners therefore viewed English as their downfall, without which their lives were doomed. As revealed before, only about 13% on average are able to get credit passes in English annually in Swaziland (Mazibuko, 2014). This is aggravated by the fact that a majority of Swazi learners come from poor, rural social backgrounds. Thamaga-Chitja and Mbatha

(2012), argue in this regard that learners from poor social backgrounds struggle with inadequate proficiency in English due to the disadvantaged schooling backgrounds they have experienced. The fact is that schools in the rural areas may not always be well equipped with the qualified personnel, materials and resources that enhance teaching and learning in the urban schools. The learners therefore receive poor education as compared to their urban counterparts. It therefore becomes an extra burden for these learners to acquire academic literacy and discourse skills because they are already struggling with weak English language mastery on top of the socio-economic constraints posed by their disadvantaged backgrounds. English occupies a hegemonic status in relation to all the other subjects which in turn disadvantages the learners. This is mainly caused by the fact that African languages do not lead to jobs that attract good remuneration (Matsinhe, 2013). People therefore will go for the obvious choice of English or any other exoglossic language, as the case may be, in order to be able to get a well-paying job which ultimately results in a good life.

The diagram which illustrates the conceptual framework in chapter 2 depicts a situation whereby English can either become a gateway to a better life in the future or a gatekeeper thus preventing learners from fully accessing knowledge which would enable them to become an educated and successful generation. This is the result of the fact that if the learners lack adequate English skills, they will struggle to grasp content which is presented in English. In this way, English has become a gatekeeper preventing them from accessing knowledge. The result would logically be that such learners will fail at the end of the year hence be prevented from proceeding to the next level of their learning or even tertiary. As aforementioned in chapter 2, the analysis report availed by the Examinations Council of Swaziland reveals that the majority of Swazi learners fail English yet it is the core subject which is also the yardstick that determines whether a learner has passed or failed.

UNESCO holds the view that people should be free to learn in the language which they best understand, not in a language which will hinder them from accessing knowledge and information. UNESCO (2003) therefore argues that foreign language learning should only be as part of an intercultural education aiming at the promotion of understanding between communities and between nations and should never be a hindrance to a learners' success in education. Kamwendo (2014) argues in this regard that one of the blockages to access information is the language factor - in the sense that one may fail to access information due to the language in which the information is packaged.

In Swaziland, the principal subject that determines whether a learner will have a bright future is English, a language which they speak as a second language after siSwati which is their MT. English determines whether a learner is intellectually capable of attaining higher levels

of education. For instance, a learner may not be admitted to tertiary institutions without getting credit pass in English. This is much against what UNESCO propagates for when it comes to MT education .In their study on some characteristic features of Englishes in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland, Kamwangamalu and Moyo (2003) found that English has a higher status in Swaziland especially in formal contexts and is used as a medium of instruction from Grades 3 upwards. They further found that even though siSwati is so widespread that there is no need for English beyond the confines of a classroom, the reality is that Swazi parents prefer English medium schools even in the rural areas (Morope, 2010). This is in total agreement with what the respondents believed in as they all believed English was a crucial subject that can either open or close doors for you.

4.3 FINDINGS FOR OBJECTIVE 3: THE LEARNERS' VIEWS ON THE USE OF ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (LoTL)

The participants revealed how English has a firm foothold on their lives and how it ultimately offers them better socio-economic opportunities as compared to siSwati which does not lead to lucrative job opportunities at all. In this subsection of the chapter, the learners were asked the question, "The EDSEC policy (2011) in Swaziland stipulates that English should be used as the LoTL from grade 4 onwards. How do you feel about that? These were their responses.

L1 strongly believed that, *"English should be taught from preschool so that when learners get to higher grades we can understand better. I think it is more difficult to switch the languages from siSwati to English at a higher grade. So, I think it is appropriate for English to be the LoTL." (Focus group).*

L2 shared similar sentiments and said, *"I think it's better to instill the English to us when we are still younger in order to grow up better able to communicate using English. The education policy is mixed up; we should learn in English from preschool and English must be taught from preschool level." (Focus group).*

On the other hand L3 thought, *"The fact that we are using siSwati from Grade 1 up to Grade 3, they want to show us students that it is an important language as well. You have to know English but you also have to know siSwati as well." (Focus group).*

L4 argued that, *"All the policy is doing is to teach the basics of siSwati to all students. As you know madam that most of us now are unable to complete a sentence using siSwati only, we*

code switch. Indeed siSwati is endangered so this is the least the government can do to save it from extinction." (Focus group).

L5 strongly advocated for siSwati to be recognized more when he said*, "I think the ministry of education should review its position regarding the language of teaching at primary level. As Swazis, the presence of English does not mean we must now discard our Swazi culture including our language. As it is, we are like a British province, copying all western values and instilling them to our Swazi kids. There is no need for English to be the dominating language, English and siSwati should be at par. Fine we won't hide the fact that English is the language used worldwide for getting job opportunities….but siSwati should also be elevated and made more supreme. Because another thing nowadays is that if you don't know English, it's like you are less of a human being." (Focus group).*

L6 concurred, *"It is the cause of poor English when we are older; we are supposed to start learning in English from Grade1." (Focus group).*

Whereas L1, L2 and L6 were in favor of using English as the LoTL, L3, L4 and L5 were not. What was interesting to note was the belief that if you start learning in English early enough, then you will be as competent as a first language speaker which is far from the truth. It is true that some states or regions in Africa have to use English from the very first school year onwards because they find it impossible to use an indigenous language, either they cannot agree on which language to choose or they think the African languages available have not yet acquired the technical vocabulary they need (Schmied, 1991). But in Swaziland there is only one indigenous language hence competence in it is almost undoubted for every Swazi child.

L1, L2 and L6 felt that English should be learnt at the earliest possible time hence be the LoTL early enough in the education system in Swaziland. They did not realize that this on its own will definitely have repercussions on their overall success in learning since English is not their MT. The other three also felt strongly for siSwati to be elevated to more important levels but they did emphasize that English is superior to siSwati hence argued that we cannot be blind to the importance of English.

It is amazing therefore that whereas less than 10% of the population in Swaziland is adequately competent in English skills; some of the interviewees still preferred English to siSwati (Khumalo 2013). The study here revealed that even though the students may have felt strongly for their MT, they were not necessarily comfortable using siSwati exclusively. A quantitative survey by Moodley in 2009 compounds the Swazi learners' stance as it discovered that even though Zulu was popular amongst the UKZN students however, the

idea of “English only” status was prevalent (Rudwick and Parmegiani, 2013). The study further showed that learners were not comfortable using exclusively their MT even for communicative purposes hence code switching between English and isiZulu made it easier for them to carry out certain communicative tasks. The conclusion here is that even though learners may be in favor of promoting their MT’s in principle, most of them would not choose to be instructed using them.

A study at the University of Ife revealed that in Nigeria, many children remain quiet, learn a little or nothing in class and fail at the end of the year because they cannot interact through the imposed language of interaction which is English (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). The study ultimately concluded that learning in a foreign language makes learners not to internalize facts but to only regurgitate information during tests and examinations. Since contexts are never the same, I found it appropriate to enquire from the Swazi learners as to how do they feel about the fact that, just like in many other African states, English is the LoTL.

This study further made conclusions as to why the learners believed English is more important and superior compared to siSwati hence should remain the LoTL. There were mainly three reasons and these were: parental influences, the LEP in Swaziland and the fact that English offers better chances in the world of work. These three reasons are further explained below.

4.3.1 WHY DO LEARNERS BELIEVE ENGLISH SHOULD REMAIN THE LoTL: PARENTAL INFLUENCES

During the data collection interviews, it became evident from the responses given by the learners that parental beliefs in English being a superior subject had rubbed off on them. The learners here revealed that parents play a huge role in influencing them to pass English. Some even pay for them to rewrite English should they fail to do well in it. This is what they had to say concerning parental influences upon their learning of English.

L1 said, “Both my parents and my siblings, we try to speak in English at home, except for my grandma. Our parents are just trying to train us to know English better because it is a failing subject, most people fail English.” (Focus group).

L2 said, “When we come back with our term reports, the first thing my father looks at is if we have passed English because he believes it is more important to do well in it.” (Focus group).

L3 added, "Parents normally encourage us to read novels and to also listen to English news in order to increase your chances of passing English." (Focus group).

L4 believed, "Our parents know clearly that if we fail English, it is the end of our success in life because we need English in order to go to University." (Focus group).

L5 said, *"Parents go all out, depending on how poor they are, they normally pay for their children to upgrade English so that they can be admissible at the university and have a better future. Some restart in Form 4 because their English was not good, still trying to create a bright future for themselves." (Individual interview).*

L6 commented, "My father always says English is important and I should pass it but I always find it difficult." (Individual interview).

Parents have a huge role to play when it comes to the education of their children. It goes without saying therefore that they have a huge influence on the success of their children's education. A study by Moyo (1991) in Ndamba (2008) concluded that negative attitudes learners have towards African languages are passed onto their children. The point of view that a parent holds towards the MT will more often than not be the view that their children have as well. This then spills over to the larger community. Ndamba (2008) further points out that community attitudes were developed a long time ago when all that was European was viewed as excellent whereas that which belonged to the local African community was seen as inferior and not worth emulating.

As L2 said, some parents are more concerned about their children's performance in English more than anything else. So when the learners come back with their end of term school reports, the first thing parents scrutinize is their performance in English. This automatically exerts pressure on the learners to pass English because their parents have this belief that it is super important and will ultimately lead their children to a better life. A dissertation by Msonthi (1997) cited in Kamwendo (2008) found that Malawian parents were generally not in favor of mother tongue instruction. In fact, the study concluded that some parents favored the strong use of English in the curriculum such that they even opt to send their children to private schools where English is the sole medium of instruction. Many parents believe that getting a job is the learners' ultimate goal hence to do that; they must be proficient in English (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja 2013). Qorro (2009), as quoted in Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2013) understands the parents' decisions to be based on the myth that having English as the LoTL will improve the learners' learning abilities and their job opportunities in life. Parents therefore would argue that their children need an International language such as English which of course, offers a ticket to a good life.

This shows that parents understand the need for their learners to do well in English such that even those who have not done well in it are encouraged to rewrite it in order to improve their chances of being admissible to tertiary institutions. A majority of parents are from poor rural backgrounds but because they know that English can retard the academic life of their children, they do all they can in order to help create a better future for them. So many parents in so many countries are therefore inclined to include English as part of their and their children's learning (Roux 2014). Without appearing to underestimate the power of English as a global language, Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2014) argue that schooling in Africa should not mean that the children must learn how and what USA or Britain is teaching their children. In other words, the content that is being taught to the learners should be socio-culturally friendly. A study by Titone, Plummer and Kielar (2012) on creating culturally relevant instructional material in Swaziland, revealed that children learn more and participate more actively when they can relate to the curriculum by seeing themselves and their communities mirrored in that curriculum than when they do not. They further discovered that when a book is culturally relevant, the content is true to the lives of the children reading it because it reflects their everyday life hence immediately accessible to them. Education stakeholders agree that the inherited curricula remain culturally and linguistically alien to Africans (Glanz, 2013), because the African learners cannot see themselves in the education materials (Grassi and Barker 2010 in Titone, Plummer and Kielar 2012).

Many curricula in Africa therefore remain mismatched and do not reflect the local thinking in teaching and learning (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja 2013). In many African countries, the status quo remained the same after the attainment of independence, the former colonial languages continued to dominate as the official language at the expense of the indigenous languages which occupied the subordinate role of being the national language or the language of communication. In Swaziland for example, the education system is based on a British framework (Titone, Plummer and Kielar 2012). English therefore continued to dominate as the language of education, government, judiciary etc., while siSwati remained the language that Swazis used for communication at home or in the community. This is despite the fact that the Swaziland education and training sector policy (2011) recognizes both English and siSwati as the official languages in the country.

One of the many reasons that people have for preferring English to indigenous languages is that they fear a drop in the standard of education, that learners will not be able to face the world from a linguistic point of view (Kamwendo, 2013). Learning English therefore is almost like going with the flow because it is the normal, natural thing to do. No matter how the learners struggle to acquire English language skills, they will almost always be encouraged to do it and not only do it but pass it well so that it opens doors for them both academically

and in the world of work. Studies such as the one done by Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) proved that learners themselves actually prefer English to isiZulu because it is a precondition for most professional employment in South Africa.

Many Governments throughout the world are still trying to find ways in which English language can co-exist with other languages whereby they complement each other instead of one being superior at the expense of the other (Kirkpatrick, 2013). For example, English can be learnt as a subject so that learners have the linguistic skills needed for wider communication, not as the gatekeeper that decides who of the learners is 'intelligent' thus eligible to go to college or University. Parents and the wider community therefore have a strong influence on how the learners view English as discussed above. Another factor that made the learners believe English should remain the LoTL is the LEPs of many African states. This is discussed below.

4.3.2 WHY DO LEARNERS BELIEVE ENGLISH SHOULD REMAIN THE LoTL: LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICIES ACROSS AFRICA

Chumbow (2013) defines an LEP as an instrument which seeks to establish what languages will be used as the language of teaching and learning at the various levels of education in the various administration units of the nation. By choosing to use English instead of siSwati as a LoTL, this has contributed greatly to shaping the way learners view English language. The learners had this to say.

L1 said, *"English is known almost everywhere, even the countries like Mozambique who were colonized by the Portuguese, now they teach English in their schools because they are no longer colonized… If you can look at leaflets, you find that there are many job opportunities there, but you need to communicate and speak English well. So in schools, everything must be written in English so that we can learn it." (Individual interview).*

L2 was of the view that, "...there are many job opportunities there, but you need to communicate and speak English well. So in schools, everything must be written in English so that we can learn it. The lack of English skills really affects people…. it can be a difficult task for us to develop siSwati because we are still unable to produce personnel that can represent our companies; most of the companies here belong to external people." (Individual interview).

As L3 said, *"English was made to be the LoTL because we were once colonized by the British hence for communication purposes we had to learn to use English so that we could*

understand each other.....using siSwati as the LoTL…I don't think this can be a good thing, because almost everybody here knows siSwati so there would be overcrowding at tertiary." (Individual interview).

L4 even argued*: "Today, if you know English you are a superior person since English is the must pass subject, it's a universal subject that is why we have to learn in English….we should be happy and satisfied with what we have as Swazis and stop being fake...like myself...I never used to eat ribs because they were called 'timbambo', but now whites came with a modern name 'ribs' and I enjoy them now. Even 'umlindzelo' –all night prayer-people now attend those in their numbers because it has a modern name now yet it's the same thing with what Zionists would hold in the past. So, I strongly believe that if siSwati would be empowered in schools, then that would be good." (Focus group).*

L5 commented, "There is nothing we can do at the moment except to try and know English well because whether we like it or not…it is the language we use to learn at school." (Focus group).

L6 believes, "...as I've said before that English is an International language it helps a lot in communication…as I said earlier, making siSwati the LoTL in Swaziland won't be easy and also expensive....to translate the words in a whole book into siSwati and then even the money notes need to be translated because we cannot translate only the books." (Individual interview).

