

**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF CULTURE DURING TEACHING
AND LEARNING THROUGH ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE AT
A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Dorothea Susanna Vosloo, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature

Date

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on understanding the role of culture during teaching and learning through English L2 at the University of Technology; determine the fundamental nature of culture; gain a better understanding of the role of cultural factors that influence L2 teaching and learning of the 1st year students; and propose possible solutions to deal with problems caused by the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2.

South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual country, a situation which has led to multiracial and multicultural learning institutions. There is, therefore, a need for students in South Africa to develop the skills, knowledge, competence and attitudes to function effectively in a diverse society. The lecturers' attitudes, knowledge base and cultural competence are also crucial when setting educational goals of acceptance and appreciation of diversity.

In this study, a phenomenological design was followed. Interviews were conducted with a carefully recruited sample of participants (i.e. first year students that were all L2 speakers and lecturers who teach in a L2) at a university of technology. The researcher recruited participants by means of purposeful sampling. Twenty students and five lecturers participated in this study.

The literature and empirical research indicated that culture and language are inseparable and that culture is important to both students and lecturers. Knowledge of other cultures by both students and lecturers would promote understanding of one another's cultures and would benefit teaching and learning. Despite the opinion that students would perform better if they were to receive instruction in their mother tongue, they noted the advantages of being taught in English L2, that is, better chances of finding work, becoming communicatively competent in a world where English is spoken by so many people.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The majority of South African students learn through a language other than their first language (primary language or mother tongue). In other words, they are experiencing schooling in a second interaction.

During the recent years, there has been a growing concern about how best to meet the educational challenge of student diversity. The composition of lecture rooms in higher education institutions around the world has now become multicultural, multinational and multilingual. The situation of dealing with students from different cultures according to Finkbeiner (2002:110), poses new challenges to lecturing. This situation probably prompted Sysoyey and Donelson (2002:55) to suggest that modules about the history and culture of students coming from a wide range of ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, should be included within teacher education curricula. Meeting the challenge of cultural diversity in institutions where the Medium of Instruction (MOI) is not the students' first language (L1) has thus become crucial.

1.2 ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

Related to the above, Hidasi (2003:1) argues that there are serious concerns about the effectiveness of English Language Teaching (ELT) and English Language Learning (ELL) as a second language (L2) which can be traced back to cultural differences in communication strategies. This argument confirms the arguments of Fleet (2000:5) that language cannot be taught without taking cognizance of culture, and those of Byram

(1997:35) and Kramsch (2001:67) who maintain that there is an intertwined relationship between L2 teaching and the culture of that language. In this research, English is a L2 and a MOI in most institutions in South Africa. In addition, Peterson and Coltrane (2003:2) assert that in order for communication to be successful, language usage must be associated with other culturally appropriate behaviour or else students will learn only utterances and not the cultural appropriateness connected to these utterances.

As communicative competence implies including both verbal and non-verbal communication, Bada (2000:101) states that cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications can be greatly reduced by an increased awareness of cultural differences in non-verbal communication patterns. The author also notes that many ethnic groups use non-verbal communication more extensively than they use verbal communication, especially in expressions of feelings and attitudes. While Foley and Thompson (2003:2) assert that up to 90% of the meaning of a message is transmitted non-verbally, Shumin (1997:3) is of the opinion that ignorance of the non-verbal message often leads to misunderstanding.

Derived from the above, culture and communication are thus inseparable as culture determines how people encode and decode messages. This also confirms the observation by Bada (2000:101) who says "... the need for cultural literacy in English Language Teaching (ELT) as a L2 arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question seem to encounter significant hardships in communicating meaning to native speakers."

The ultimate goal of L2 teaching and learning is to enable students to communicate in language other than their own. A fact most people seem to ignore is that everyday language is coloured with cultural bits and

pieces (Hahne & Friederici, 2001:124). Hidasi (2003:81 - 90) warns about L2 acquisition at the expense of losing one's identity and culture, and with the unfortunate outcome of acculturation. Kovacev and Shute (2004:259-267) defines acculturation as changes that occur in members of a minority group in contact with another dominant culture.

