achievement (Tlale, 1991: 18) and could, therefore, also influence English L2 proficiency.

Based on these results and discussions, it is clear that one can conclude the following:

- Acquisition planning for English as a L2 is relatively effective for Afrikaans respondents but not effective for Southern Sotho respondents.

- Understanding the cultural identities of these respondents provided some insight into their English L2 proficiency. A better understanding of the role that language plays as part of these cultural identities, and results that correlated English L2 proficiency with aspects of cultural identity showed that a positive identification with the in-group, balanced with a more inclusive attitude and valuing an autonomous lifestyle, enhance English L2 proficiency of Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents.

The complex nature of these cultural identities challenges effective use of this information for acquisition planning. These cultural identities are complex, because they incorporate seemingly irreconcilable notions: a celebration of a form of in-group identity, balanced with a more inclusive inclination, and an emphasis on values linked to an autonomous lifestyle. Recommendations for acquisition planning for English as a L2 for Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents should be made while taking full cognisance of these complexities.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and recommendations

1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to relate findings from Chapter 5 to recommendations for improving acquisition planning\(^{102}\) for English as a L2 for Afrikaans and Southern Sotho learners in multilingual South Africa. Preceding these recommendations, concluding remarks about cultural identity and acquisition planning [reflecting on §3, Chapter 3] and cultural identity and social approaches to L2 learning [reflecting on §4, Chapter 3] are presented. The aim is to link this discussion with the findings from Chapter 5. Findings from this study provide some clarification to mainly theoretical discussions presented in the above-mentioned sections of Chapter 3.

2 Implications of findings for cultural identity and acquisition planning

Three issues discussed in Chapter 3 need to be considered when findings from this study are related to a discussion of cultural identity and acquisition planning. First of all, identity politics is a major trend in postmodern society. Secondly, a relationship between language and identity is salient for some cultural identities and this might influence L2 learning. Finally, the postmodern view of identity is that it is multidimensional and complex.

Firstly, then, findings from this study show that Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents hold very positive views about their ethnic and their racial identities and actively pursue activities that would lead to its maintenance. The general description of the cultural identities of Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents in §3.1 and §3.2, in Chapter 5 provides evidence of this. Furthermore, the statistical analysis of possible relationships between aspects of cultural identity and English L2 proficiency presented in §4.1 and §4.2 proves that a positive identification with some form of cultural identity is statistically significantly related to better English L2 proficiency.

\(^{102}\) “Improvement of acquisition planning” refers to improvements on the unintentional acquisition planning efforts for English as a L2 that formed part of language in education policies in the past (Schuring, 1992: 252) and improvement of the current, deliberate, acquisition planning context for English as a L2 in South Africa, of which the Langtag (1996) process is one example.
This latter finding must be taken into account if improvement of acquisition planning for English L2 learning for Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents in South Africa is considered.

Secondly, findings show that both L1 groups identified language as a specific marker of their identities, although language plays a different role in the Afrikaans and Southern Sotho context. Afrikaans respondents regard their L1 as an important marker of their identity and display a basically bilingual type of identity. Southern Sotho respondents regard communication with others as a more important component of their cultural identity and this inclination probably represents one source for their multilingual identities.

Thirdly, a consideration of these findings in the context of the discussion in §3.2 [Chapter 3] indicates that the identities of these respondents cannot be regarded as unidimensional or simplex and that the aim of language learning for South Africans is not to achieve transitional bilingualism, but additive bi/multilingualism. The complexity of the identities of the Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents can be expressed at two different levels: the Southern Sotho cultural identity is multidimensional and the identities of the Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents differ and this adds a further multidimensionality to the South African L2 learning context. Acquisition planning for English as a L2 for these respondents, therefore, needs to take the positive identification with the in-group, the multidimensional nature of identity and the role languages play in these identities into consideration.

3 Implications of findings for social approaches to L2 learning

Findings from this study provide empirical evidence that many of the assumptions underlying social approaches to L2 learning are incorrect or not tenable in the South African context. According to Giles’ Intergroup model, high L2 proficiency is possible only “when in-group identification is weak or the L1 does not function as a salient dimension of ethnic group membership” (Ellis, 1994: 234). Positive in-group identification correlated with and predicted English L2 proficiency for both Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents and both groups indicated that the L1 is a salient marker of in-group identity and the ethnolinguistic vitality of more proficient Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents was high.