In as much as the respondents believe English should be treated the same as other subjects such as Science, they also believed that it is important for them to know it because it is an international language. It is imperative to note that learners view English as very important because all the subjects are being taught in English except siSwati, something which was inherited from our former colonizer Britain. The fact that we live in a global community exacerbates the problem even further as there is genuine need for communication with the wider world. There is a glaring similarity among the LEPs for many African states today. They all have one thing in common-and that is, they adopted their former colonial languages as the language of teaching and learning (Mwelwa and Spencer 2013, Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja 2013, Knagg 2013, Rudwick and Parmegiani 2013, Glanz 2013). English therefore continues to enjoy a hegemonic status over siSwati because it was fully adopted into being the LoTL when independence was attained in Swaziland in 1968.

The LEPs therefore have planted a seed in the learners' minds that former colonial languages are actually more important than the indigenous languages hence the reason why Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize (2013) argue that there is need for rejuvenation and

rebirth in the use of African languages especially in higher education. Actually, Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) hold a different view and argue that African languages need to be assigned higher value in the entire education system, right from primary level through to secondary and tertiary institutions. Even though these authors have dissenting views on when and where should the African languages be assigned higher value, one thing clear is that they all agree that African languages have to be developed into LoTL. In fact, Thamaga, Chitja and Mbatha (2012) argue that African languages should be seen as partnering with English and not replacing English in the classroom. The LEP in Swaziland, just like in many other African states, has therefore assigned higher value to English. As a result, a majority of the learners want to be taught in English because they have seen it being decorated as being of more value than their own MT siSwati.

As Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2013:13) reiterate the significance of language, they claim that "language influences the thought processes of the learner. It plays a critical role in cognitive learning and in the development of logic, reason, critical thinking and new knowledge". The LoTL has therefore had a great impact on the way learners view ESL. The learners interpreted the use of English as the LoTL to mean that English is more important than siSwati.

4.3.3 WHY DO LEARNERS WANT ENGLISH TO REMAIN THE LoTL: LANGUAGE AND EARNINGS-UPWARD MOBILITY IN THE WORLD OF WORK

The learners kept on pointing out that English language is crucial because it prepares them for the world of work whereby upward mobility is almost impossible without adequate English skills. English for them was their only solution to better earnings, their 'knight in shining armor'. Here is what they said on the relationship that exists between language and the world of work.

L1 said*, "Job opportunities can be scarce. People stay at home with their qualifications; they do not get jobs without the English language skills….Of course there are benefits of learning in siSwati but then eventually who is going to employ us? It's good to know siSwati but I don't think it helps a lot when you need a job." (Individual interview).*

L2 shared similar sentiments when he argued that*, "If you know English, you stand better chances of being hired than somebody who does not. When we go to job interviews, we will have a problem of speaking English." (Individual interview).*

L3 explained*, "Jobs that pay well require good English skills." (Individual interview).*

L4 added, *"Besides, who is going to employ us with siSwati? English is the better language and we must accept that it is a language used worldwide. … moved on to open his small*

business, but bear in mind that had he passed English, maybe he would be a teacher today, earning a decent salary." (Individual interview).

L5 went further and argued that, *"Swaziland needs industries to grow her economy and we will need to acquire raw materials from other countries. The question is how we would obtain these without competence in English language." (Individual interview).*

L6 argued*, "I like siSwati but I know that if I want a job that pays me good money, I have to learn and pass English, it goes hand in hand definitely. Besides, most companies here use expatriates so we need to be able to communicate with those people from other countries." (Individual interview).*

All the six respondents here believed that English language skills are the gateway to better job opportunities without which it would be difficult to get a job. Job opportunities are scarce if one failed to pass English because as already mentioned above, English is the language for upward mobility such that without English proficiency, it remains difficult to secure a lucrative paying job (de Wet 2002). As discussed earlier on in this chapter, people in general, especially parents believe that learners must use English as the LoTL because the chances of securing a good job without English proficiency are quite slim. The learners here even insinuated that the certificates they get upon completing school are actually useless if they did not get a credit pass in English. So the situation here is that we see English language as a gatekeeper that allocates jobs, education, political participation and self-esteem (Laitin and Ramachandran, 2014).

English is seen as the language of trade and industry hence the knowledge of English is perceived to be essential for economic empowerment (de Wet 2002). Lack of English proficiency therefore results in poverty and marginalization in the world of work something which Kamwangamalu (2005) affirms when he argues that former colonial languages have more economic value as compared to local languages. They thus have more to offer in terms of earnings than indigenous languages.

4.3.4 LEARNERS VIEWS TOWARDS SISWATI BEING MADE A GATEKEEPER SUBJECT

In the Swazi context, the learners are currently taught and assessed in English which is not their MT. As already mentioned in this chapter, some of the learners fail to do well in English no matter how much effort they put into it. The learners were asked the question, "In other countries, the MT is used for education from preschool to University, would it be possible to do the same in Swaziland? Why? Why not? The learners held the following dissenting views.

L5 said, "*The Ministry of Education would also have to standardize the siSwati papers so that those who go to the University are those who are truly knowledgeable in siSwati .....because siSwati is a language just like English....it's just that English is used worldwide. The way I see it is that if we were not a poor country, siSwati could perhaps be an International language just like English." (Focus group).*

L3 said, *"SiSwati can be developed to be the passing subject...because everybody here can speak siSwati. Even though some students fail it, I believe many more students can qualify for college or University." (Focus group).*

L1 believed, *"I don't think this can be a good thing, because almost everybody here knows siSwati so there would be overcrowding at tertiary." (Focus group).*

L4 said, "I think it is partially true that in our country we can introduce siSwati as the language of teaching and learning, just like French in France. But in France, they don't need to speak other people's languages since their economy is really improved, they do not need to even ask for grants from other governments, they are independent of themselves, which is why they don't need much help from other countries and... English.... they just learn it as an intermediate subject to be able to communicate with others." (Focus group).

L2 had this to say*, "SiSwati is well capable of being the LoTL, after all, it is a language just like English". (Individual interview).*

Lastly L6 said, "I think the standard of education would drop dramatically if siSwati would be the LoTL." (Individual interview).

L3, L4 and L2 believe that siSwati is well capable of being a gatekeeper subject or being the mark of intelligence amongst the Swazi learners. L4 further brought in a new dimension, being that, the economy of a country determines the language choice that shall be made by it. This could not be further from the truth since most education systems in Africa are donor dependent, governments find it to be an uphill task to provide the necessary resources to support the use of African languages in education (Kamwendo, 2009). This is one other subtheme that was discovered during the research study and it shall be unpacked in detail later on in the chapter. In the same vein L3 believed that with siSwati as the passing subject, more learners would actually make it to university or college. The reason is implied when she says "...everybody here can speak siSwati" which was interpreted to mean that every student is proficient in the siSwati language hence stands at a better position to attain academic excellence if it could be used as the language of the exit tests which learners write to qualify for University or college. As Gandara et. al (2003) argue that if the language of

assessment is the L1 of a learner, that test will provide an accurate reflection of the learner's knowledge and capabilities which will in turn help teachers to enhance their instruction on their learners. If this would materialize, it would quell the general trend across the African continent that of excessive overdependence on the languages of the former colonial powers looking at the fact that African languages other than English can serve as the medium of instruction all the way from preschool up to higher education (Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize, 2014).

As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, UNESCO promotes the use of the MT in education. UNESCO argues that MT in education is essential and should therefore be extended to as late a stage in education as possible (UNESCO 2003). This has been validated by numerous research studies which have all come to the conclusion that children learn better when they can understand the teacher and the material is presented to them in a language that they speak. The exclusive use of English as the LoTL hinders a child's intellectual development yet studies show that learners become actively involved when a local language is used (Mwelwa and Spencer, 2013). A study by Khosa (2012) proved this to be true when the Grade 3 learners she was observing were better able to identify more nouns from a text after the teacher had code switched to Xitsonga, the learners' local language. The learners had previously found this to be quite challenging for them. So, learners understand better when concepts are explained in a language that they understand and they partake joyfully during the lesson.

Moreover, Glanz (2013) maintains that students who learn through a LoTL which they do not master are therefore disadvantaged in assessments. This was proven in yet another study by Gandara et.al (2003) in the state of California, which came to the conclusion that when the learners are not proficient in the language of assessment (English), their scores on a test in English will not accurately reflect their knowledge of the subject assessed. Therefore the exclusive reliance on English language norm referenced achievement test for L2 speakers of English was inappropriate for those students. In this context therefore, the L1 speakers of English were always put at an advantage to pass the high school exit exam than the L2 learners of English in California.

4.4 LANGUAGE AND THE ECONOMY

The learners kept on bringing forward a link between language and the economy of a country. They believed that the economy of a country determines the choice to be made in as far as LoTL is concerned. This is what they said.

L1 argued, *"Swaziland is a developing country, in order for Swaziland to improve English must be spoken in order to communicate with other people around the world. To put siSwati as the language of teaching and learning....it can cost us a lot, in fact Swaziland is struggling to provide basic needs to its people, and so if we can do this, it can affect us so much that even the standard of living can deteriorate." (Focus group).*

L2 further mentioned, *"We are still unable to produce personnel that can represent our companies; most of the companies here belong to external people. It goes hand in hand definitely; most companies here use expatriates so we need to be able to communicate with those people from other countries." (Focus group).*

L3 argued, *"Unfortunately if we can demote English, our economy can suffer because we depend on external help greatly". (Focus group).*

L4 mentioned that, *"English is used extensively in Africa especially the developing countries. Developed countries such as Italy and Germany use their own languages instead of English. We cannot be a successful country economically if we can use siSwati because not many people speak siSwati." (Focus group).*

L5 believed that, *"..But for the sake of development in our country, we need to use English." (Focus group).*

L6 finally concluded and said, *"So this would not be good for our country. Moreover, we are not economically stable so using siSwati and dropping English would not be good for the country. Even our neighboring countries would not look at us in a good way because they also use English so what would we be implying really?*" (Focus group).

The learners' views couldn't be further from the truth. Former colonial languages such as English, French or Portuguese are seen as the languages of industry and trade despite them being spoken by only a small minority and thereby excluding a large proportion of the population from participating in the economic mainstream (de Wet, 2002). In Swaziland for instance about 10% of the population is able to speak English fluently just like the same figure is true for French former colonies such as Niger, Burundi, Mauritania and many more

(Laitin and Ramachandran, 2014). This minority however, controls or runs the economy because of the higher economic value of colonial languages hence Kamwangamalu (2005) argues that it is this imbalance that needs to be corrected in order for local languages to have value in the linguistic market. This is because currently, many people fear to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water if they stick to indigenous languages and are unable to converse fluently in English (de Wet, 2002).

4.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Brock-Utne (2010, 2013) has written extensively about the underperformance of African students in the schooling system due to the language barrier (Mkhize, Dumisa and Chitindingu, 2014). Whereas promoting English as the LoTL may promote neo-colonialism in African states, thus placing the economy and power in the hands of a few English speaking elite, it remains a sore reality that African languages are still a long way off from being validated as the LoTL (de Wet, 2002). Kamwendo (2015b) further notes that African languages are still being frowned upon because people question their ability to lead one to well-paying jobs. As a result, scholars of indigenous African languages concur that these languages need to be developed and empowered so that they can move away from just being languages of communication only. After all, the over-reliance on exoglossic languages in education systems in the African continent is not based upon sound pedagogy but rather on ideologies that have their roots in the tyrannical colonial experience (Mkhize, Dumisa and Chitindingu, 2014).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter focuses on analyzing the data which was collected using interviews and focus group discussions. Data will be analyzed in accordance with the three research questions which are outlines below.

The aim of this study was to document learners' constructions of English as the gatekeeper subject in schools in Swaziland. This emanated from the fact that language scholars view English as being a gatekeeper to non-native learners hence impeding on their ability to receive and internalize instruction or content delivered to them using English. English is used as the LoTL in schools in Swaziland while also being the official language in formal domains. This has prompted the researcher to view English as a bridge which learners have to cross in order for them to get access into the land of success where there are ample opportunities for personal development and growth (see conceptual framework). The study therefore views English as the yardstick to determine intelligence among learners because research has proven that those learners with adequate English skills stand a better chance to absorb the content which is presented to them in this language. This chapter discusses the findings of the learners' experiences and perceptions pertaining to English being a gatekeeper subject. The findings will be discussed as per each research question. These research questions are outlined below.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The whole research study was framed by the following three research questions;

1. What are the learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in Swaziland
2. What are the learners' positions regarding the English as a gatekeeper claim?
3. What are the learners' views on the use of English as the language of teaching and learning in Swaziland?

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE OF ENGLISH IN EDUCATION AND OTHER DOMAINS IN SWAZILAND?

This study found that the learners saw English as being a very important element in their journey to acquire an education. English was actually seen as a basic element without which a learner cannot succeed in his or her academic journey. It was seen as a fundamental requirement to have adequate English skills because it is the language through which teaching and learning takes place. In other words, without adequate mastery of English, the learners believed it was difficult to grasp the content delivered hence leading students to fail at the end of the academic year. Proficiency in English language therefore was interpreted to be a cornerstone for the learners' success in education especially because all the subjects except siSwati are taught in English. Even though this may not always be the reality on the ground, with some teachers code switching, however the tests and examinations are given in English language hence the learners concluded that those with weak skills in English find it hard to attempt the questions in a satisfactory manner.

The study also found that those learners with weak English skills struggle to pass ESL, which is a very crucial subject that either enables or disenables them to get admitted at tertiary level. It is an impossibility to succeed academically for a learner who failed to get a pass in English. The EDSEC policy clearly stipulates that learners need to pass ESL before they can proceed to their next level of study. What this implies is that even if a learner would get distinctions in all the other subjects, but if they failed to get a pass in ESL, then they are considered to have failed the examination. Some learners opt for upgrading the subjects they failed while some restart in Form 4 in order to get better results.

On another note, the learners alluded to the fact that English was of a very high value to them because it opens job opportunities for them. As explained by the drawing depicting the conceptual framework, the siSwati zone does not offer much opportunity yet the English zone flourishes with opportunities for employment and academic advancement and more. Jobs that remunerate well require skilled labor and English was seen to be one of the skills required in order to secure a good job. As a result, those who lack English skills often end up missing opportunities and being sidelined in favor of those who possess those skills. This is equated to falling into the river whereby the learners basically fail to make it to the land of plenty hence they then have to make do with whatever means in order to earn a living. In fact, the learners here noted that it would be difficult to even hold up the job interview with the lack of English skills. So, the learners' understanding of the value of English in the education system in Swaziland was that it was a very crucial component to the learners'

academic success. Failing siSwati for instance was seen as not being as bad as failing English because it is not the LoTL nor the subject that determines if one can or cannot be admissible to a college or University.

These findings are in line with May (2007) who concur that having English language skills puts one in an elevated position as compared to somebody who does not speak English. This is the reason why many people, given a chance, would opt to acquire English skills because it offers better job opportunities than any other language (Pennycook 2008 in Roux 2014). Ferguson (2013) even claims that there is a link between English and getting a job. Finally, many people feel that having English language skills is the path out of poverty and a sure entry to certain well-paying professions (UNESCO, 1953). Even though this may not always be the case, but the fact stands that if one has good English skills, they stand a better chance of obtaining a job than one who does not have them. So the value of English cannot indeed be doubted.