Monica (1998:160) claims that due to the relationship between language, thinking and learning, it has become clear that when learning is not through students' mother tongue during formal learning, then cognitive development and academic performance are negatively affected. The author also indicates that students tend to view their own language and culture as devalued and inferior because the primary language is not given a positive value in institutions. In the South African context, the aforementioned means that the value of students' primary/home language and culture cannot be ignored and should be used as a point of reference when teaching/learning through a L2 such as English in an attempt to align possible differences (Atkinson, 2002:416-427).

Cultural consciousness needs to be raised in lecture rooms where students with different cultures and languages are gathered. According to Bonanni and Chetty (1999:4), raising cultural consciousness in lecture rooms plays an empowering role in helping lecturers to deal with diversity. They furthermore indicate that unless the lecturer has sufficient awareness, knowledge and skills to assimilate students' various cultures successfully into the fabric of the learning context, he/she is going to face trouble (Bonnani & Chetti, 1999:4) in getting through to students.

This research focuses on the influence of both the cultures of the students and lecturers on teaching and learning through English as a L2 or as a MOI and not as a subject.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa is a country that boasts its diversity in terms of culture, language, race and social background. Students in South Africa are not culturally homogeneous and cultural differences undoubtedly play an important role in formal education in the country. There is therefore a need to characterize the cultural differences involved.

South Africa has a system where the MOI in most tertiary institutions is English and therefore, tertiary education is not available in African languages. Mda (2000:25) claims that since language can be described as the main means through which knowledge is conveyed, this makes the MOI used in institutions of the utmost importance.

Numerous possible reasons could be contributing factors to the low pass rate amongst first-year students at the institutions of higher learning. The majority of students at the University of Technology that is the focus of the study are L2 speakers. They therefore, not only experience linguistic barriers, but also barriers relating to understanding the cultural component of English as it is their L2. As an experienced lecturer at a University of Technology I am aware of the throughput problems encountered by the institution especially with the first-year L2 students from the Department of Engineering.

In trying to deal with the problems of the influence of culture on teaching and learning through a L2, Du Plessis (2006:104) asserts that the lecturers' attitudes, knowledge base and cultural competence may be crucial when setting educational goals of acceptance and appreciation of diversity.

The main question that this study endeavours to address is:

- What is the role of culture during teaching and learning through English L2 at a University of Technology?

This study will also focus on addressing the following questions:

- What is the fundamental nature of culture?
- What cultural factors influence L2 teaching and learning of the first-year students at the University of Technology under investigation?
- What possible solutions can be proposed to deal with problems caused by the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2?

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

The main aim of this research is:

- Better understand the role of culture during teaching and learning through English Second Language at a University of Technology.

The objectives of this research are to:

- determine the fundamental nature of culture;
- gain a better understanding of the role of cultural factors that influence L2 learning and teaching of the first-year students at the University of Technology under investigation through English as L2; and
- propose possible solutions to deal with problems caused by the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A two-phased investigation was conducted in this research. In Phase 1 a literature study was conducted and in Phase 2 an empirical study was conducted.

It was important to identify a suitable research paradigm that would allow me to determine the course of my research project and distinguish an appropriate research approach and data collection strategies so as to achieve the aims of this study.

The procedures used in each phase are outlined below and discussed in detail in chapter 4.

1.5.1 Research paradigm

In this study, an interpretivist paradigm was followed. According to Maree (2007:59), interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics, the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. The author furthermore states that the ultimate aim of interpretivist research is to offer a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under investigation. The phenomenon under investigation in this study is role that culture exerts on teaching and learning through English L2. I intended to provide insight into the way in which students and lecturers at a University of Technology make sense of understanding the role of culture during teaching and learning through English L2.

1.5.2 Literature review

A literature review was conducted in this study. Mouton (2001:9) suggests that the purpose of a literature study is to provide evidence of reading about the topic. The libraries of the University of Technology under investigation and the North-West University (VAAL) were approached to assist in promoting the literature research. A literature study was conducted to create a factual background for the study.