A form of integrative motivation seems to be at work in the language learning processes as described by Southern Sotho learners. They indicate that communicating with others so that they can understand them better forms a very important part of their cultural identity. This is akin to Lambert’s initial conceptualisation of “integrative” motivation as “a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group” (Gardner, 1985: 134). However, Southern Sotho respondents in this study indicated that they learn English, Afrikaans and Zulu to communicate and better understand others in South Africa. English (or Afrikaans or Zulu) is, therefore, not learnt by Southern Sotho respondents to integrate/acculturate with any target language group (integrativeness as expressed by Schumann), but to communicate with speakers of languages other than English. Findings from this study support an approach to social identity as expressed by Norton Peirce (1995: 23). A positive cultural identity is correlated with higher English L2 proficiency for the Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents in this study.

4 Recommendations for improving acquisition planning for English as a L2 in multilingual South Africa

Emerging from the findings reported in Chapter 5, the following issues need to be reflected in recommendations for improving acquisition planning for English as a L2 for Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents:

- language planning and social planning are related; and
- cultural identity contributes to L2 learning in South Africa in many different ways. Mainly, Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents who identified strongly with the in-group achieved better English L2 scores. Apart from this finding, the following issues affect the role of cultural identity in L2 learning: the salience of the L1 in the cultural identity; the role of other languages in the cultural identity; and the beliefs about language and communication that form part of the cultural identity. Another component of cultural identity that correlated with English proficiency is an autonomous lifestyle.
At the onset, it is important to acknowledge that other researchers have made many of these recommendations previously. See, for example, the work of Alexander (1989; 1992; 1995), Heugh et al. (1995), Lemmer (1993; 1995), Luckett (1993; 1995) and Starfield (1995). These recommendations were often based upon teacher or researcher observations, more theoretical or only focused on attitudes. An important contribution of this study was to empirically investigate issues such as ethnic identification and racial identification and its relationship to English L2 proficiency. The following recommendations, therefore, empirically support notions already referred to by these and other researchers.

Before the recommendations of this study are presented, it is also important to acknowledge the work that became known as the Molteno Project (Walters, 1988: 5; Walters, 1996: 214). The brief of the Molteno Project (founded in 1974) was to analyse the problems related to the use of English as language of teaching in African schools and to recommendation of methods for preparing primary school children for the use of English as language of teaching from their fifth year of schooling upwards (Walters, 1988: 7; Walters, 1996: 214). Based on findings very early on in the project’s existence, researchers realised that:

... while the curriculum assumed that a sufficiently sound basis of mother-tongue reading and writing skills would be established in the first year to enable ESL children to transfer those skills to the task of beginning to read and write in a second language in their second year, the majority of the children simply had too weak a foundation for any transfer to be possible (Walters, 1996: 217).

These findings from the first field-workers resulted in the shifting of the focus of the project from problems relating to the teaching of English in African primary schools to the teaching of reading and writing in the mother tongue (Walters, 1988: 9). This project was therefore way ahead of its time (locally and internationally) in realising the possible interplay between literacy in the L1 and literacy in an L2. The principles, materials and practices of the Molteno Project are even more valuable in the post-1994 South Africa, because it brings with it a body of research findings that evaluated the implementation of interventions. Findings from the Molteno project must be distributed more widely and the project should be afford much more attention in the L2 teaching/learning circles.

4.1 Language planning and social planning are related

It would have been very rewarding if all recommendations made in this study could come to pass. It would then be easy to recommend that all socio-economic differences in South Africa be eradicated from 1 January 2000. Apart from erasing differences in L2 proficiency, other important social conditions could have been changed for the better as well. Several authors (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971b: xviii; Cooper, 1989a: 66; Edwards, 1989: 30) and the Langtag (1996: 13) committee unfortunately attested to the fact that social and language change are tedious processes (cf. discussion in §4, Chapter 2). Moulder (1991: 9) predicts that it takes about 20 years to change an education system. Apart from being tedious, some social conditions that influence language learning seem insurmountable. The influence of poverty on the academic achievement of black learners in South Africa is an example of such a formidable social effect that language planners might have to take into consideration, without having any real opportunity to change or remove its influence from the lives of their learners. Edwards (1989: 30) is even more sceptical and is of the opinion that “relativism of one sort or another seems a long-enduring aspect of society”. He seems to suggest that no matter how we plan, social inequalities will remain an integral part of any society.