5.2.1 THE VALUE OF ENGLISH IN OTHER OFFICIAL DOMAINS IN SWAZILAND

The language planning policy of the country is in line with what Cobarrubias (1983) refers to as linguistic pluralism. It actually recognizes the two languages as being co-official in the country, English and siSwati. Unlike in other countries such as South Africa whereby there are eleven official languages due to the different ethnic groups who reside in that country, Swaziland is not divided along tribal lines hence siSwati is the only mother tongue. Just like the majority of African countries such as Malawi, Lesotho, Kenya and others, English, the former colonial language was adopted to be the other official language. Moving away from the education sector whereby it was clear beyond any shadow of doubt that English is the only recognized official language by virtue of it being the LoTL, the study made the following conclusions of the value of English in other official domains in Swaziland.

The learners reaffirmed that English is widely used not only in the education sector but is also the preferred language in other official domains in Swaziland. For instance, the learners made examples of the High Court of Swaziland whereby trials and verdicts are delivered in English. This elevates the value of English. The use of an international language, English in this case, as a lingua franca in official domains is what Cobarrubias (1983) refers to as internationalization. Even going to a cinema requires one to be conversant with English language because the movies are mostly in English. It is clear beyond reasonable doubt therefore that even though there are drives to vernacularize siSwati as a language, such as producing the siSwati dictionary by Mcmillan Swaziland, a books publishing company,

English is a formidable language that opens doors or closes them for those who lack English skills. English is therefore of more value when one studies other official domains in which it is used.

5.2.2 HOW CRUCIAL IS IT FOR THE SECONDARY LEARNER TO BE COMPETENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

As already mentioned earlier with the conceptual framework for this study, English was viewed as a bridge which enables the teaching and learning process to run smoothly. According to the conceptual framework, a learner who has good English skills is better able to grasp the content that is delivered using English as the LoTL. Moreover, a secondary learner who has passed English stands a better chance of being admitted to tertiary institutions. The learners in this study therefore viewed having adequate English language skills as being an integral component of their success in learning.

The study found that the learners were well aware of the repercussion of not being competent in English. First, they alluded to the fact that it was necessary for them as learners to be exposed to environments where English is used while at a young age because they believed that developing the skills of using English depended also on how much a person was exposed to it. They decried the fact that a majority of them do not have access to environments which allow them to use English outside of the classroom. As a result, many of them only use English in school because when they get home, they switch to speak siSwati their mother tongue. One learner, L4 even mentioned that in some family setups it was interpreted as a sign of disrespect to speak with the elders in English. The study concluded therefore that Swazi learners face challenges in their quest for improved English language skills ranging from lack of access to reading materials at home which they could use to improve their mastery of English.

The study found that the lack of English language skills obstructs the learners' ability to receive instruction and content given in that language. These findings are in agreement with an assertion made by Glanz (2013) who argues that students who learn in a language that they do not master are disadvantaged when it comes to assessment. These learners according to Glanz (2013) often perform poorly as compared to first language speakers of the LoTL. Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja (2014) also concur with this assertion and argue that learners who learn in their MT are often more resourceful and better academically prepared than those who use a second or even a foreign language. It comes as no surprise therefore

that the learners who partook in this study felt inadequate and ill prepared to absorb content if they have weak English language skills.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE LEARNERS' POSITIONS REGARDING THE ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER CLAIM?

This study found that learners view English as a gatekeeper on two levels. First, learners believe that English obstructs their ability to grasp knowledge because it is a second language to them which they hardly know and are conversant in yet it remains the LoTL. Secondly, learners viewed English as a gatekeeper in the sense that it is the determining yardstick of whether they should or should not be admissible to tertiary institutions in the country. This would mean that even if they pass with flying colors the other subjects, they will not be eligible for admission at tertiary for the simple reason that they have failed English, a language which is foreign to them. So, the study concluded that learners understood English language to be that subject which hinders their academic growth should they happen not to do well in it. All the same, they also understood English to be an International language which is relevant and important in their lives because not being conversant in it once again disadvantages them especially when they get into the world of work.

Moreover, the study found that learners believe that there is no success for people who lack English language skills. They believe that English opens doors which would otherwise be shut for somebody who does not have English language skills. So the conclusion was that English does offer a potential path out of poverty (Ferguson 2013, Matsinhe 2013 and Kamwendo 2013). This comes from the fact that the respondents have seen both the benefits of doing well in English as well as the repercussions of failing to get a credit pass.

The learners' views are in line with scholars of African languages who are in agreement that for now, English cannot be separated from the economy such that English is the language of the economy (May, 2007).This was a crucial finding of the study since learners pointed out that they are adversely affected and marginalized if they have not passed English. Learners view English as their gateway out of poverty (May, 2007). As a result, they felt the need to pass it well. They were in support of those students who, upon discovering that they had not passed ESL, went back to re-write it again until they passed it.

5.3.1 FACTORS GUIDING THE LEARNERS' POSITION REGARDING THE ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER CLAIM

The learners' constructions were also shaped by their parents who encouraged them to pass ESL. The study discovered through the interviews held with the learners that their parents in Swaziland go to great lengths in trying to help their children to pass English. On top of encouraging their children, the learners revealed that some parents even go to the extent of forking out money in order to pay fees for their restarting students. It was found in the study also that some parents encourage their children to strive for better English skills even though English is not used by the majority of families to converse in at home. This is in agreement with what Thamaga-Chitja and Mbatha (2012) declare that in order for a specific language to be the LoTL, it must be first understood by the learners. Understanding English would therefore require the Swazi learners to be exposed to environments in which it is extensively used because the lack of this environment would otherwise hinder their intellectual development (Mwelwa and Spencer 2013). Adegoke and Ibode (2011) assert that unless the learners are proficient in the second language, such students are likely to be retarded in reasoning as well as in assessment tested in English.

Another factor which made the learners view English as a gatekeeper is the country's LEP. By virtue of it being the LoTL, and also the fact that without it one cannot be accepted to institutions of higher learning, learners concluded that English is a gatekeeper. Even though a huge majority still struggle to pass English language, the prevailing attitude amongst them is that they must push themselves and keep trying because without it, their lives will not amount to anything important. They even suggested that those students who upon getting their results, discover that they have not passed it, should be willing to go back to school and do it again.

5.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE LEARNERS' VIEWS ON THE USE OF ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SWAZILAND?

This study indicated that even though a majority of Swazi learners struggle to pass English language, they still believed it is reasonable for it to remain the LoTL. One thing they were not hesitant about was the fact that siSwati should not become the LoTL because it is only spoken by a very small fraction of the world's population. They really did not mind English being the LoTL and were determined to pass it well so that it does not become a hindrance to their brilliant future. The learners therefore saw ESL as that crucial stepping stone that can make them to bounce to the highest academic standards possible. This is in agreement

with the findings of a study done by Setati (2005) in Ndamba (2008) that generally students have a negative attitude towards their own languages while having a huge appetite for exoglossic languages. Another study by Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) also came to a similar conclusion that students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal were not necessarily most comfortable using exclusively their mother tongue in any given communicative situation. To cite an example, one participant in Rudwick and Parmegiani's study was so vocal about the fact that speaking isiZulu made him feel more in touch with his Zuluness and ultimately Africanness but still he had reservations with using isiZulu exclusively. This is what Kamwendo (2010) calls denigrating the local yet glorifying the foreign. So, learners embrace the practice that English is and therefore should remain the LoTL. But the question here is, does gaining competence in this global language depend on whether it is used as a medium of instruction or when it is taught as a subject or both (Kamwendo, 2015a). The fact remains here that if learners gain competence early enough in the language, they stand better chances of doing well in it later on when they begin to use it as the medium of instruction (Kamwendo, 2015a).

This study further concluded that learners feel that English should become the LoTL at the earliest possible grade or better yet, at preschool level. They viewed the EDSEC policy which allows siSwati to be used as the LoTL in the first three grades of primary school as being a malfunction. The learners actually believed that by receiving instruction in English early enough, they would then be in a better position to learn English and be better able to understand it so that it does not hinder their learning as they progress to higher levels of schooling. This is an unfortunate and misinformed standpoint by the learners because they actually believe that knowing English is equal to knowledge which is far from being true. Their stance is actually contrary to the findings of another study done by Mwelwa and Spencer (2013) whereby it was discovered that learners become more actively involved and answer more questions when a local language is used as the LoTL instead of a second or foreign language. The study by Mwelwa and Spencer (2013) further concluded that the exclusive use of English as the LoTL hinders a child's intellectual development because the language being used at home which is the one he comprehends better is not the language of the school. According to Kamwendo (2013), there is a distinction between English as a subject of study and English as a medium of teaching and learning. This implies that the learners can be taught English language as a subject of study without it becoming the LoTL.

The learners standpoint discussed above is actually supported by many misinformed parents who also believe that their children need an international language such as English and not the so called good-for-nothing African languages (Kamwendo, 2013). In the same vein, Khosa (2012) argues that many black parents consider their indigenous languages good

only for social purposes and not for education. This is the reason why some parents will send their children to private schools which are English medium schools so they can learn English better. However, as Rudwick and Parmegiani (2013) claim, there is no research which proves that knowing English automatically makes a learner to become successful in life.

A study by Gandara et. al (2003) established that in the USA, English learner students (migrant students who spoke English as a second language), performed poorly in the high school exit examination when compared to the English speakers (those students who spoke English as their mother tongue). Even so, this does not mean that the English speakers automatically become more successful just because they have passed English since there are other requirements they still have to meet before they can enroll with tertiary institutions. The study by Gandara et.al (2013) therefore does not hold water because there are learners who pass English but fail the other subjects and this renders them failures. The conceptual framework for this study illustrated this point clearly as it illuminated the fact that there are learners who are quite conversant in English language such that they excel in it. So, English has not become a gatekeeper for those learners. However, passing English does not automatically mean that the learner has qualified for tertiary education. As a result, there are learners who pass English but still fail to meet the requirements which would enable them to be admissible to institutions of higher learning. So, the learners' belief falls away.

There are countries such as Botswana who have reverted to early exposure to English as a medium of instruction, in standard 1 (Kamwendo, 2015a). The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) has limited the use of Setswana only to standard 1 yet prior to this policy, Setswana was used as the LoTL from standard 1 to 4 and then English took over from standard 5 onwards. The argument for the Botswana government for introducing this policy is that it helps learners to be better able to use English if it is introduced early enough in their schooling life. Part of the RNPE is stated as follows:

"There is a concern about the poor performance of primary school children in English and part of the problem is that children do not get used to English early enough in the learning process yet they are required to write their examinations in the language. Using English as the medium of instruction from standard 2 will improve their performance." (Republic of Botswana 1994:60 in Kamwendo 2015a).

However, as Kamwendo (2015a) argues, there is no empirical evidence which indicates that using English at the earliest possible time will enhance the learners' proficiency in the language thus resulting to better academic performance. In fact other countries which had gone for early exposure to English such as Zambia are now changing course in the sense

that indigenous languages are to serve as media of instruction in the first four grades of primary school (Kamwendo, 2015a).

To argue this point further, the learners' standpoint falls away when one realizes that there are countries that do not use English as the LoTL at all, or in the first years of primary learning such as Tanzania. In Tanzania Kiswahili is used as the LoTL for the whole duration of the primary learning (Babaci-Wilhite and Geo-Jaja, 2014). Their education system is a success story because more primary learners are able to pass because there are no language barriers for them. So, using English at the earliest possible time carries no research-proven advantages for the learners.

The study also established that learners were not opposed to empowering siSwati so that it grows from the level it currently occupies today. They were just not comfortable using it as the LoTL though still arguing that once developed, siSwati would be well capable of being used in all spheres of language use the same way English is used nowadays. This is contrary to the belief perpetrated by proponents of exoglossic language education for Africa that African languages lack the academic discourse to handle higher levels of schooling. This is in line with the African linguistic renaissance which Kamwendo (2015b) defines as uplifting the status and use of African languages and taking them into domains where their economic value will be uplifted by making them become income generators or job-creating entities. Kamwendo (2015b) further argues that many people look down upon African languages because they have slept for so long that it is safe to now compare them to devalued currencies. However, the reawakening of African languages can lead to a thriving African languages industry just like the flourishing English language teaching industry (Kamwendo, 2015b).

5.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the study in accordance with the three research questions. The learners' constructions of English as the gatekeeper subject were outlined and further discussed. The next chapter will summarize the findings of the study and further draw conclusions before making recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter aims to make a summary of the findings in accordance with the three research objectives. It will further draw conclusions and then make recommendations based on the findings. The three research objectives are outlined below.

6.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The whole study was guided by the following three research objectives:

1. To establish learners' understanding of the value of English in education and other domains in Swaziland.
2. To document the learners' positions regarding the English as a gatekeeper claim.
3. To determine the learners' views on the use of English as the language of teaching and learning in Swaziland.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that Swazi learners understand the value of English in education and other domains to be so high. English is used as the language of teaching and learning. They viewed this as contributing highly to the high numbers of learners who fail at the end of the year. Moreover it used as the preferred language in other official domains such as the high court. The EDSEC policy was found to contribute a lot in influencing the learners to view English as being of a very high value. They understood English to be more important than siSwati because of this. Even though they are not adequately competent in English, they still believed it is important for them to strive for better skills in it because lacking English skills impeded on their academic success.

The study also found that the learners view English as being a gatekeeper in different aspects of life such as education and also in the world of work. English determines their success because it is the LoTL yet the majority is not adequately conversant in it. Moreover,

English is the language that is used in the world of work. Learners believed that a person who lacks English skills will struggle to go through the interview phase because formal interviews are not held in siSwati. The fascinating part however is that the study found that learners are not comfortable with the idea of the current status quo to change. They want English to remain a gatekeeper due to a number of reasons. First, they believe that removing English as the gatekeeper will isolate them and keep them far away from civilization. Secondly, they insisted that if English were to be removed as the gatekeeper, the economy of the country might suffer a lot since Swaziland still depends on foreign trade and aid a lot to boost her economy. So, they believed we should go with the flow and let English be a superior language for us just like in other African countries.

As already alluded to above, the findings of the study indicated that learners want English language to remain the language of teaching and learning. Even though it poses a great challenge for multitudes of them to pass it well, this still did not dampen their spirits hence they have a strong liking for English. They lamented the fact that they are not adequately exposed to English-rich environments that would enable them to have better skills in English. However, they still could not foresee a bright future for themselves without English language. As a result they decried the fact that the EDSEC policy only insists on English to ne the LoTL from Grade 4 onwards. Their belief was that the government should go straight for English right from Grade 1 as this would help them learn better without having to worry about the switch to English later on in Grade 4.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY

The findings of the study have directed the researcher to make the following conclusions.

First, English language forms a fundamental part of the education system in Swaziland as a whole. It is virtually impossible for now to disengage the two because one cannot be a success without the other. After all, learners believe they would not be properly educated with the absence of English in the school syllabus.

Secondly, English does become a gatekeeper to those learners who do not have adequate mastery of the language. Learners have a challenge receiving instruction in English. Moreover, those learners who have failed English cannot be admitted to institutions of higher learning. Such a conclusion was confirmed by the ECOS annual analysis report which proved that those learners who failed English are recorded as failures hence not qualified to go to University or college.