The researcher mainly made use of primary sources, but information retrieved from secondary sources was used as well. National, as well as international literature, was consulted. A search on EBSCO host, as well as a KGPV search, was done to find relevant reference sources. The researcher's decision to use EBSCO host was motivated by the fact that it is a worldwide leader (Widget, 2009: 1) in providing information access, management solutions and electronic journal subscription services and access to more than 150 databases and thousands of e-journals. The KGPV search gave the researcher access to research that has already been done on the topic under investigation. It facilitated access to ensure the utilization of research results, technology and innovation.

The following keywords were used:

Culture; intercultural communication; acculturation; L2 teaching and learning; non-verbal communication; learner diversity; L2 language acquisition; multilingualism in higher institutions; multiculturalism in higher institutions; barriers to language acquisition; barriers to L2 language teaching and learning.

The central themes indicated in the table below were identified based on the literature review. The themes guided the conceptualization of the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3.

Table 1.1: Summary of Literature

Theme	Source
<p>Culture</p> <p>Interrelation of culture and language</p> <p>Diversity in education/ Learner diversity</p>	<p>Sources will include:</p> <p>Peck 1998; Goode, Sockalingam, Brown and Jones, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede 2002; Nieto 2002; Diaz-Rico and Wees, 2006;</p> <p>Jiang, 2000, Nieto, 2002; Biseth 2005;</p> <p>Agar, 2007; Kuo, 2007;</p> <p>Bonanni, 2000; Louw and Avenant, 2002; Parekh, 2002; Myburgh, Poggenpoel and Van Rensburg, 2004; Venter, 2004; du Plessis, 2006; Hemson, 2006</p>
<p>Multicultural education</p>	<p>Viljoen and Molefe 2001; McGroarty, 2002; Gitimu, 2004; Demeter 2005; Du Plessis, 2006; Constandius, 2007</p>
<p>English Language Teaching; English as MOI</p> <p>Motivation</p>	<p>Nkabinde 1997; Banda, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Bada, 2000; Vermeulen 2001; Viljoen and Molefe, 2001; Norris-Holt, 2001; Kyeyune, 2003; Hall, 2003; Webb 2005; De Vries 2006</p> <p>Keunig, 1998; Kalaja and Leppanen, 1998; Van Lier, 2000; Littlewood, 2001; Zhongganggao, 2001; Culhane, 2001; Littlewood, 2001; Zhongganggao, 2001; Culhane, 2001</p>
<p>Mother tongue</p>	<p>Monica, 1998; Moyo, 2000; Banda, 2000; Vermeulen, 2001; Webb, 2002; Heugh, 2002;</p>

	Radebe, 2004; Nel, 2005; Biseth, 2005
Acculturation	Laroche, Kim, Hui and Joy, 1996; Berry, 2003; Shute, 2004; Hill, 2007
Intercultural communication	Herring, 1990; Krasner 1999; Hinkel, 1999; Crystal 1999; Bonanni, 2000; Viljoen and Molefe, 2001; Samovar and Porter, 2001; Culhane, 2001; Culhane, 2001; Nieto 2002; Knapp and Hall, 2002; Lustig and Koester 2003; Gitimu 2004; Holliday, Hyde and Kullman, 2004; Lustig and Koester, 2006; Xia and Petraki, 2007; Lai, 2007; Blatner, 2009

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Hagan (2000:68) defines a research design as the plan or blueprint of the study. Mouton (2001:38) states that the research design provides a set of guidelines for instructions on how to reach the aims the researcher has set himself/herself. The aims of this research are indicated in 1.4 above.

The research design of this study is qualitative. A qualitative research design was deemed to be appropriate for this study because the aim was to understand human experiences, namely how students and lecturers at University of Technology under investigation experience the influence of culture on English L2 learning and teaching. This is in line with the statement by De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002:79) that the qualitative approach refers to research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experiences and perceptions. Clisset (2008:100) also indicates that the qualitative research approach covers a wide range of approaches for the exploration of human experience, perceptions, motivations and

behaviours and is concerned with the collection and analysis of words, whether in the form of speech or writing.