A more realistic recommendation related to the findings that socio-economic status is related to English L2 proficiency would be:

**Recommendation 1:** that transformation, affirmative action and reconstruction and development plans have overt language requirements.

A strong expression of language requirements would focus on providing incentives for South Africans to use their L1 in as many domains as possible. This would result in status and corpus development (especially for African languages) and improvement of literacy-related (academic) language proficiency in the L1 that would make these skills available to L2 contexts. A weaker expression of language requirements would at least focus on developing an understanding and appreciation of functional multilingualism in the South African context. This would lead to a better understanding of different types of language proficiency that would make L2 teachers
in an educational context aware of the demands that using the L2 would bring about. This would hopefully impact on their L2 teaching and, consequently, the L2 learning of their learners.

4.2 Contributions of cultural identity to English L2 learning

It is difficult to consolidate recommendations that flow from the finding that cultural identity affects L2 English learning, because some elements of the cultural identity of Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents differ. However, this is the reality that English L2 teachers will face. An attempt is, therefore, made in this section to develop recommendations that would equally and simultaneously benefit Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents. Recommendations to improve acquisition planning have to focus on findings that a positive identification with the in-group, combined with an inclusive attitude and valuing an autonomous lifestyle correlated with English proficiency. The recommendations that follow emerge from these findings.

**Recommendation 2:** that English L2 learning contexts take cognisance of the multilingual nature of South African society and the resultant multidimensional cultural identities of English L2 learners.

This recommendation would imply that English L2 learners and teachers are required to critically reflect on their linguistic repertoires and their cultural identities. This is also in line with the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa. While introducing OBE the then-minister of education, Sibusiso Bengu (1997: 1) stated that:

> It will foster learning which encompasses a culture of human rights, multilingualism and multi-culturalism and a sensitivity to the values of reconciliation and nation-building.

Afrikaans and Southern Sotho learners should, therefore, revisit the multilingual and multicultural context in which they learn. Afrikaans learners of English as a L2 should first of all be made aware that they have a very privileged linguistic position in South Africa. They are able to use their L1 exclusively in many domains, while this advantage is not readily available to other South Africans. Afrikaans learners should learn to appreciate the privilege to learn in the L1 and to add English as a L2 relatively successfully to their linguistic repertoire. They should also be made aware that bilingualism in Afrikaans and English has been a part of the cultural identities of Afrikaans people for some time. Due to this group bilingualism, they are in the fortunate position that they have relatively more contact with English outside the classroom (through people and products, for example, books, music, films). One should emphasise how they can use these opportunities to improve their English L2 proficiency. Finally, they should be made aware that the addition of a third language (preferably an African language) would benefit them greatly in South Africa. In other words, Afrikaans learners need to understand the multilingual nature of South African society better.

Southern Sotho teachers and learners should be made aware that their multilingual and multidimensional identities are assets in the South African context. This cognitive awareness should ideally be matched with clear examples of the benefits of multilingualism in the South African society. More importantly, Southern Sotho learners should be given opportunities to come to a better understanding of functional multilingualism. Two matters need emphasis in this discussion: first of all, that one often uses different languages in different contexts and, secondly, that the type of language proficiency required for language use in different contexts differ. Southern Sotho learners should come to understand that their multilingualism is probably a result of conversational language proficiency skills in different languages. If the linguistic and educational positions of African languages do not change in the near future, Southern Sotho learners should be made aware that the type of English proficiency they require (to study at a technikon or university, for example) is different from their conversational language proficiency skills in possibly two or three other South African languages. They should recognise that English plays a different role in their linguistic repertoire than, for example, Afrikaans or Zulu, in which they

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Readers are reminded that these findings pertain to the lives of white Afrikaans speakers of English as a L2 exclusively, because no coloured speakers of Afrikaans participated in the study.
have may have acquired conversational language proficiency. Great care should be taken not to make English into a Holy Grail, but rather to develop a realistic understanding of English L2 demands with these L2 teachers and learners. They should understand that literacy-related (academic) language proficiency skills relate to context reduced and cognitively demanding contexts such as education. Future research could be improved by inviting more Southern Sotho respondents from different educational and language policy contexts to participate in the study. A bigger sample of Southern Sotho speakers from different contexts could yield even more interesting findings related to this speech community.

**Recommendation 3:** that the L1 is used in English L2 learning contexts to enhance literacy-related (academic) language proficiency development.