Furthermore, Swazi learners have a strong liking for English. Even though they feel proud of siSwati their only mother tongue, they also like their first official language despite the fact that it often hinders them from academic growth if they fail to get a credit pass in it.

Lastly, the study found that numerous factors impact negatively on the learners' potential to gain adequate English language skills such as poverty. Many Swazi learners come from disadvantaged families who cannot afford to offer their children more than the basics in life. As a result, it is a challenge for them to get exposed to English language outside of the classroom environment.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study have convinced the researcher to offer the following recommendations in relation to the learners' constructions of English being a gatekeeper subject.

It is a reality that English language will continue to remain the LoTL in Swaziland for as long as siSwati is not developed so that it can assume this role. Thamaga, Chitja and Mbatha (2012) argue in this regard that most African languages are still a long way from being developed into academic languages hence the hegemony of English and other exoglossic languages such as French, looks set to continue for years to come. Kamwendo, Hlongwa and Mkhize (2014) concur and argue that there is need for rejuvenation and rebirth in the use of African languages.

The study therefore recommends that there should be a continued assessment and analysis of how English can be learnt without it being a hindrance to the learners' success in learning. Many more governments in the world are actually currently looking at ways in which English can co-exist with the indigenous languages (Kirkpatrick 2013). As Kamwendo (2013) asserts that there is a distinction between English as a subject of study and English as a medium of teaching and learning. So, the study recommends that English be learnt as a subject of study for communication purposes with the wider world but then be stripped of its powers of being the passing subject. This will enable more learners to pass and be eligible for tertiary education. The truth is that we all need English to communicate with other people from different parts of the world hence we should learn it but it should cease being a gatekeeper subject and be treated the same way as all the other subjects such as Science or Math which are not used as the yardstick to determine the learners eligibility to get into institutions of higher learning.

Moreover, the government is encouraged to continue supporting the learners with programs that shall strengthen their literacy skills in English. According to Khumalo (2013), over three quarters of the Swazi learners reside in rural areas where access to English-rich environments is scarce. The government is therefore persuaded to continue providing the learners with material and programs that will sharpen their English literacy skills. Non-governmental organizations such as FUNDZA which organize debates in schools need to continue working more closely with the government in order accord the learners a richer environment to acquire and practice using their English skills. At this point in time English is the gatekeeper subject. The current status quo was established long before independence and has prevailed over the years. Even though the demerits of using a L2 as a LoTL has been extensively discussed in this dissertation, the reality is that currently, learners will not be able to realize their success in education if they do not pass English. It is from that point of view therefore that the researcher recommends that the government must work hand in hand with the teachers to encourage learners to do extensive reading. Extensive reading defined simply is reading as much as possible, for your pleasure, and at a rate that is convenient for you. Ewert (2014) defines it as reading quickly, large amounts of easy, varied and interesting self-selected material. When a learner practices extensive reading, they read starting with simple books that will create enjoyment for them in such a way that the culture of reading will be developed in them. According to Ewert (2014), extensive reading helps the L2 learner to have improved skills in the L2 whilst also increasing the learners' vocabulary.

To add on this, the reality is that for most Swazi learners, the material to read may more often than not be scarce to find. Most of them come from disadvantaged backgrounds where the culture of reading is not alive. So, the government should support those schools which do not have libraries by building them libraries and further provide books for the learners to read and ultimately have richer vocabulary. This will enhance their literacy skills in English thus place them in a better position to pass it at the end of the day.

Furthermore, research has proven that having strong linguistic skills in one's MT aids an individual's mastery of a second language (Khosa 2012). It is for this reason therefore that the government is encouraged to vernacularize siSwati hence put more emphasis on its importance so that learners will ultimately understand that their proficiency in it will help them to learn English better.

Lastly, the government should look into avenues of consolidating its resources with those of other countries such as South Africa, whom she shares a cross-border language with, in order to promote and develop siSwati. For instance, both countries could look into

possibilities of introducing siSwati as the LoTL in primary schools especially in those provinces in South Africa where siSwati is a dominant language.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Adding to other factors such as poverty, gender inequality and social class, language has been clearly identified as one of the barriers to learners' equal epistemological access to education (Nomlomo, 2014). It is a great cause for concern that after attaining independence, many African countries still rely on exoglossic languages in their education systems which are obviously not adequately mastered by the African learners. It is evident that the language-in-education policy in Swaziland just like in most other African countries still favors and promotes the use of English and other exoglossic languages in their education systems. It is without a doubt that this has contributed extensively to the high number of Swazi learners who are unable to pass more especially the form 5 exit exam because research has proven that "children learn better when they can understand the teacher and the material is presented to them in a language that they speak", (Babaci-Wilhite 2014:27). The learners in this research have revealed the injustices that they experience as a result of English remaining a LoTL and ultimately the gatekeeper subject. In as much as they believe that English is very important, they are also aware of the consequences that come with failing it.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

23 October 2014

Mrs Dludlu Monicah Siphiwe (214581382)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1365/014M
Project title: Learners' constructions of English as a Gatekeeper subject in Swaziland: A case study of one school in Manzini

Dear Mrs Siphiwe,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 09 October 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor GH Kamwendo
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 **Facsimile:** +27 (0) 31 260 4609 **Email:** ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

P. O. Box 6079

Manzini

21 October 2014

Dear participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Dludlu Monicah Siphiwe. I am a Master's in Education candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.

I intend studying about "Learners' views on English being a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland. I would like you to partake in an oral interview whereby we shall be discussing on the subject mentioned herein. I will further request you to form part of a focus group discussion to discuss this topic further in a group setting.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only and there are no financial benefits. My contact details are:

Email: sphiwedludlu@yahoo.com

Cell: +268 7613 5053.

My supervisor is Professor G.H. Kamwendo, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Supervisor's contacts

Phone no: +27 31 260 3459

Cell no: +27 710 852 438

Email: kamwendo@ukzn.ac.za

Research Office

HSSREC

Tel: + 27 31 260 8350

Fax: + 27 31 260 3093

Email: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Thank-you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I

……

… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE……. ……..

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE HEADTEACHER

P. O. Box 6079

Manzini

Swaziland

The Head teacher

Luthela High School

Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I am Dludlu Monicah Siphiwe, an education M.Ed. candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. My area of research is on 'Learners' constructions of English as a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland: a case study of one secondary school in Manzini.

I humbly seek permission to collect data at your school. I intend to interview some learners in your school. The information gained will be highly confidential, and useful to the schools, and teachers of English in Swaziland. If you have any questions, contact my supervisor Prof. G.H. Kamwendo at Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, at +27 710 852438 (c); +2731 2603459 (w) or electronically kamwendo@ukzn.ac.za.

I greatly appreciate your support to pursue my study. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Dludlu Monicah Siphiwe

APPENDIX D: HEADTEACHER'S PERMISSION LETTER

MBEKELWENI H. S. LUTHERAN

MBEKELWENI HIGH SCHOOL

P.O.Box 198
Kwaluseni

Tel/Fax: 2548006

6 October 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that Mrs Monicah Siphiwe Dludlu has been granted permission to conduct her research on LEARNERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER SUBJECT IN SWAZILAND. Mrs Dludlu will be allowed to work with learners from the Form 4 class.

For further enquiries regarding this, you can contact the principal at the above given address.

Yours Faithfully

M. N. Bhembe

Principal

Mbekelweni High School
P.O. Box 198 Kwaluseni
Tel: 2548 0006

APPENDIX E: LETTER TO THE PARENTS

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Mtali

Libito lami ngingu Monicah Siphiwe Dludlu.Nginguthishela esikolweni I Mbekelweni High school. Kungumanje ngichuba tifundvo tami enyuvesi yaKwazulu-Natali, eEdgewood campus ngaphansi kwa-supervisor wami longu Professor G.H. Kamwendo. Empeleni ngenta luhlolo lolunesihloko lesitsi ‘ Kubaphatsa njani bantfwana besikolwa kufundziswa baphindze bahlolwe kusetjentiswa lulwimi lwesingisi (Learners’ constructions of English as a gatekeeper subject in schools in Swaziland).

Kuhambisana nemtsetfo waleNyuvesi, ngicela imvume yakho kukhulumisana nemntfwana wakho longu…….. ngalesihloko lesingenhla. Sitawukhulumisana sikhatsi lesingaba sigamu seli-awa kuya kulinye li-awa.Uvumelekile kutsi ungamvumela noma umalele umntfwana wakho kutsi angenele lolucwaningo.

Kute sijeziso latasitfola nemntfwana nangabe akhetsa kungalungeneli loluhlolo.Kani futsi nakungenteka lusakatwe emaphephandzabeni lolucwaningo, umntfwana wakho utawuvikeleka ngekutsi ligama lakhe litawufihlwa, kusetjentiswe iNombolo esikhundleni seligama lakhe.

Yonkhe imibono latasipha yona ……, ngeke ibekwe ebaleni kepha itawufihlwa baphatsi labafanele khona eNyuvesi eNatali.

Umntfwana wakho utalungenela loluhlolo ngekutsandza kwakhe akacindzetelwa. Kunjalo nje kute nenzuzo latayitfola yena ngekuvuma kungenela lolucwaningo

Ngicela unake naku lokulandzelako ;

- Yonkhe imibono letfolakele itawusetjentiselwa tinjongo talolucwaningo kuphela, hhayi lokunye.

- Lonkhe lwati lasinike lona umntfwana wakho lutawugcinwa iminyaka ize ibe sihlanu enyuvesi bese ke iyalahlwa.
- Lolucwaningo luhlose kutfola imivo yebantfwana besikolwa mayelana nekufundziswa baphindze bahlolwe kusetjentiswa lulwimi lwesingisi.
- Uma umvumela umntfwana wakho ngicela ukhombise ngekumaka lapha ngentasi:
  -ngiyavuma……..
  -angivumi……

Uma kungenteka kube khona umbuto lonawo mayelana nalolucwaningo, ungatsintsa mine noma supervisor wami. Sitfolakala ku:

1. Mrs M.S. Dludlu

Email: sphiwedludlu@yahoo.com

Cell: 00268 7613 5053

2. Professor G.H. Kamwendo

Main Administration & Tutorial Building

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Contact details: Tel: +27 (0)31-2603531

Cell: +27(0)71 0852 438

E-mail: kamwendo@ukzn.ac.za

Siyabonga kubambisana natsi.

Ngimi lotitfobako

Dludlu Monicah Siphiwe

Incwadzi yekuvuma noma kungavumi kwemtali

Mine..... (ligama lemtali)), umtali wa....., ngiyavuma kutsi alungenele lolucwaningo. Ngiyifundzile lencwadzi futsi ngiyacondza kutsi angicindzetelwa kumvumela umntfwana wami kutsi alungenele.

Kusayina.....

Lusuku.....

APPENDIX F: TURN-IT-IN REPORT

APPENDIX G: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

P. O. Box D 107

The Gables

Swaziland

03 December 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that Siphiwe Monicah Dludlu's thesis entitled, "LEARNERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF ENGLISH AS A GATEKEEPER SUBJECT IN SWAZILAND: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN MANZINI" has gone through the editing process as per the requirement of the university.

I consider the thesis appropriate to meeting the standards for master's level in that the findings are an invaluable contribution to the relevant field by way of informing policymakers and other stakeholders on the position of English Language as a gatekeeper in Swaziland.

Yours sincerely

Nomsa Masuku

Nomsa K. Masuku
Editor @ Emlalatini Development Centre
Tel. (00268)2416 1171 Cell: +268 7680 7124 Email: nomsa.masuku6@gmail.com

APPENDIX H: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term gatekeeper subject?
2. What subject in Swaziland is a gatekeeper? Do you know how it came to be the gatekeeper subject?
3. Do you like English? Why/ why not?
4. Do you like siSwati? Why/ why not?
5. What are your views towards the fact that English is a must-pass subject?
6. How are those learners who have failed English in Form 5 affected by it?
7. Is there a way for these learners who have failed English to make it in life? How?
8. How would you take it if siSwati would be made a gatekeeper subject as well, alongside English?
9. Do you think the standard of Education would be affected in any way by this?
10. How can siSwati be developed in order for it to be a significant language just like English or French?
11. In other countries, the mother tongue is used for education from preschool to University, would it be possible to do the same in Swaziland? Why/ why not?

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There is a claim by language scholars and researchers that English is a gatekeeper on two levels:
   a) As a LoTL
   b) As a passing subject which ensures entry into tertiary institutions
   What is your position regarding this claim?
2. What are your views regarding the fact that English is an international language?
3. The EDSEC policy (2011) in Swaziland stipulates that English should be used as a LoTL from Grade 4 onwards, how do you feel about that?
4. How important is it for secondary learners to be competent in English language in Swaziland?
5. Does the lack of competence in English skills affect learners in their journey to get an education?
6. How often do you get to be exposed to English-rich environments and how does this help you in your quest to have improved competence in English?
7. Research has proven that students learn better if the home language is also the school language. What are your views on that?

APPENDIX J: TRANSCRIPT FOR PILOT STUDY

Teacher: Welcome to this interview session, how are you today?

Student: Thank you madam, I am fine.

Teacher: Ok, by the way, where do you stay? Would you like to tell us more about yourself....what do you enjoy doing during your spare time and any other thing you would like to share with us.

Stud: Well.....I am Neo Zulu; I stay at Madonsa in Manzini with my sister. My real home is in Hhohho but because I needed to be closer to school, I came to live with my sister here in Manzini. During my spare time I enjoy jogging....I do it every after school. I also like doing aerobics especially on weekends.

Teacher: Oh alright, so you like to keep yourself in great shape....I see. Now, we want to talk to other students your age about English language. We want to know what you learners think about English being a gatekeeper subject. Thank you once again for taking part in this study and as mentioned before, your identity is protected and your ideas and the information you will give to us remains confidential. Maybe to start us off Neo, what do you understand by the term gatekeeper subject?

Stud: ehm.....well....this is a subject which when you have failed, you cannot go to the next class...in our school it is English.

Teacher: Ok, I was just about to ask which subject it is....how did English come to be the gatekeeper subject instead of, say, Maths or Science?

Stud: eh....I don't know how English came to be the gatekeeper subject, what I know is that if you pass English, you can go to the next class.

Teacher: Ok, I see. Do you like English? Why?

Stud: Yes I like English, it is an interesting subject. I enjoy it a lot.

Teacher: I see, now how about siSwati, do you like it, and why?

Stud: Yes I like siSwati, but I pass English more than siSwati. I like it but I don't pass it well.

Teacher: ok why do you like siSwati...do you have any reason to give to us?

Stud: I think....eh...when we speak with my friends in siSwati, we understand very well and we cannot speak to old people in English.

Teacher: Ok, I see...how do you feel that English is a gatekeeper subject?

Stud: I think it's a good thing ma'm, because English is spoken everywhere so it is good for us to learn English...also our subjects are in English.

Teacher: I see, so how would you feel if siSwati was made into the gatekeeper subject instead of English?

Stud: SiSwati?...This would not be good because all the books are written in English except for siSwati books.