I chose a qualitative approach for this study because I wanted to:

- understand the phenomenon within a specific context, which in this case is the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2 at a University of Technology;
- derive interpretation from the participants' perspective;
- give meaning to the practicality of day-to-day the participants' lives and encounters.

1.6.1 Strategy of inquiry

For the purpose of this study, I made use of a phenomenological research strategy. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to understand an experience from the participants' point of view (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001: 157). The focus was on the way things appear to students and lecturers, through experience or in their consciousness regarding the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2. My aim was to provide a rich textured description of lived experiences of students and lecturers at a University of Technology. According to Schwandt (2001: 191), the aim of the phenomenological approach is to abandon the researcher's prejudgments and preconceptions of the phenomena and to describe the subjective experiences of people.

A phenomenological study allowed me to gather data regarding the perspectives of first-year, L2 students and their lecturers about the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2.

1.7 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING

According to Rubin and Babbie (2001:225), the target population is that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected. The target population for this study consisted of all first-year L2 students from the Engineering Department at a University of Technology. For the purpose of this study, the population comprised of male and female first-year L2 speakers of a University of Technology from the Sotho, Zulu, Tswana and Xhosa cultures, the student population of the university also consists of foreign students from cultures such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Ivory Coast, Angola and Botswana.

After defining the population, I selected a sample or representative group from the population for the purpose of determining characteristics of the whole population. Burns and Grove (2003: 31) refer to sampling as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behaviour with which to conduct a study.

The type of sample in this study was a non-probability, purposive sample which targeted a particular group of people. According to Neuman (2000: 196), the purpose of non-probability sampling is to collect specific cases, events or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding. Only first-year L2 speakers of English and their lecturers, also L2 speakers, were requested to be part of this research.

The sample was drawn from the population of L2 first year students and their lecturers at a University of Technology. The researcher selected (n=20) L2 first-year students to participate. Lecturers (n=5) who teach first-year students through English L2 were also requested to participate. Four

of the lecturers were female and one was male. Four lecturers were from the Western culture and spoke Afrikaans and one from the Black culture, who spoke Sotho.

1.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data was gathered by means of interviews. Hagan (2000:174) and Harrison (2002:1082-1100) describe an interview as a face-to-face situation in which the researcher orally solicits responses from subjects. In data collection I was totally involved, perceiving, reacting, reflecting, attaching meaning and recording the collected data.

According to Hancock (2002:10), qualitative interviews are structured, semi-structured or unstructured. For the purpose of this study data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. Phenomenological interviews are generally not very structured (Tesch in Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139). Greeff (2002:302) states that semi-structured interviews primarily focus on obtaining a detailed picture of the respondent's beliefs, feelings or perceptions regarding a particular topic. I decided to use semi-structured interviews as questions could be prepared ahead of time and I had more discretion over the timing, content and issues raised. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. I introduced questions and ensured that every participant had the opportunity to participate in the conversation and kept to the topic as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000:9).

The semi-structured interview was not fixed in its ways, but provided a clear set of instructions. According to De Vos *et al.* (2002:302), the guidelines for the semi-structured interview guide the researcher's thinking on the content of the interview that needs to be covered.

Individual interviews were arranged with students and lecturers who agreed to participate in the study at venues and times most suitable to the participants. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and then transcribed. All questions asked to the participants related to the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2. The interview schedule used in this research is attached (*cf.* Appendix 3). Probing questions were asked to gain clarity on the responses.

1.8.1 Data analysis and interpretation

The purpose of a qualitative inquiry is to produce findings. The data in qualitative research is usually in the form of written words or videotapes, audiotapes and photographs. According to Brink (2001:192), analysis of data in qualitative studies therefore involves an examination of words rather than numbers, as in quantitative studies. My approach to data analysis was to determine the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2.

As phenomenological studies are not driven by preconceived theoretical constructs and research hypotheses, but by a desire to explicate a given phenomenon, I expected to be deeply immersed in data (Pietersen, 2002: 7). During the interviews, I recorded the responses of each of the participants on audiotape. Field notes were also taken to enrich the taped discussions. All data from both the personal interviews was transcribed and analysed together with field notes. The data was then transcribed verbatim and typed.