This recommendation is based upon Cummins’ construct of common underlying proficiency (CUP) that would allow transfer of academic literacy skills and conceptual knowledge (Starfield, 1995: 177) from the L1 to the L2. More importantly, this would facilitate the acquisition of L2 literacy. According to Starfield (1995: 178), Cummins’ theories helped to reconceptualise the role of the English L2 teacher. She argues that this mainly concerns the integration of language and learning skills with content courses (1995: 178).

Although it is acknowledged that black learners in South Africa barely acquire literacy-related (academic) language proficiency in the L1 (Starfield, 1995: 177), this recommendation extends Starfield’s position by requiring the use of the L1 in the English L2 classroom so that the development of literacy-related (academic) language proficiency in the L2 can be enhanced. A careful analysis of the findings from the Molteno project could be invaluable in implementing this recommendation in an acquisition plan for English as a L2 for Southern Sotho learners.

This recommendation might meet with a lot of resistance from parents, teachers and learners (Sarinjeive, 1999:133, 136). Parents might find it difficult to see how using the L1 in the English L2 classroom would benefit the development of English L2 proficiency of their children. This concern should be considered seriously in future research about the role of the L1 in L2 proficiency. Disseminating the results of

success stories (such as those documented as a result of the Molteno Project) to parents would be the only way in which to constructively change their attitudes. English L2 teachers might be negative about this recommendation mainly because they might feel threatened by the fact that many of them cannot use the L1 of their English L2 learners. Ultimately, they might fear loss of their jobs. English L2 teachers could be trained to understand that they are not the only sources of knowledge in the classrooms. The English L2 learners are the main sources of L1 use in the L2 classroom. The English L2 teacher would simply have to effectively facilitate the process where a learner uses a concept in the L1. The English L2 teacher would then have to ask another learner to interpret or translate this concept into English. This whole process could greatly facilitate learning. English L2 learners might also have negative attitudes towards this idea. If they effectively understand the benefits (increased literacy-related (academic) language proficiency development and L2 proficiency), and in time experience the benefits, they might be convinced.

Apart from the literacy-related (academic) language proficiency and L2 proficiency benefits of using the L1 in the English L2 learning context, an added benefit might be increased self-esteem of L2 learners. Feelings of cultural loss and lack of self-image due to the low status of the L1 in the educational context in general (cf. discussion by Ngugi, 1986 and Mawasha, 1987 in §3.3.2, Chapter 2) could be curbed by the use of the L1 in the English L2 learning context.

**Recommendation 4:** that in-group pride and a more inclusive attitude towards humanity in general be reflected in English L2 learning contexts.

Findings from this study indicate that a positive identification with the in-group relates to positively to English proficiency. Implementing this recommendation relates to combating the feelings of cultural loss and lack of self-image as discussed above, as well as ties in with an appreciation of multilingualism and multiculturalism as experienced in South Africa discussed previously. Connected to a positive identification with the in-group, Afrikaans learners in this study who achieved better English L2 proficiency displayed more positive attitudes towards Black people. Similarly, Southern Sotho learners who achieved better proficiency identified with a
more inclusive South African identity. A respect for the in-group and humanity in general seem to be related to better English proficiency. It would be a gross simplification to state that less racist or ethnocentrist South Africans would be better learners of English as a L2. However, a more inclusive or "world-minded" (cosmopolitan) attitude might be beneficial in L2 learning contexts.

**Recommendation 5:** that learning activities in the English L2 learning context focus on developing a more autonomous lifestyle among learners.

Similarly, it would be dangerous to state that a more autonomous disposition would automatically result in increased English L2 proficiency. Findings from other studies, however, seem to suggest that a more autonomous attitude (that might be related to particular learning styles) is beneficial in educational contexts in general (Agar, 1990: 448-451). Furthermore, outcomes-based education (OBE) (currently introduced in South African education) requires the following from learners:

- that they are active,
- capable of critical thinking and reasoning, reflection and action,
- and that they take responsibility for their learning and are motivated by constant feedback and affirmation of their worth (Department of Education, 1997: 7).

OBE requirements of learners to be active, critical and take responsibility for their learning are related to a more autonomous lifestyle. All these desired attributes for learners relate to the operational definition of autonomy\(^\text{105}\) as used in this study.