Teacher: What if the books could be translated into siSwati and then we teach you and you learn in siSwati?

Stud: No, it will not be good because maybe here in school we speak siSwati all of us, but in the University it's not only Swazis who are there. Other people will not understand us and we won't be able to hear them when speaking.

Teacher: Ok....so you don't support that siSwati be made into the gatekeeper subject?

Stud: Yes that will not be good for us.

Teacher: Ok then, moving forward with our conversation, there are learners who you find that they have not passed English especially in the Form 5 exam, how are those learners affected by this?

Stud: (long pause).....Yes some students pass the other subjects and you find that now, they fail English. That is very painful because they cannot be accepted to the University.

Teacher: Ok, so then how does that affect them?

Stud: eish.....(long pause), they have to stay at home; other people go to school again to restart so that they can pass English.

Teacher: Ok, so are you saying that the students have to repeat English alone or they have to just go back to class and do all the subjects?

Stud: Some you find that they have passed the other subjects but failed English, so then those they do only English but there some fail English and other subjects too, so they go back to class to repeat the subjects.

Teacher: Oh, I see. So, are you saying that the parents have to pay again for their schooling?

Stud: Yes, the parents are the one who say they must go back to school and they pay for their children. Some parents say they do not have the money so you cannot go back to school if there is no money for school fees from your parents.

Teacher: I see...coming to a close of our conversation Neo, I know you do not support the idea for siSwati to be the gatekeeper subject but what do you think can be done to siSwati in order to develop it and make it a strong language just like English?

Stud: eh....I think we can teach more people siSwati so that more people know siSwati like English, English is spoken everywhere you go.

Teacher: Ok, I see. In other countries you find that they use the mother tongue, like siSwati, for teaching and learning, from primary school to University. Do you foresee that happening in Swaziland, why or why not?

Stud: As I said before, some people do not understand siSwati because they are not Swazis, so it will not be good for them to learn in siSwati. This will make them to fail because of siSwati, I think we must continue to learn in English because everybody understands English.

Teacher: Neo thank you so much for your time and for sharing your ideas with us. These will go a long way into helping us understand what your views are on the subject of English being a gatekeeper.

Stud: Thank you.

APPENDIX K:TRANSCRIPT FOR THE INTERVIEW DATA

Semi structured interviews were held in November 2014 at Luthela high school. These are the transcripts for the six interviews which were held individually with each student. As already mentioned above, the students will be identified using numbers L1, L2, L3 and so on.

TRANSCRIPT for L1

Teacher: We are talking here about English as a gatekeeper subject, according to your understanding, what is a gatekeeper subject?

L1; well, according to me English is a gatekeeper subject because without English you cannot go to the next class, for example in colleges they require you to get a pass in English, at least you must get a 'C' or more than C, maybe B or A....so English is very important, according to my understanding, it is a basic that you need in order to pass and succeed in life or in your educational studies.

Teacher: ok....when you say it is a basic....do you mean that it is the first subject, all the other subjects come after English in order of importance. Is that what you are saying?

L1; yes, ma'm, it's because English is a basic, it's easy to learn and most of the subjects are written in English in order for everybody to understand...so English is a very good subject, it helps us easily understand any text that is written.

Teacher: ok...I can hear from what you are saying that you really like English, is that so?

L1; yes, I really like English because I'm able to communicate with people worldwide. Nowadays, we are mostly engulfed with industrial relations which is very important to our lives and even to the country because Swaziland needs industries and they will need to acquire raw materials from other countries.....so I really like English because it helps us even in school, you pass because you have passed English and most of the subjects like Science, are written in English.

Teacher: ok....there are those students who you find that they have not done so well in English, how are they affected in life? How does English affect them when they have not passed it...if it does?

L1; a lot of them are affected but some of them, it is an alternative...for example at home there is my cousin, he did well in Science but he failed English. After failing that English, he got an opportunity to study at SCOT, so then he studied there and moved on to open his

small business, but bear in mind that had he passed English, maybe he would today be a teacher, earning a teacher's salary, as I've said earlier on, there are consequences of failing English maybe you have passed well and you wish to go study overseas but you are being overcome....you miss opportunities to study abroad because the first requirement is that you pass English ...yes....so English is that subject which everybody must do well in it in order to succeed.

Teacher: How are those students who have failed English affected, I hear you are talking about your cousin who is successful today, but you see those people who have not passed English, you normally find them across the street and along roads, what can be done....what can they do to help themselves?

L1; according to my understanding, those people need to re-do the English....like to upgrade it or to ask for external help from others such as teachers in order to pass that English.

Teacher: what are your views then....do you think English should continue being the gatekeeper or this should change and English no longer becomes the gatekeeper subject....can you imagine a situation like that? And what do you think could happen maybe to the standard of education if English was to be removed from being a gatekeeper?

L1; if English was going to be the gatekeeper in the country, there are a lot of opportunities that can be introduced in the country. for example you find that there are people in England or America you know that America is a very industrialised country, so people are going o be employed. If you can look at leaflets, you find that there are many job opportunities there, but you need to communicate and speak English well. So in schools, everything must be written in English so that we can learn it. The English also affects people.

Teacher: Moving forward...There are other countries such as Russia, Italy, Spain and a lot more....you find that they use their own mother tongue as the language of teaching and learning....do you think the same can happen in Swaziland...whereby siSwati would be used as the language of teaching and learning?

L1; I think it is partially true that in our country we can introduce siSwati as the language of teaching and learning, just like French in France. Because they don't need to speak to other people since their economy is really improved, they do not need to even ask for grants from other governments, they are independent to themselves, that is why they don't need much help from other countries and... English.... they just learn it as an intermediate subject to be able to communicate with others.

Teacher: If siSwati was to be made the passing subject, what do you think could happen to the standard of education? The quality- would it drop or improve...and what do you think needs to be done to improve siSwati into being the language of teaching of teaching and learning-if maybe that could be done in the future?

L1; there must be, Swaziland is a developing country, in order for Swaziland to improve English must be spoken in order to communicate with other people around the world. To put siSwati as the language of teaching and learning....it can cost us a lot, in fact Swaziland is struggling to provide basic needs to its people, so if we can do this, it can affect us so much that even the standard of living can deteriorate.

Teacher: so the status quo should just remain the same, English should just remain the gatekeeper?

L1; yes, ma'm I think English should remain a gatekeeper because right now, we are looking forward to the kings vision for 2022, without having English to communicate with other people we must speak English to tourists...they are the ones who generate income and revenue for the country...so using English will really help us a lot....teaching siSwati to other people would be very expensive for us as a country.

Teacher; Ok…do you think that as learners you get adequate help and support from your parents in order for you to pass English well as you say that it must remain a gatekeeper subject?

L1; Some parents are greatly concerned about their children's learning. They even go to the school to find out how their children are doing.

Teacher: Thank you so much for sharing your views with us....but before we close...do you like siSwati?

L1; I do like siSwati, because it is my mother language and I learn it since I was born, I'm fluent in siSwati, I know it, I love it but I know that really, I do need English in my life...because there is no progression in life without English.

Teacher: ok...thank you so much for your views and ideas.

L1; my pleasure ma'm

TRANSCRIPTION FOR L2

Teacher: what do you understand ngalesihloko lesitsi nje {on the subject that says} English as a gatekeeper?

L2; ngi understander kutsi singisi sentiwe ngazutsi ngiso lesimcoka kakhulu lekumele sisiphase sitsandza singatsandzi kuze sibe nechance kuchubekela embili {I understand that English has been made to be super important, one subject that we should pass whether we like it or not in order for us to be able to proceed further with our studies.}

Teacher: nawutsi sitsandza singatsandzi ngivungatsi kunebuhlungu kwasangatsi niyafoselelwa lokutsi nisente. Kukanjani lakangwane vele umntfwana kumele asiphase noma kumbe ungasiphasa ungete wasiphas.....kukanjani nje? {when you say whether we like it or we don't, you sound as if you are a bit hurt, like you are being forced to learn it. Could you explain the current status quo here in Swaziland, is every child expected to do it or you can pass it or not pass it-please explain on that.}

L2; kwamele usiphase vele...nawungakasiphasi utsatfwa njengemuntfu lo-useless, lofeyilile kani maybe letinye tifundvo bowutiphasile. {one has to pass it, if you haven't passed it you are as good as useless, one who has failed even if you can pass all the other subjects.}

Teacher: kuhamba njani ngakuwe esingisini? {How is your performance in English?}

L2; ey....vele mine singinika inking madam kakhulu nje.Sometimes ngiyaye ngizame ngawo onkhe emandla ami but ukhandze kutsi angisiphasi....nasibuya la kumaCompositions...ey...sifike singikhiphele mbamba ke lapho. {English is very problematic for me. Sometimes I try my best but still fail to pass it. The compositions...ey...those are my worst nightmare.}

Teacher: How are those learners who have failed English in Form 5 affected by it? Kubalimata kanjani labanye loko? {How are they affected by it?}

L2; kuyabalimata because ababe basakhona kungena emauniversities nasema colleges...ukhandze kutsi lomntfwana sekumele abuyele emuva ayocalela phasi kaForm 4....ukhandze kutsi nebatali sebete imali yekumbhadalela ngenca nje yekutsi ufeyile singisis kuphela. {It affects them because they are unable to gain entry to Universities and

colleges....you find that the child has to go back to Form 4....at times the parents now don't have the money to pay for the child again-just because she/he failed English only.}

Teacher: In some countries, English is taught as a subject only and it is not the gatekeeper subject, what would be your view in doing the same in Swaziland?

L2; ngibona kutsi lesingisi asingatsatfwa njenge passing subject, sibe khona sona njengakulamanye emave...kumcoka loko.....njengoba iSwaziland kuyi developing country kungasita loko {I believe that English should not remain the passing subject, it should be there like in other countries, that's very important for Swaziland because we are still a developing country.}

Teacher: uma kususwa singisi ekubeni yi gatekeeper, sekungabekwa siphi ke sifundvo sibe ngule gatekeeper? {Which other subject could then become the gatekeeper if English language is removed as a gatekeeper?}

L2; siSwati ngicabanga kungaba ngiso lesimcoka.....ngoba siSwati wonkhe muntfu uyakhona kusikhuluma although labanye sibehlula but kungaba ncono bangaba baningi labaphasako bangene lama colleges nase university
{siSwati can be developed to be the passing subject...because everbody here can speak siSwati. Even though some students fail it, I believe many more students can qualify for college or University}.

Teacher: ok..... Do you like siSwati? Why/ why not?

L2; yes...lulwimi lengkhule ngalo lengiluvako ngikhululekile nje kukhuluma noma ngayini. {Yes, siSwati is a language I grew up conversing in, I understand it and I'm free to express myself in it.}

Teacher: ok....I see....moving forward with our conversation...kunemave le lapho khona kusetjentiswa lolulwimi lwaleso sive kufundzisa umtfwana kusukela epreschool aze ayofika enyuvesi...countries like boGermany naboSpain....nase Britain, uwakhandze atfutfuka kakhulu lawo mave. {There are countries where you find that the MT is used as a LoI from preschool right up to University, countries like Germany, Spain, Britain. Those countries are quite well developed....what would you say on that, is it a possibility for us?}

L2; no, kungaba lukhuni lokutsi siphakamise siSwati ngoba tsine lakangwane asikhoni kukhicita bantfu labangamelela tinkapane tetfu lakangwane incumbi yetinkapane timelelwe bantfu bangephandle {No, it can be a difficult task for us to develop siSwati because we are still unable to produce personnel that can represent our companies; most of the companies here belong to external people.}

Teacher: so, what are you saying....utsi umnotfo welive uhlangene kakhulu nalolulwimi lolusentjetiswako kuleso sive {So, what are you saying....are you trying to say that the economy of a country determines the official language that's going to be used in that country?}

L2; kuyahambisana vele, tinkapane letinengi tisasebentisa bantfu bangephandle manje vele kuyadzingeka sikhone kucommunicator nalabanye bantfu kulamanye emave. {It goes hand in hand definitely, most companies here use expatriates so we need to be able to communicate with those people from other countries.}

Teacher: sona lesiswati wena ngekubuka kwakho yini tintfo lekungadzinga tentiwe kulesiSwati sitokhona kuphakama naso sifike ezingeni lalesingisi, njengekutsi nje sakhe emagama eMaths njengabo co-sign nabobanibani {What do you think needs to be done on the siSwati language in trying to develop it so that it becomes at par with English....maybe we could create more words for terminologies such as co-sign in Maths?}

L2; ey loko kulukhuni madam kungatsatsa sikhatsi lesidze kakhulu coz njengeScience nje kunemagama longeke ukhone kuwabita ngalesiSwati.
{eh that can be very difficult madam, it can take a long time because, for example, science-there are words you simply cannot pronounce in siSwati.}

Teacher: but ukubona ngatsi kuPossible yini noma vele hhawu asikhohlwe yintfo lengayuke yenteke?
{is it a possibility though or it's never going to happen?}

L2; eh....hhayi kona ngeke sekwenteke madam, yintfo lengatsatsa sikhatsi lesidze kakhulu ngoba naletincwadzi vele takhiwa lemaveni.....lapho bangasati khona lesiSwati.
{eh...No, it is impossible for that to happen madam, it is something that can take a very long time especially because even the current textbooks we use, are produced in other countries where siSwati is virtually unknown.}

Teacher: ngabe eUniversity kungentekani nasebabanengi kakhulu laba labaphasile ngalesiSwati, nakungatsiwa asale kuphaswa ngalesiSwati. Ucabanga kutsi kungaba njani nje i-overcrowding?Wona lamaresources angabenela yini? {What do you think the situation could be like at the University if siSwati were to be made the passing subject? Would there be overcrowding perhaps? What about the resources-would they be enough for all of them?}

L2; loko kungafike kusi affecte kakhulu ngoba nasebabanengi labanye sebayavimbeleka kungena indzawo sekute. {That can affect us a lot because too many students who qualify would mean there is no more space for others.}

Teacher: oh....ok...I see. Thank you so much ST B for sharing your views with us on English being a gatekeeper subject. Your views will go a long way into helping us understand what you students think of English being the gatekeeper subject.

TRANSCRIPT FOR L3

Teacher: what is your favourite subject at school?

L3; My favourite subject is History.....eh...and English of course.

Teacher: Why do you say English 'of course'

L3: because English is very important....without English I can do nothing.

Teacher: when you say I can do nothing....what exactly do you mean....even if you pass the other subjects, if you fail English what happens....to your life?

L3: eish.....English in Swaziland.....ok....even if you may pass all the other subjects but if you fail English, you do not qualify to go to university, so your life then is disturbed.

Teacher: is it a good thing though, according to you, that you have to pass English before you can be admitted to the University. Is it a good thing, is it a bad thing... Does it benefit you-if it does?

L3; I think it's a good thing because if English was not taken as a gatekeeper, nearly all of us could qualify to go the university...then after that I don't think there would be enough space....ok the services won't be enough for all of us. On the other side, it affects a lot of people and that results in poverty in that they will be jobless.

Teacher: It affects them how, when they complete school-they discover that they have failed and then what do they normally do?

L3; ok sometimes they upgrade...but some parents do not have the money so they stay at home.