Once all data was collected, the analysis began. Analysis sought to identify individual or group similarities and differences, by noting major themes that emerge from the interviews. The analysis technique for the

data collected was primarily content analysis. I read through all the transcripts several times to get a sense of the whole. Burns and Grove (2003:548) state that various techniques are used by qualitative researchers during the process of data analysis and interpretation, and that these techniques include coding, reflective remarks, marginal remarks and developing propositions. I identified codes which led to the development of themes and attempted to demonstrate support for these themes by means of excerpts from the participants' responses (*cf.* Chapter 5). The pages of data were coded according to each theme.

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Schwandt (2001:258), trustworthiness refers to the quality or goodness of an investigation that makes it noteworthy to audiences. Qualitative research has its own constructs or criteria for evaluation so that it can be proved to be both credible and valid for professional practice (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002:250). The constructs that I used in this research include: transferability, dependability, credibility and confirmability. It was necessary to use these constructs in the establishment of the trustworthiness of my findings. How each construct in the study was addressed is explained in detail in Chapter 4 (*cf.* 4.6).

1.10 ETHICAL ASPECTS

According to Parse (2001:19), ethical issues are always an important consideration in any type of research as they are intended to protect participants from any harm, emotional or physical, befalling them during the course of the research study. Participant's emotional, physical and psychological well-being were not jeopardized in any manner in this research.

There are several ethical issues that I considered when I designed this study as it made use of human beings as participants. The ethical aspects that were considered are indicated below:

- I informed research participants about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research and what their participation entailed.
- The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents were respected. I assured them that any information revealed to me will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and would only be used for this specific research.
- Research participants participated in a voluntary way, free from any coercion.
- If participants wanted to withdraw, they could have done so without being questioned.
- I treated all information disclosed in interviews with confidentiality and I used it for no other purpose than the one intended in the study.
- Permission was obtained from:
 - The Research Faculty Board of the university of Technology that participated in this research, allowing me to conduct research at the campus (*cf.* Appendix 1); and
 - The Dean of the Faculty Engineering allowing me to conduct interviews at the campus with the participants after contact sessions (*cf.* Appendix 2).

1.11 CHAPTER DIVISION

A preview of the chapters in this study comprises:

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This chapter provided information on the background to the study, the aims of this research and the research methodology employed.

CHAPTER 2: THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF CULTURE IN RELATION TO A LANGUAGE

This chapter intended to explore the fundamental nature of culture in relation to a language by providing information on South Africa as a multicultural country, the influence of culture in a language, the importance of cultural and linguistic competence and instructional strategies for teaching culture and language.

CHAPTER 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH L2

Different models of language learning and acquisition, the role that language plays in learning, as well as the motivation of a L2 learner in learning are discussed. Information on the language policy implemented in South African learning institutions and the mother-tongue debate are also provided.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 contains the research methodology used in the empirical study, including the problem, the aims and the research paradigm that influenced this research.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

An analysis of the data gained through semi-structured interviews was reflected as the result of this study. The responses were content analysed and discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARIES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 6 served as a conclusion to this study, incorporating findings of the literature study, findings of the empirical study, limitations and contributions, as well as recommendations for further studies.

1.12 CONCLUSION

The overview of the study was described in this chapter. The purpose was to offer a description of the research problem and it included an introduction, rationale, as well as aims and objectives. A summary of the research design and methods was put forward and ethical measures were set out. The next chapter presents a review of the literature that is associated with the research topic.

CHAPTER 2

THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF CULTURE IN RELATION TO A LANGUAGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Campbell (2002:31) states that social changes such as economic globalization and international mobility have led to an increase in the number of people who spend substantial periods of time in more than one cultural context. The author furthermore says that this has led to a cultural diversity within nations that is reflected in institutions of higher learning and lecture rooms, where increasing numbers of students are from non-mainstream cultural backgrounds. Globalization has made communication between people from diverse backgrounds a necessity. It has made intercultural communication inevitable. Although global communication possibilities have been maximized by technology, it has not diminished the need for language competency.