5 **Recommendations for future research**

Three issues following from this study warrant further research. First of all, the finding that a positive identification with the in-group is related to English L2 proficiency provides a counter-example that begs the revision of established social approaches to L2 learning. No attempt at presenting a new social and educational model for L2 learning was sought in this study and this might be a fertile area for further research.

Secondly, there is a trend in L2 acquisition research towards "a more balanced focus on both the social and the personal nature of L2 use and learning" (Johnson, 1992: 27, 41). Any comprehensive theory of L2 learning would have to take both factors (individual learner differences and social) into account. This is a trend also acknowledged by Dreyer (1992) and Van der Walt (1997). Both these researchers acknowledge the need to add a "cultural" perspective to their research (Dreyer, 1992: 130-131; Van der Walt, 1997: 127, 145, 147). An overt assumption in this study was right from the start that an investigation into cultural identity would be able to explain some of the variance in L2 proficiency. The overlap between findings that relate to an autonomous lifestyle (a social value included in this study), field independence and personality components, and English L2 proficiency, seem to suggest that future research needs to take account of both perspectives. An integrative research approach is needed particularly because social variables might intersect with psychological ones (Ellis, 1994: 240). This interaction might complicate an explanation of variance in English L2 proficiency invariably.

Thirdly, it is conceived that the implementation of some of the above recommendations would meet with considerable resistance among, for example, parents. It is recommended in this study that future research focus on identifying contexts, like the Molteno Project, in which some of these recommendations are already implemented. Research should be conducted on the relative success of these types of projects and research results should be made available to parents and other stakeholders who might resist these recommendations.

6 **Conclusion**

From the findings of this study, it is clear that:

- acquisition planning for English as a L2 is not (and was not) effective for Southern Sotho learners;
- there is a relationship between the cultural identities of Afrikaans and Southern Sotho learners and their English L2 proficiency; and

\(^{105}\) The operational definition of autonomy in Langley et al (1992: 7) is: "to make her/his own decisions and to carry out plans as she/he sees fit; to have an independence of action within her/his sphere".
- language planning can be improved on the basis of the new knowledge about the cultural identities of Afrikaans and Southern Sotho learners and their relationship to English L2 proficiency.

The challenge presented by the complex nature of these cultural identities is to find a way to use this information effectively in order to improve acquisition planning for English as a L2. The cultural identities are complex, because they incorporate seemingly conflicting notions: a celebration of a form of in-group identity, balanced with a more inclusive inclination; and an emphasis on values linked to an autonomous lifestyle.

Other researchers also battled to comprehend the possible contributions of complex cultural identities to the English L2 proficiency of learners. Robb (1995) presents a particularly poignant metaphor to explain her understanding of the nature of South African cultural identities and the possible influence this may wield on learning achievements. She argues that:

Strategies need to be devised and implemented to ensure that each child is enabled to develop both roots and wings (1995: 22).

It seems that the Afrikaans and Southern Sotho respondents who achieved better English L2 proficiency got this magical mix working for them. They have no insecurity about their roots (their positive identification with different forms of in-groups is proof of this), and they are simultaneously spreading their wings (reaching out to a bigger world that is more inclusive than the world of the in-group alone). The complexity of these cultural identities (and ultimately the complex context in which they are forged) challenges simplistic perceptions such as integrative motivation and transitional bilingualism (essential components of traditional social approaches to L2 learning).

It seems that the biggest challenge for effective use of findings from this study would come from the context (and attitudes of people in this context) in which these cultural identities are forged. Heugh (1995d: 24) verbalises this challenge as follows:

The challenge before us it to reorientate our thinking away from the problems associated with linguistic diversity and toward the advantages of engaging with the multilingualism of the country.

According to Verhoef (1998), functional multilingualism is at present only an ideal in South Africa. Attitudes from government and South Africans in general towards these complexities inherent to multilingual societies show that few people understand the broader societal benefits of engaging with these complexities. Reorienting the minds of South Africans about these matters presents the biggest challenge to implementation. The language reality in which many multilingual South Africans function today still entices them to believe that their complex cultural identities, and their consequent multilingualism, are problematic. Until we celebrate these cultural identities and value their contributions to act as catalysts of development in general, functional multilingualism might remain an ideal only. Ultimately, we would continue to ignore one of the most powerful sources of social energy. Mindful that social change (language change in particular) takes time (Haugen, 1971: 285; Rubin & Jernudd, 1971: xviii), it seems as if our unwillingness to act upon this knowledge might result in the hampering of development in South African society much longer than our society can afford.
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