Teacher: ok....kahlekahle wena ngekubuka kwakho kufanele yini kutsi lesingisi kube ngiso le deciding factor ekutsenini wena u-smart .....{is it fair to put English up there and expect you to learn it and further pass it...if you don't ...then you are not smart?}

L3; akusiko kahle, singisi kumele sifane nato tonkhe leletinye tifundvo noma usiphasile noma usifeyilile. {It's not good, English should be treated the same as all the other subjects whether we pass or fail it.}

Teacher: if singisi sesisisfundza fanana ne Maths....sesingabe sitosidzinga kuphi nje {But now, if we learn English just like Maths, then why would we need it then?}

L3; nasi communicator.....sikhone kuweva emaForeigners nakakhuluma {to communicate with foreigners, to be able to understand them when they speak with us.}

Teacher: there are countries where you find that they use their mother tongue right from preschool up until university level such as in Germany....they learn in German...in France they learn in French, according to you yintfo lengenteka yini lakangwane kutsi sifundze ngesiSwati kusukela kaGrade 1....futsi nakungenteka kungaba yintfo lenhle yini noma cha. {is this a possibility here in Swaziland that we learn in siSwati from Grade 1....if it can happen would it be a good or bad thing?}

L3; ngicabanga kutsi kungaba yintfo lekabi ngoba cishe sonkhe siyasati siSwati sonkhe so kungaba bête indzawo.....{I don't think this can be a good thing, because almost everybody here knows siSwati so there would be overcrowding at tertiary.}

Teacher: oh..like you said earlier on...so kungaba {there would be} ne overcrowding

L3; yes....nalomsebenti ungaba scarce, bantfu sebangahlala emakhaya netitifiketi tabo. Ngeke bawutfole lomsebenti bete lesingisi
{yes, even the job opportunities can be scarce. People can stay at home with their qualifications, they would not get jobs without the English language skills.}

Teacher: wona lamagama singakhona yini kuwakha siwasuse esiSwatini siwayise esingisini? {Would we be able though to create siSwati words from English ones?}

L3; I think it can take some years kutsi siwatsatse siwayise esingisini...ikakhulu nje tifundvo teScience njengaboBiology nabo Physical Science.... {that we translate the words to siSwati especially for subjects like Science, Biology and Physical Science.}

Teacher: oh ...ok...I see. Wena ngekubuka kwakho,{according to you} what needs to be done, perhaps in the future...ku {in the}siSwati language to help it kutsi sikhule siSwati size sibe sezingeni lalesingisi lesatiwa mhlaba wonkhe{to help develop siSwati to be in the same league as English which is an international language} , is that possible?

L3; ngicabanga kutsi naku creatwa job opportunities lamanengi kuze bantfu labanengi bête lakangwane batosebenta khona, bangasibona sidzingo sekutsi basifundze lesiSwati kuze batokhona ku communicator nebantfu balakangwan...nekutsi bakhe emaProgramme esiSwati langaba yi entertainment kulabantfu. {Maybe if more job opportunities can be created so that more and more people flock into the country for those jobs, people can then see the need to learn siSwati so that they are able to communicate with the local people. Moreover, more siSwati programmes can be created for entertainment. Unfortunately if we can demote English, our economy can suffer because we depend on external help greatly}

Teacher: ok.....I see. Otherwise according to you, what do we mean by English as a gatekeeper?

L3; kusho kutsi ngaphandle kwesingisi ngeke ukhone kuchubekela kulenye iLevel, shokutsi kumele usiphindze uze usiphase. {It means that without English you cannot proceed to another level, it means you have to repeat and pass it before you can proceed.}

Teacher: batali bayaye batsini nje ngalesingisi, bayaye bakhonkhosele vele lokutsi usiphase?{what do parents normally say to you, do they encourage you to pass it?}

L3; bavame lokutsi fundza ema novels ulalele naseRedweni lesingisis kuze utokhona lokusati utosiphasa. {parents normally encourage us to read novels and to also listen to English news in order to increase your chances of passing English}

Teacher: ok.....Thank you so much for sharing your views with us...they will go a long way in helping us understand better your views towards English as a gatekeeper subject

TRANSCRIPT FOR L4

Teacher: According to you, what is a gatekeeper subject....what do you understand by English being a gatekeeper subject?

L4: ok coming to that Eh.....please allow me to speak in siSwati, singisi kutsi sibe yi gatekeeper Ngicondzisisa kutsi singisi Sifundvo lesingakubamba kutsi uchubekele kulelinye liklasi nekutsi ungene eCollege noma emanyuvesi lakhona emhlabeni....{By English being a gatekeeper I understand that it is a subject that can stop you from proceeding to the next class or from being admitted to colleges and Universities around the world}.

Teacher: ok....I see. So loko kuyintfo leyenteka mhlaba wonkhe ngekwati kwakho loko kwenteka mhlaba wonkhe noma mhlambe nje kwenteka lakaNgwane and a few African countries? {so, does that happen worldwide or its just here in Swaziland and a few African countries? }

L4: cha...singisi sisebenta kakhulu kulamave laseAfrica ikakhulu lawa lasatfutfuka..njengemave latfutfukile njengaboItaly nabo Germany singisi asisebenti kakhulu...basebentisa nje tona letilwimi tabo. {English is used extensively in Africa especially the developing countries. Developed countries such as Italy and Germany use their own languages instead of English. We cannot be a successful country economically if we can use siSwati because not many people speak siSwati.}.

Teacher: mhhh...ok....so what you are trying to say is that they use English for communication purposes not as a gatekeeper lengabavimbela kuchubeka nekufundza kwabo'....{that can prevent them from proceeding with their studies}.

L4: yes bona singisi basifundza nje njenge-language nje lekhona emhlabeni ngoba vele noma kuliphi live singisi sikhona. {yes, they only learn English just like any other language found in the world because in any country you go to, English is there}.

Teacher: kwenteka njani wena ngekukhumbula kwakho lokutsi size sibe ngule gatekeeper lesingisi? Kubuyaphi nje emlandweni wemaSwati kutsi singisi kube ngiso lesesiyigatekeeper namuhla instead of French or German.{ According to you, how did English come to be the gatekeeper subject in Swaziland...instead of, say, French?}.

L4: lokwenta singisi sibe yi gatekeeper kutsi sasibuswa mangisi ngako ke kuze akhulume natsi siweve lamangisi kwamela lokutsi sisebentise singisi khona sotokhona kuchumana sivane kutsi sitsini. {English was made to be the gatekeeper because we were once colonised by the British hence for communication purposes we had to learn to use English so that we could understand each other}.

Teacher: wena nje ngekwakho {Personally}, do you like English as a subject?

L4: yes I do Love English very much.....because I can't.....I can't escape from the fact that English is an International language. Everywhere it is used for communication, in courts some cases which are charged against foreigners, English comes in to handle those cases.

Teacher: moving on with our conversation....wena ngekubuka kwakho yini ema views longaba nawo wena ngalesingisis being a gatekeeper subject? Kukhona yini lapho kubasita khona bantfwabesikolwa noma nje kuyabalimata kuphela lokutsi lesingisi sibe yi must-pass subject? {According to you, what views do you hold towards English being a gatekeeper subject? Do you think this is in the best interest of the students or it's something that destroys them - when English is the must pass subject?}.

L4: incumbi yebantfwabeskolwa kuyabalimalimata because singisis akusilo lulwimi lwetfu tsine emaswati....futsi singisi bantfu siyabalimata ngoba sebatsetse singisi balahla ngisho emasiko bagijimela lemihambo yebelungu...{Amajority of learners are affected especially because English is not our language as Swazis....moreover many people have adopted English ways at the expense of their own culture and this destroys them}.

Teacher: mhh...ok...lokusho kutsi ngalamanye emavi you are against it being a gatekeeper subject? {Does that mean you are against it being a gatekeeper subject?}

L4: yes

Teacher: ok....kunalabanye bantfu ke labatsi yini lesingisi singafundziswa njengeMathss...or Science...iMaths ngeke nje ikuvimbele kutsi ungene eUniversity ne

Science ngeke ikuvimbele....nalesingisi ke akube kanjalo kutsiwe nje nawuphase siSwati hamba ungene eUniversity noma lesingisi ungasifeyila....wena how do you feel about that? {There is a body of thought that propagates for English to be studied just like Maths or Science-Maths cannot prevent you from being admitted to the university, so the same should apply to English: students must be admitted irrespective of the fact that they have passed or failed it...personally how do you feel about that?}.

L4: cha ngicabanga kutsi kungumcondvo lomuhle lowo ngoba vele tsine singemaswati asingalahlekelwa lulwimi lwetfu, singisi asifundziswe njengeScience....{I think that's a very good idea-English should be treated the same as Science} ...as I've said before that English is an International language it helps a lot in communication.

Teacher: so we need it?

L4: yes we need it, it should be taught like other subjects such as Geography...for the sake of communication when we are in other countries, USA, Britain.

Teacher: Nawubuka nje ST A tihlobo takho nalabanye lasebacedze sikolwa embikwakho bangasiphasi lesingisi, kubalimata kanjani loko emphilweni? {How are those learners who have completed school yet failed English affected by it?}

L4: eh...kubalimata kakhulu ngangoba iyaye ibe buhlungu lenhlitiyo kutsi ngiphase kahle tonkhe tifundvo... nalesiSwati ngitfole i symbol lekahle...ukhandze kutsi kaEnglish sowutfola D. Kuyaye kubekhona lobuhlungu lanhlitiyweni bekutsi ngibanjwa singisi nje lekuyintfo yebantfu...hhayi intfo lengingayisebentisa throughout mhlambe lakangwane. { It's really hurtful to discover that I have done well in all the other subjects and I have even credited siSwati with a very good symbol-only to get a 'D' in English language. It's hurtful to discover that you are being held back by English-something foreign-not even something I can use throughout the country.}

Teacher: Bayaye bente njani lapha nasebasifeyilile lesingisi, yini labayaye bakuzame kutsi kumbe bagcine basiphasile? {What do they normally do try and pass it eventually?}

L4: Ngekutikhandla kwemtali, kuyaye kube kuye umtali bese ke kudepender kutsi bamphofu kangakanani, bayaye bababhadalele kutsi bayosi upgrader lesingisi khona batokhona kutfola tindzawo emacollege nekwenta likusasa labo libe ngulelichakazile bangabi ngulabasokolako emphilweni. Labanye kuyaye kukose kutsi babuyele emuva

kaForm 4 barestarte ngoba lesingisis si worse, solo bazama kulungia imphilo yabo yakusasa. {Parents go all out..depending on how poor they are, they normally pay for their children to upgrade English so that they can be admissible at the university and have a better future. Some restart in Form 4 because their English was not good, still trying to create a bright future for themselves.}

Teacher: uma ngabe lesiSwati kungake sekuphakanyiswe sona sibe ngule passing subjects, ngoba phela simaswati ...ucabanga kutsi kungaba njani wena lapha enyuvesi ngoba phela siSwati lulwimi lwetfu. {If siSwati was to be made the passing subject- since we are Swazis, what do you think the situation would be like at the University?}

L4: ngicabanga kutsi kungaba yintfo lenkhle kakhulu leyo...nangitsatsa kubuka bantfwana emakhaya kunemagama esiSwati lesewutsi nawuwakhuluma nje kufanane nje nenhlamba kubo abasawati...kani nebantfu labadzala nje kuyenteka umbhalale utsi... “Sipho ngumusa wazibani...atsi yena yini umusa?? Manje ngicabanga kutsi kungatsatsa sikhatsi kutsi kube sihlifilili ngesizatfu sekutsi simaswati, siSwati setfu sesisilahlekele...iMinistry of Education kungamele itsi kucinisa emabhawoti lamaphepheni esiSwati khona kutowenta kutsi bantfu labaya lapha kube bantfu labati siSwati hhayi bantfu labafanekisa kwati. {I think that would be a very good idea. When I assess the situation currently, I realise that there are Swazi kids whom when you talk to, they don’t understand you...so it would take time for the University to be overcrowded just because we are Swazis. The Ministry of Education would also have to standardise the siSwati papers so that those who go to the University are those who are truly knowledgeable in siSwati. }

Teacher: otherwise the standard of Education nasekungulesiSwati le passing subject singaba njani, singehla or singenyuka? {Otherwise, what would happen to the standard of education if siSwati would be made the passing subject?}

L4: le standard ngicabanga kutsi singaba sinye ngoba siSwati lulwimi lwesive njengoba nesingisi kululwimi lwesive...sengulokutsi nje singisi sisetjentiswa mhlabawonkhe lemhlambe ngekubuka kwami kube natsi emaswati asizange sibe sive lesimphofana ngabe mhlambe siSwati naso ngabe naso siyiInternational language just like English. Ngicabanga kutsi kungachubeka nje kube njalo njenganasi singisi leskhona. {The standard would remain the same because siSwati is a language just like English....it’s just that English is used worldwide. The way I see it is that if we were not a poor country, siSwati could perhaps be an International language just like English. So, I think things would remain as they are now}.

Teacher: ok....now coming to a close of our conversation, lesiswati utsi kungalunga sibe yi passing subject...yini tintfo letingadzinga kutsi kumbe tintjintjwe lasiswatini mhlambe kungetwe emagama ngiyabekisa nje emagama eScience longakhanda kutsi akekho kwanyalo esiswatini lekungamele akhiwe. Kungaba lukhuni kanganani loko? Nekutsi mhlambe ngasetimalini live kungalidulela kanganani? {Ok. now, coming to a close of our conversation...what would need to be done to siSwati in order for it to be the passing subject? Maybe more discourse would need to be created for scientific terms...how difficult would that be? How expensive would that be for the country?}

L4: ya...ekushintjeni lamagama ngicabanga kutsi kungaba yintfo lelikhuni but hhayi kangako ngoba sinawo emaswati lafundzile ayasati singisis agogodzele lamanye aphesheya kwetilwandle ngicabanga kutsi kungabuyiswa bona labantfu labo basishintjele lamagama....ngasetimalini ke ngicabanga kutsi vele kungalidulela live lakaNgwane ngoba kuyabita.....eh...kubita kubhala incwadzi uyakhe kahle ihambe iye emakethe. Kanganani ke nasewuntjintja lokubhalwe ngumuntfu. {The development of new linguistic terms would not be a problem because Swazis are well educated, some are in Europe. So those people can be recalled to do this for us. Moneywise, it would be very expensive for the country...it is expensive to produce one book...how much more changing books written by other people!}

Teacher: kulamanye emave uyaye ukhandze kutsi vele bona basebentisa lolulwimi lwabo kusukela ePreschool baze bayofika to the highest level of education nasemanyuvesi....kulamanye emave kusetjentiswa siFrench, Spanish, kwasona lesingisi sisetjentiswe as a first language leBritain lapho bantfwana basikhuluma as a first language khona, wena nawubuka kupossible yini kutsi natsi sigcine sesifundza ngalesiswati kusukela epreschool kuye nyuvesi? {Other countries use their own MT from preschool through to University....some use French, Spanish or even English in Britain where it is the MT. How possible is it that we can also do the same with siSwati?}

L4: ngicabanga kutsi kuyintfo lepossible nasingajabuliswa nguloku lesingiko kona ngoba simaswati siyahatsatela kakhulu, njengami nje bengingatidli timbambo noma ngabe kuhlatjiwe ekhaya, safika singisi kwatsiwa semaRibs but nyalo nawukhuluma ngema ribs ngigijima kakhulu. Nemilindzelo .....kadze simaswati solo silindzela ikakhulu emaZayoni kepha nyalo sekutsiwa yi All night prayer bagijime bantfu baye khona lentfo yinye ngumlindzelo nje. Ngicabanga kutsi lesiSwati nasingake sesiphakanyiswe latikolweni singatitfola simaswati sititfola sikahle.