South Africa is a country that boasts its diversity in terms of culture, multilingualism, race and social background. Du Plessis (2006:104) states that South Africa is a multicultural society evolving from a history where multiculturalism could not be celebrated because of the separation of cultures.

Without culture, we cannot understand the lives and motivations of others or connect with their concerns and interests. Kuo (2004:5) claims that culture

is inherent to our being and a powerful human tool to develop the society, add to people's knowledge and establish relationships between people.

To get a better understanding of culture and the influence it exerts on language, it was necessary to look at South Africa as a multicultural country with a past where a clear distinction existed between different cultures.

2.2 SOUTH AFRICA AS A MULTICULTURAL COUNTRY

Louw and Avenant (2002:146) state that South Africa is characterized as a multi-cultural society and has great diversity in geography, language and culture. According to Parekh (2002:166-167), cultural diversity creates a climate in which different cultures can engage in a mutually beneficial dialogue. The author furthermore states that different artistic, literary, musical, moral and other traditions interrogate, challenge and probe one another, borrow and experiment with each others' ideas, and often throw up wholly new ideas and sensibilities that none of them could have generated on their own (Parekh, 2002:166-167).

According to Venter (2004:149-160), there is a clear distinction between the pre-democratic and the new democratic South Africa. This distinction refers to a shift in political and constitutional conditions, and also to a shift in the value and philosophical frameworks which underpin the basis of South African society (Venter, 2004:149-160). Venter (2004:149-160) asserts that all students in South Africa will have to develop the skills, knowledge, competence and attitudes to function effectively in a diverse society.

Bonanni (2000:1) claims that in post-apartheid South African classrooms, access to urban schools by educators and scholars of all cultures and

language groups was permitted virtually overnight, thereby transforming the previously racially/culturally segregated classrooms into multicultural classrooms.

Webb (2000:3) indicates that the majority of South African students are from non-Western societies (often largely rural or at least semi-rural societies) with different learning content, different views about learning as well as different measurements of successful learning. He furthermore states that it is likely that students from such societies will find the culture of formal educational institutions somewhat inhibiting and alien (Webb, 2000:3).

Venter (2004:149-160) states that for a long time Western culture and values dominated without acknowledging and considering the African origin of the vast majority of people. According to the author the western capitalistic, individualistic view of life is often in direct opposition to the more group-oriented outlook of the African cultures (Venter, 2004:149-160).

Constandius (2007:3) is of the opinion that the realization of the goal of equal opportunity education as envisioned in the constitution and to ensure that cultural diversity continues, a multicultural education approach should be investigated. To enable multicultural education, the social environment of the student, which obviously also includes educational background and indigenous knowledge, has to be taken into account (Constandius, 2007:3).

In a study by Elmarie Constandius (2007:1) done at the Stellenbosch University, it was found that the disadvantaged historical and political

circumstances of black African students have influenced their emotional ability to adapt in a new and different environment. The author says that all the students felt that there were not many guidelines as to which aspects of their own culture they could keep and which they had to leave behind (Constandius, 2007: 6).

Bonanni (2000:3) states that in South Africa forty years of apartheid segregation policies have left indigenous and other settler groups uncommonly ignorant of their respective cultures. She continues to say that right now educator training which highlights the elements of culture and intercultural studies has become essential.

McGroarty (2002:49) adds to this by saying that since the educational level often sets the limits to career, income and social prestige, higher education is desirable in order to experience social mobility. English and Afrikaans are the only languages of instruction in the tertiary educational institutions which, for the majority of students, are either a L2 or L3 and therefore become an obstacle.

Biseth (2005:4) asserts that English is a globally used language and often associated with globalization. Widespread knowledge of English enables everyone to interact, hence making this a part of the cultural dimension of globalization. Sonntag (2003:1) claims that the Black disempowered South African population, in particular, sees English as a ticket to upward mobility. English is therefore considered as the global language and the response of nations is to increase teaching in English in the institutions of learning and even to use it as MOI. Biseth (2005:4) states that a market for English is created when that is the language most often used in the public sphere, and the parents demand it with the intention of improving the future for their children. Van Staaden (2005:12) states that black

parents particularly believe that a good command of the English language will secure an economic advantage and social mobility for their children.