{I think it's possible if we can be happy and satisfied with what we have as Swazis and stop being fake...like myself...I never used to eat ribs because they were called 'timbambo', but

now whites came with a modern name 'ribs' and I enjoy them now. Even 'umlindzelo' –all night prayer-people now attend those in their numbers because it has a modern name now yet it's the same thing with what Zionists would hold in the past. So, I strongly believe that if siSwati would be empowered in schools, then that would be good.}

Teacher: Thank you so much for sharing your views with us, they will go a long way in helping us understand what students think of English being a gatekeeper subject....thank you so much. We have come to the end of our discussion.

TRANSCRIPT FOR L5

Teacher: What do you think....first of all, what do you understand by the term gatekeeper subject?

L5: A gatekeeper subject is a subject that is a passing subject. It is a must pass subject; you cannot make it to many institutions without having got credits in it.

Teacher: Oh, ok....thank you so much...now, you say it's a must pass subject which means you cannot go to the next class if you haven't passed it?

L5: Yes you can't.

Teacher: Ok which subject in Swaziland is a gatekeeper subject? and maybe do you know how it came to be the gatekeeper subject?

L5: In Swaziland, the gatekeeper subject is English. I think it came to be the gatekeeper subject because Swaziland was once colonised by the British...and when the British introduced education to the Swazis.....like the only way they could have introduced education by their MT which is English. They introduced English together with the education because they once colonised us and it was the way of communicating with the Swazis.

Teacher: ok.....so do you mean that the Swazis had to learn English in order for them to be able to communicate with the British people?

L5: Yes...because the British people were like masters to the Swazi people so it was like the Swazis had to cooperate with their masters using the same language.

Teacher: Oh...So if they were the masters, do you mean to tell me that even their language was superior to siSwati?

L5: Yes it was superior, even today, if you know English you are a superior person since English is the must pass subject, it's a universal subject.

Teacher: I see. Personally, do you like English? And if you do, why do you like it or why don't you like it if you don't?

L5: Personally I like English, because first of all because it is a universal language. You can normally understand different cultures from different people because they can write in English their culture. You can learn more using English because it is universal.

Teacher: Ok...what about siSwati...do you have the same sentiments about it or do you feel that you like English more? Do you like siSwati?

L5: I personally do like siSwati because it is my MT

Teacher: ok...ok....and if it is your MT you feel strongly attached to it?

L5: Yes it's my pride....it's something I can be proud of...it's something that is within me.

Teacher: So does that mean you are free when expressing yourself in it?

L5: Yes I'm free when speaking in siSwati compared to English because maybe someone can come and speak the English better than me but siSwati....(gestures to show absolute mastery of siSwati)

Teacher: You are a master?

L5: Yes...

Teacher: Ok I see. What are your views....how do you feel that English is a must pass subject....that it is a gatekeeper subject or a passing subject....how do you feel about that personally?

L5: I have got mixed feelings about that because.....yes...it is the passing subject but it has pulled many Swazis into a drain....like.... Many Swazis cannot make it without passing it. Personally, on my own, it is a good subject especially because many of the subjects we do at school are in English therefore to be able to understand the subject better, you must understand English.

Teacher: I hear you saying English has pulled many Swazis into a drain. Do you mean to tell me that many people have their lives not going in the right direction just because of English?

L5: Yes, it is because of English because after doing Form 5, if you have failed English, you can't make it to any institution. It means they should either restart or upgrade it....only English...even if you have passed the other subjects well but if you failed English, you should do it and get at least a 'C' or a better credit to make it to the institutions.

Teacher: Oh Ok....Ok...I hear you....I was just coming to that question that eh...how are those learners who have failed English affected by it?

L5: They can't make it to the institutions of higher learning; they are being rejected only because of English even if the other subjects were well done because English is a gatekeeper subject.....it's unfair....yes it's unfair.

Teacher: Ok, I can see you don't feel good about it....ok...in your own experience, how do those learners who have failed English, how are they affected by it or how do they try to make it in life after having failed English?

L5: Some of them try, they keep on trying to pass English, and though it may be a bit challenging to do just one subject but they keep on trying. It's either they do the upgrading or they go back to school to do the subject in full for two years and that takes a lot of money....it's a waste of time, it's a waste of money

Teacher: Ok thank you for that....moving to our next question...how would you take it or how would you feel if siSwati would be the gatekeeper subject instead of English? Many people know siSwati and I'm sure they speak it quite well...do you think it would be good for siSwati to be a gatekeeper subject?

L5: It would be good but only for us Swazis...but for the sake of development in our country, we need to use English. We have to implement the siSwati as a gatekeeper subject because if it was the gatekeeper subject, more people would make it to institutions of higher learning and they would open more businesses because they have had the chance to make it institutions of higher learning if they have passed the siSwati.

Teacher: If siSwati were to be the gatekeeper subject, do you think the standard of education would remain as high as it is now...or do you think that without English as the gatekeeper then the standard would lower in education?

L5: It might start at a lower level but after some time it would rise because if siSwati were to be made the gatekeeper subject, it would be placed at par with English...and as more people learn siSwati then it would mean that the development of siSwati will increase.

Teacher: Ok....I was just about to come to that question as to how siSwati can be developed so you are saying if more people speak it, and then it would develop?

L5: Yes...because siSwati is not a gatekeeper subject, even Swazis think it's inferior to speak siSwati and even in schools, siSwati is regarded as vernacular and in that way siSwati is endangered such that in the future very few people will be able to speak siSwati.

Teacher: You say its called vernacular and in some schools learners get beaten for speaking in vernacular? Does that happen at your school?

L5: Yes....the siSwati speakers are punished for speaking their Mother tongue

Teacher: My last question Stud E, in other countries you find that they use their Mother tongue from preschool to University....would it be possible to do the same in Swaziland?

L5: It is possible...siSwati is a language and anyone can speak a language if given a chance to try and speak it and with the help of little practices in siSwati....and also if more words can be added to the siSwati so that more words are implemented in siSwati.

Teacher: Ok....Thank you so much for sharing your views with us in as far as English being a gatekeeper subject.

TRANSCRIPT FOR L6

Teacher: My first question to you would be...what do you understand by the term gatekeeper subject?

L6: Well, I think a gatekeeper subject it is a passing subject which can prevent you from going further with your studies.

Teacher: Ok...prevent you from going on in what sense?

L6: like when you fail English you cannot be admitted to the University of Swaziland and other colleges.

Teacher: Oh...so you have to pass English?

L6: Yes

Teacher: Ok...what subject in Swaziland is a gatekeeper and do you know how it came to be the gatekeeper subject?

L6: Well I think in Swaziland the gatekeeper subject is English. Well I'm not really sure how it came to be the gatekeeper subject but I think it's because English is an International language so if you know English It is easier to communicate with people from different parts of the world.

Teacher: Oh ok....when you say it's an international language, would you explain what you mean by that.

L6: Well, an international language is a language that is known in all the parts of the world like English. English is known almost everywhere even the countries like Mozambique who were colonised by the Portuguese, now they use English because they are not colonised.

Teacher: Oh ok....so they are free now....to use English as well?

L6: Yes ma'm

Teacher: What is your personal view, do you like English? If you do, why, if not, why not?

L6: Well I like English because it is an interesting subject. Apart from that nowadays we use English to converse with our friends, family and other people we meet along the way.

Teacher: ok...Do you mean to tell me that even at home in your family you communicate in English sometimes?

L6: Yes we try to communicate in English.

Teacher: Ok....with who? Your siblings or with your Parents? Do you stay with your grannies?

L6: Both my parents and my siblings. We try to speak in English except for my grandma.

Teacher: Ok...Ok...why do you speak English at home?

L6: Our parents are just trying to train us to know English better because it is a failing subject, most people fail English.

Teacher: Oh Ok...I see. What about siSwati, do you like siSwati?

L6: Well, I can say I like siSwati because it's our mother language and it's better to express yourself in siSwati because I have not learnt siSwati but I've acquired it from birth and as I grew up.

Teacher: Ok...moving on to our next question....what are your views towards the fact that English is a must pass subject?

L6: Well, I think it is not good for English to be a must pass subject because some students fail English and it's just difficult to express yourself in English than in siSwati because we are Swazis.

Teacher: Oh yes....maybe for you it's better because you also practise at home but we know that some students don't speak it at home at all.

L6: Yes, we come from different family backgrounds....some parents are not educated whilst some are.

Teacher: Ok I see.... Eh...I'm sure you have seen students who have completed Form 5 but you find that they failed English, how are they affected by that?

L6: Well, I think students who fail English in Form 5 are affected because they have to repeat the class and not just repeating the class but they have to go back to Form 4 and restart....meaning that their parents have to spend lump sums of money to pay their school fees whereas some of the parents were just managing to pay for their Form 5 students.

Teacher: Ok.....so now they have to repay again so that their children can restart.

L6: Yes

Teacher: Ok...Other students were talking about upgrading, what is that in Swaziland?

L6: Well upgrading I think it's fixing the subjects that you've failed, trying to make them to have better grades such as A's and A*'s.

Teacher: Ok....so what happens...do you go back to class or you just do the subject?

L6: You only specialise in the subject that you failed.

Teacher: Oh...Ok. I see....moving forward to our next question....How would you take it if siSwati would be made a gatekeeper subject instead of English?

L6: Well I don't think siSwati should be made a gatekeeper subject because some people don't understand siSwati...many people nowadays as I said earlier; they use English to communicate than siSwati. SiSwati is only used in class during the siSwati period. And even in schools....some students are being punished for speaking siSwati around the school premises, so siSwati must not be a gatekeeper subject.

Teacher: How do you feel about that, that students are punished for speaking siSwati?

L6: I think that's an unfair thing to do because...ok....for some people English is a foreign language and not even a second language so it's not easy for them to cope with all the languages so it's unfair.

Teacher: Ok, what do you think would happen to the standard of education in Swaziland if siSwati would be taken and placed at par with English for it to be the gatekeeper subject?

L6: Well I think the standard of education would decline because there would be more time needed to translate a whole book into siSwati and there would be a lot of money that should be invested in that translating of the books and the other stuff.

Teacher: I understand that you say siSwati must not be made into a gatekeeper subject but is there a way that siSwati can be developed so that it is almost like English so that maybe in the future or centuries to come it could become a gatekeeper subject as well or an international language just like English.

L6: Well, I think there is a way but it would be very expensive because the government has to pay for the teachers who would have to do extra classes with the students to teach them siSwati, go deeper in siSwati into the indigenous words not just the siSwati we use for communication.

Teacher: Coming to our last question....in other countries such as in France and Germany, even Britain...they use their mother tongue for education from preschool to University, do you think this would be possible for Swaziland and how?

L6: Well as I said earlier, making siSwati a gatekeeper subject in Swaziland won't be easy and also expensive....to translate the words in a whole book into siSwati and then even the money notes need to be translated because we cannot translate only the books. As we would have adapted to siSwati, seeing English would be difficult and those English words. So this would not be good for our country. Moreover, we are not economically stable so using siSwati and dropping English would not be good for the country. Even our neighbouring countries would not look at us in a good way because they also use English so what would we be implying really?

Teacher: But there is this view that we can use siSwati as a gatekeeper subject and then learn English so that we are able to communicate with other people but strip English of the powers of it being a gatekeeper subject....such that English should be like Maths or Science which cannot prevent you from going to the university. What do you think about that?

L6: Well, I don't think that's a good thing to do because there is only one subject in school that is being taught in siSwati so making siSwati a gatekeeper subject again is not good because it's difficult to use the indigenous words. Speaking siSwati, expressing yourself in siSwati is a different thing again from writing it down....because the siSwati we learn in class is different from the one we use to communicate.

Teacher: Thank you so much for sharing your views with us. They will go a long way in helping us understand what students think of English being a gatekeeper subject.

APPENDIX L: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Researcher: Today we are gathered here with the six participants for my study, we are doing a focus group interview with them.....of course we still want to find more about their views as a gatekeeper subject.

Res: Welcome everybody, how are you today?

Learners: We are fine

Res: I'm also fine. I hope you are comfortable enough....and I hope everybody is ready to tell us more about what they think is the most important reason why we are here-to get everybody's individual view of how they feel about English in the many dimensions that we are going to mention. Maybe to start us off, I'll ask this question and then were going to respond to it.....we don't necessarily have to go line by line, we are going to be random in our responses.

R: First of, would you please describe how important is it for you as learners to be competent in English language....as a secondary learner how important is it for you to know English- to speak it well and to write it well?

L1: Well I think it is important for us to know English and to write it well because most of our subjects are taught in English, only one subject is taught in siSwati. Furthermore, the national news at 8 o'clock is read in English so we need to understand English. So, it is important for us to know English.

R: Ok that is her idea, what does somebody else think?

L2: I think English opens a lot of opportunities for us. For example when we are researching here at school, we need to research on the web, it is written in English so it is very important. Also, this helps us in our studies because if you are in class and there is something you don't understand, you can consult the web where you can research about that topic in order for you to understand. Also, you can be able to acquire information that will help you along as are studying. I think that English is a necessary subject.

R: Ok, so the internet does not provide information in siSwati, is that what you are saying?

L2: yes ma'm

R: Ok...anybody else?

L3: If you speak English, it opens opportunities. Moreover, you are able to communicate with foreigners especially in business partnerships. So, there are more challenges if you don't speak English.

R: Ok...how about if we bring it closer to the school setting, for your academic success-is it really a necessity or you can just be able to make it without being competent in English....what do you think?

L4: I think it is important because it widens your capability of understanding in all subjects because most are taught in English...I think the most challenging thing is the speaking of English...our accents are different from others?

R: ok...ok...so the most important thing is that if you are competent in English then you are better able to understand the content? Ok....what do you think-anybody?

L5: I think it is a good idea to be competent in English in terms of the subjects which are taught in English. If you are capable in English, you are going to excel in your subjects such as Home Economics and be able to carry out research in subjects such as Geography...you are going to be able to collect data and access the internet which provides information in English.

L6: You fail and repeat the class if you do not know English.

R: Ok...you are already getting me into the second question that I wanted to ask....how does the lack of competence in English affects you in your journey as you try to get an education? If you don't know English or if you think you don't usually pass it, do you foresee a bright future for yourself or you believe that English can hold you back somehow....what do you think?

L 4: I think academically, English can hold you back, even socially; you may never know why you did not get that job. First of all, academically, we wouldn't understand the content if we don't know English. If you are lost on the content, you cannot respond to the questions properly. Next is socially, normally when we are applying for jobs, we cannot write the application in siSwati. Even after you get that job, you may need to communicate with other people who don't know siSwati and then you need to do so in English. English therefore is beneficial to us both at school and out of school.

R: So are saying there is a connection between knowing English and getting a job?

L4: Yes there is a good link, because if you are poor in English, you cannot be hired in some jobs.

L1: All the subjects are taught in English except for siSwati. So, not being competent in English makes you to fail because you don't get to understand the subject you are being taught.

R: Ok, anybody else?

L3: Moreover, English is the subject that makes you to be accepted into the University, not knowing English means you cannot go to the University so your education is affected.

L6: Yah....English helps us to understand what is being said to us in class, and also when we do listening comprehension....because some of the English words are difficult and they can make you fail if you don't know English.

L2: Being less competent in English really affects you because if you fail it, you have to repeat that class until you pass English. So, it holds you back in that way.

L5:Not knowing English really affects you in your journey to get an education in the sense that you struggle with understanding what is being taught and when time for tests come, you find that you cannot perform well because you did not understand in the beginning.

R: True, like you said you cannot apply in siSwati.....It's true that you believe English is very important, it's a core subject which can either open or close doors for you if you don't know it. Do you think that you are adequately exposed to English because there is this belief that if you are in an environment that is 'rich' in English, you find yourself getting better skills or competence in English, maybe way back at home or even here at school, do you believe that you are adequately exposed?

L6: Can you repeat the question?

R: My question is, when you are living with people who speak English most of the time, you find that your English skills become better as well....that is, the way you speak and write English becomes better. So my question is, are you adequately exposed to an environment that is rich in English as you have all been saying that English is very important, right?

L6: eh.... no. I speak siSwati at home with my family, nobody speaks English at home.

R: Ok, anybody else?

L5: I think we are exposed to English because nowadays we have these mobile smart phones and we are exposed to watssap and face book where we use phone language, most of the time we use phone language by shortening the words. So, one of the ways of mastering English is to read, write and speaking. As much as we shorten the words, we do master some of them which we can then use in writing compositions and in writing applications for jobs.

R: but then the shortening of the words, doesn't it affect you in your capability of writing correct spelling in class?

L3: Yes it does affect us, because you find that you have even forgotten how to write properly.

R: How about at home, are you exposed to English?

L4: I think we have a challenge of speaking English at home because some people then think you are more learned if you start speaking English at home such that If you start speaking English, it seems like you have pride. Therefore they will never see the good side that you are trying to enhance your competence in speaking English. Otherwise it's only when we are communicating with our friends and colleagues on watssap, that's the only time we get to speak English.

R: Ok, so from your response, am I getting it right that if you know English then you are a better person in society?

L5: in the Swazi culture, speaking English when you are talking to an elderly person is a sign of disrespect, so speaking English at home; you may find that you end up getting an attitude from the family members.

L1: I think it depends on the family because some parents will want us to speak English even at home because they will say....'we don't want to keep on paying money and yet you keep repeating the same class only because you failed English. So, if you speak siSwati it's a problem to some parents. And also nowadays, it is difficult to converse with our friends in siSwati since some of the siSwati words have become very difficult for us because at school we are beaten for speaking siSwati so when we are at home we have to practise speaking those words which we broke at school because they will make a laughing stock out of you. So even at home you have to practise speaking English.

R: So, are you saying that at home you converse in English with your parents?

L1: Sometimes, but not with my grandmother or great-grandmother.

R: OK...I understand that you're saying that speaking English to your colleagues here at school, it appears as if you are making yourself better or you are proud and making yourself a superior individual. Is there anything you would like to add?

L6: As I said before, we don't speak English at home, there is no need for English at home. By the way, I live with my grandmother and two younger brothers, I am going to be the first one to finish school. So, who am I going to speak to speak English with?

L2: I think it depends on the attitude of the people, and also the home like sister L1 has said. Sometimes at home I am exposed to English as my parents speak to me in English especially my mother, she will speak to me in English and when I answer her in siSwati then I'm in a big problem it will be like I haven't answered her. It depends on the family background as some parents believe that English is important and it can hinder you from progressing if you are not exposed to English. Sometimes I watch the television- the learn programme, they do speak about English and the importance of English. They even mention that due to the industrialisation and the worldwide economy these days, we really do need English to communicate. And even here at school, to emphasize that English is very important, I think I am a little bit exposed to English because the principal encourages us to speak in English yet some other people are reluctant to adhere to the instruction but I think English is very important.

R: so, do you speak English here at school?

L3: Some people believe that you are making yourself better.

L4: It depends...you find that if you are being shy then you become afraid to speak in English because you may talk to someone in English but then they respond in siSwati, it may end up being like you are trying to make yourself better.

L1: To be frank madam, it's a mixture of English and siSwati....when we are just around the corner with our friends we converse in siSwati but when we are in public or close to the administration block, we speak in English.

L5: I hardly speak English here at school, but when there's a teacher around, I pretend to be speaking English.

L6: I am comfortable speaking siSwati, but we are beaten here at school if we speak siSwati so I try but I don't like it. I know it is for my benefit but still I don't enjoy it.

R: Ok...but I understand your reasons of course that some students may give you attitude and believe that you are making yourself better. Well we have been talking about speaking at home, how about being exposed to literature....or television. Are you exposed to television programmes that are in English or as I said, literature that is in English like newspapers or books or magazines. Do you think you have a good environment at home for those things?

L4: Actually, that's one of my challenges at home, I usually enjoy listening to English Channel and this usually causes conflict with my mom because she enjoys listening to siSwati.

R: Ok and that helps you to improve your English?

L4: Yes...exactly...I normally understand things that are happening, say, in Nigeria mainly because those people are speaking in English and not Nigerian.

R: is English therefore a necessity for your success in education, yes or no.

ALL learners: yes it is.

R: Ok...now let's look at English in other domains such as parliament, or courts...or when there are public presentations. From your experience, do they use English or siSwati? How often do they use English and what does that tell you about the importance of English?

L2: I have seen a lot of people, especially government officials and people from the parliament...they do speak English. For example, there was a budget speech that was out for April this year, it was delivered in English so I saw the importance of English because one would not understand the speech if they do not know English. Even businessmen, some of them speak English and even the jobs that are advertised, they want someone who is fluent in English, and also to be a manager you must be fluent in English so as to be able to communicate with the clients.

R: Ok....anybody else?

L5: English is an international language so it is used in courts in cases where you find that the accused is not Swazi but they have to appear in front of the magistrate but in parliament, king Sobhuza 11 did mention that everyone has the right to form part of the cabinet, educated or not. So, the parliament uses both English and siSwati. Moreover, if you are fluent in English, you are welcome and you enjoy staying in any place because English is a very important language.

L1: Moreover, in public domains, English is used more frequently, for example, when the ingwenyama (king) delivers speeches, he always uses English and then there is always an interpreter. I take this to mean that both languages are equal because we are Swazis and we must be proud of our culture and our language. I heard recently that Mcmillan Swaziland is making drives to make siSwati a gatekeeper subject. Actually, there is a belief that nowadays siSwati is not used any more, people use English and siSwati is dropping.

L3: To add on that, Mcmillan has also introduced a siSwati dictionary. The last time I checked they were to launch it soon which shows that siSwati is also important.

R: So, there are those people who are pushing for siSwati to be given more value and be made important?

L3: yes but still, the truth is that English is more important. For instance, if you go to the cinemas, the movies are shown in English, so if you don't know English, you are not going to understand anything, you won't laugh even when there is a joke.

L4: Introducing siSwati as a gatekeeper subject is going to be a challenge because we all learn in English not siSwati. Besides, we as learners hardly know siSwati that well ourselves. I think this siSwati dictionary will only have the real indigenous words not the simple words we use on a daily basis. Therefore, I think, both languages should be put at par.

R: You say English and siSwati should be put at par, how can that be done?

L4: By making both of them gatekeepers, so that if you pass either English or siSwati, you are eligible to get into the University.

R: Oh...you mean that the requirement should be a credit in either English or siSwati?

L3: I do see a problem however because if you get opportunities to go and study overseas, siSwati will not help you in any way, you will not even be accepted if you credited siSwati only so with siSwati, you can lose out on an opportunity.

L2: I think that even the material we use for learning and studying is written in English. I think, English should remain the gatekeeper subject.

R: Let's look at the education policy of Swaziland which states that we only use siSwati from Grade 1-3, then switch to English. How do you feel about leaning in English, a second language to you?

L6: I think it is the cause of poor English when we are old, we are supposed to start learning in English in Grade 1.

L3: I think the fact that are using siSwati from Grade 1-3, they want to show students that it is an important language as well. You have to know English but you also have to know siSwati as well.

L4: I think all the policy is doing is to teach the basics of siSwati to all students. As you know madam, most of us are unable to complete a sentence using siSwati only, we code switch. Indeed siSwati is endangered so this is the least the government can do to save it from extinction.

L1: English should be taught from preschool so that when a learner gets to the higher grades, he can understand better. I think it is more difficult to switch the languages from siSwati to English at the higher grade.

R: How about learning in siSwati the whole primary school?

L2: I think that can be a disaster. Our minds as students operate in the way that what you teach me in Grade 1, I will stick to it no matter what, so when the time for the switch comes, it can be very difficult for me but of course I can learn. I think it's better to instil the English to

us when we are still younger in order to grow up better able to communicate using English. The education policy is mixed up; English must be taught from preschool level.

L1: Switching from siSwati to English at secondary level would be difficult.

L5: I think the ministry of education should review its position regarding the language of teaching at primary level. For the benefit of everyone let me put this in siSwati. {Simaswati sesikhohlwe ngemasiko etfu.Kubakhona kwesingisi akusho kutsi asilahle lulwimi lwetfu.Nyalo nje sesifanana nekutsi siyiprovince yaseBritain sikopa emavalues aseBritain silahle lokwetfu. Singisi nje akumele sibe ngetulu kwesiSwati, totimbili letilwimi atibe ngu50:50 tilingane. Angeke sikufihle vele lokutsi singisi ngulona lulwimi lotonconcotsa ngalo wonkhe umnyango naseNgilandi naseMelika but nalesiSwati asebasibukele kutsi sibe supreme njengalesingisi.Kulamalanga nawungati singisi bese kuba ngazutsi awusasuye umuntfu nje}. As Swazis, the presence of English does not mean we must discard our Swazi culture including our language. As it is, we are like a British province now, copying all western values and instilling them to our Swazi kids. We have completely forgotten our own traditions. There is no need for English to be the dominating language, English and siSwati should be at par-50:50. Fine we won't hide the fact that English is the language used worldwide for getting job opportunities in England or America or anywhere else but siSwati should also be elevated and made supreme just like English. Because another thing nowadays is that if you don't know English, it's like you are less of a human being.

R: Oh ok, I see, anybody else?

L3: Learning in siSwati is not a possibility because all the subjects are written in English, except siSwati.

L4: Besides, who is going to employ us with siSwati? English is the better language and we must accept that it is a language used worldwide.

L6: I like siSwati but I know that if I want a job that pays me good money, I have to learn and to pass English.

R: Research shows that if you learn in your MT makes you to pass well than if you learn through a second language. So, do you think that learning in English makes you not to succeed like the white people who learn in English which is their MT? What do you think?

L4: Yah, I think that is the problem with us Swazis, if research has proved that learning in your MT is better, coming to our education policy, the policy must be extended to higher grades in order to help Swazi learners pass better. For us, we already learnt in English so it would not be possible to do anything about it now.

R: ok, but we must understand that when we talk of English being the LoTL, we do not mean to say that English is not taught as a subject....what we mean is that from Grade 4, it becomes both a subject and the language through which instruction is received.

L4: Concerning that, it can be easy for us learners to go to our teachers whenever we need help because as it is, there is the problem that what do I say in English? Yet if I was to use siSwati, I will be comfortable.....and even if the teacher explains to me, I will understand better

L1: Of course there are benefits of learning in siSwati but then eventually who is going to employ us? It's good to know siSwati but I don't think it helps a lot when you need a job.

L2: When we go to job interviews, we will have a problem of speaking English.

L6: Yah I agree, we like siSwati because it is our MT but still, English is an international language and we need it more than siSwati.

L3: We should learn siSwati because it is our MT. Our future generation should know siSwati.

R: ok, I see...thank you for that. Now, moving forward, are there any tasks that you normally find difficult and challenging as a learner here at school in your English class. What are those tasks and how do you manoeuvre around those tasks in trying to understand them?

L3: Most exercises are just difficult but we often ménage.

L5: we don't know much of the tenses are very difficult for me, switching from the present to the past tense is very difficult. I try to read as much as I can in order to improve my ability in doing that but it is always a challenge for me.

R: oh ok I see, so If you read you become better able to hear and understand English better?

L1: Yes just to add on that, when writing compositions, you find that you can't express yourself. You have the points but you simply can't elaborate much on them because of the language that you have to use when elaborating. What we can do to help ourselves would be to watch a lot of English programmes on television so that we are able to improve our vocabulary.

R: So the compositions seem to be a problem?

ALL: Yes

L3: Even the listening exercises are quite a challenge to us. You try your best to listen attentively but you find that you still miss some of the words and end up failing because of that.

R: But I understand that the syllabus has now been localised such that the person who reads during the listening task is actually a Swazi.

L1: Sometimes they will say a word which you have never heard before and you have to write it down because it's the answer.

L3: Yes and at times they will say a word such as bird, and you will have difficulty understanding which bad he is talking about.

R: Oh ok, those ambiguous words?

L4: The reading and writing is also difficult because you will be reading when all of a sudden you come across a big word that will just distort all your understanding. As a result, you lose the whole meaning of what you have been reading about. So, this really affects us because

if you have never seen or heard this word before, you will really have a problem of understanding the task. Yet if this was a siSwati word, things would be much easier.

R: Oh, you would understand better. I think I hear you saying these words actually become gatekeepers to your own understanding.

L6: Of course, just one English word and the whole meaning is lost.

R: How do you feel about the fact that English is an elevated language superior language as opposed to siSwati....do you feel that's right or wrong....how do you feel?

L5: With me madam I feel this is wrong. We have English as an international language and we cannot hide from that fact, but now our own Swazis are now switching from our own culture to western cultures which makes me feel bad because as for me, I'm a cultural person....I'm proud of being a Swazi.

R: Anybody else?

L6: It is not right but we have been saying it again and again during this discussion that English is an international language, so we don't have a choice.

L1: It is ok for English to be superior because here in Swaziland, we grow and export sugar.....how are we going to get the markets for selling our sugar if we can't speak English so we have to use English.

R: I think I am getting an important point from you that English actually brings together people from different social backgrounds, whether she is Sotho and I am Swazi, we both can't speak each other's language but we both can speak English. So, English unites people?

ALL: Yes

L2: Moreover, nowadays we are using cars, if we don't speak English how are we going to obtain those cars from overseas. That's why we need English all the time.

R: From what I hear from all of you is that English is the language of trade?

L6: You can't trade successfully without English.

R: So, is there a link between English and the economy of a country?

L5: Yes , for instance, the ministry of Tourism is responsible for welcoming guests into the country, guests who cannot speak siSwati.....those people bring in revenue for the country they need to be treated well and have things explained to them in English.

R: Thank you so much for your contribution. Your ideas will surely go a long way in helping us understand better what learners think of English being a gatekeeper subject.