Essentially, multicultural education is about social change through education. It requires deep and critical thinking imagination, and commitment. Nieto (1999:112) states that education accepts and affirms differences in race, ethnicity, religion, language, economics, sexual orientation, gender and other differences that learners and educators encompass.

This research aims at understanding the influence of culture on teaching and learning, therefore it is necessary to start by defining culture and elaborate on its characteristics.

2.3 DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Nieto (2002:109) defines culture as follows: “Culture is the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors (which can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion), and how these are transformed by those who share them ... Culture includes not only language, ethnicity and race, but other crucial dimensions such as social class and gender, because they may be key factors in explaining educational achievement.”

Kramsch (1998:127) associates culture with “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting”.

According to Goode, Sockalingam, Brown and Jones (2000:15), culture is an “integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations”. Human behaviour results from a process of socialization, and socialization always takes place within the context of specific cultural and ethnic environments.

Diaz-Rico and Weed (2002: 232) define culture as the explicit and implicit patterns for living, the dynamic system of commonly agreed-upon symbols and meanings, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, behaviours, traditions, and/or habits that are shared and make up the total way or life of a people, as negotiated by individuals in the process of constructing a personal identity.

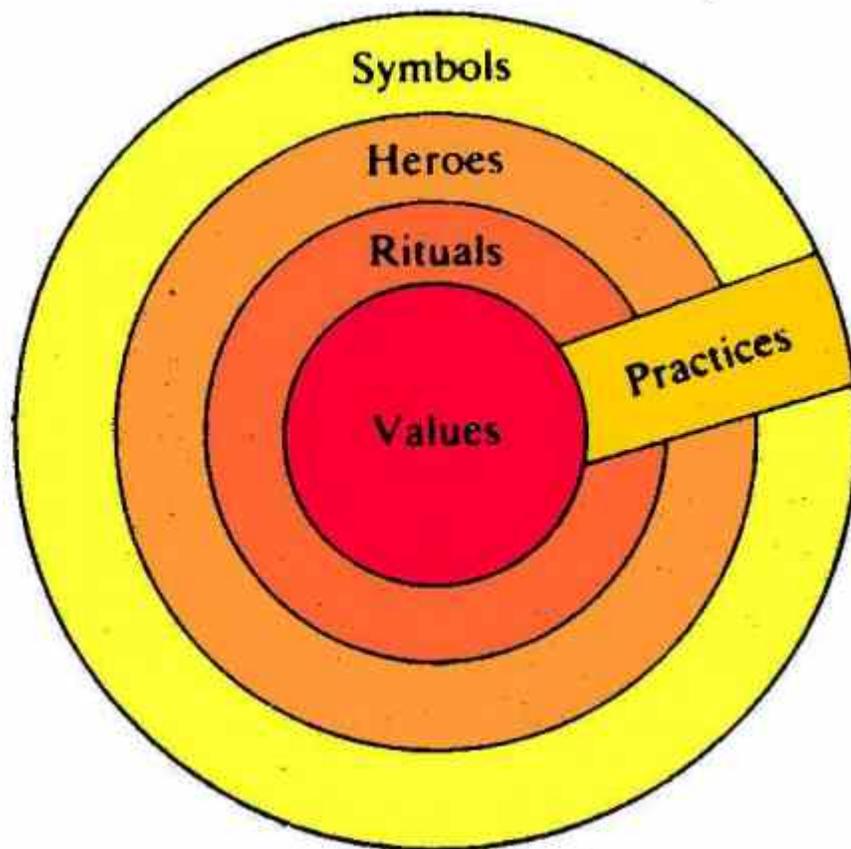
Hofstede (2001:9) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or people from another. Hofstede’s definition focuses on cultural differences in people’s thinking, feeling and acting which will influence their choice of symbols, heroes, rituals and values.

The key words in the above definitions are: patterns, behaviour, agreed-upon symbols, achievements of human group, traditions, collective programming of the mind and attached values help in differentiating between cultures. The functions of culture in everyday life are also indicated in the definitions. The functions include: ‘using culture to influence behavior’, ‘including thoughts’, ‘communications’, ‘languages’ and ‘manners of interacting’. The interpretative role of culture is the key when analysing cross-cultural interaction.

The study focused on various South African Black cultures, i.e. Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Tsonga and Tswana, as well as French-speaking Black cultures from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroun and the Ivory Coast.

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005:7) have created an “onion” metaphor to understand culture.

Figure 2.1: The onion model of culture



Source: Hofstede (1991:9)

According to Tatsuki (2001:3), Hofstede used an onion diagram to illustrate his view of culture as a many-layered concept. These layers are described as follows:

- Values: values are defined as broad tendencies to prefer certain states to others among dichotomies such as ugly-beautiful, dirty-clean, unnatural-natural. Hofstede (2001:394) claims that by the age of 10, most of a child's basic values have been programmed into his or her mind.
- Rituals: This is the layer that stands for collective activities such as greeting, paying respect, social/religious ceremonies, etc.
- Heroes: This is the layer which refers to persons alive or dead, real or imaginary who possess characteristics prized in the culture.
- Symbols: This forms the final and outermost layer and is the layer where Hofstede (1991:10) places words (language), gestures, pictures, objects, clothing, hairstyles or other superficial expressions of culture.

Hofstede (1991:11) then introduces the notion of practice which he explains as the means by which a culture coherently and cohesively inculcates its values at each level of expression.

Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan and Street (2001:30) emphasize the dynamic, on-going nature of culture and state that culture is not a given, but constituted in the everyday practice of groups and individuals. Bateman (2002:5) claims that, from this perspective, it is difficult to imagine "teaching culture", since, as Tseng (2002:13) asserts, "understanding culture is a process of learning rather than an external knowledge to be acquired".

Roberts *et al.* (2001:63) postulate that culture is constructed by people in their everyday lives, and language is the chief instrument for doing so. These authors furthermore state that for individuals from different cultures to communicate effectively, they must be open to engaging in the process of negotiating meaning. Hofstede (1991:26) indicates that culture is learned and not inherited. If the aim of education, according to Giladi (2005:35), is to preserve culture and to pass it on to the next generation, the concept of education is therefore not only focusing on the provision of skills, but also on cultural identity and values.

Different cultures have different beliefs, values and norms and it is therefore important to identify these elements of culture to establish a better understanding between people of different cultures. Culture is a broad term, therefore there are different types of cultures. The Iceberg model (Rodseth, 1998:55) on one hand indicates two types of cultures:

- the **surface culture** which includes the food, dress, music, visual arts craft dance, literature, language, celebrations and games; and
- the **deep culture** which includes the concepts of time, personal space, non-verbal communications, nature of friendships and concept of self.

Triandis (cited by Bennet, 2003:33) also makes a distinction between subjective culture which includes worldviews, perceptions of environment, stereotypes, role expectations and norms and material or concrete culture.

To furthermore have a better understanding of what culture entails, it is necessary to discuss the different elements of culture.

2.4 ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Mooney, Knox and Schacht (2000:5 – 9) identify beliefs, values, norms, sanctions and symbols as elements of culture. These elements of culture are discussed below:

- **Beliefs** refer to definitions and explanations about what is assumed to be true. The belief of an individual or group influences whether that individual or group views a particular social condition as a social problem.
- **Values** are social agreements about what is considered good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable. Cultural values are shared beliefs about the desired outcomes, priorities and acceptable methods for achieving goals. Frequently, social conditions are viewed as social problems when the conditions are incompatible with or contradict closely held values. Cultural values affect the way individuals judge the behaviour of others. Not understanding students' cultures will certainly result in a lack of understanding their behaviour.
- **Norms** are socially defined rules of behaviour. They serve as guidelines for people's behaviour and for their expectations of the behaviour of others.
- **Sanctions.** All norms are associated with sanctions, or social consequences for conforming to or violating norms. Conformity to social norms may be rewarded by a positive sanction. Violation of social norms may be punished by a negative sanction.
- **Symbols.** A symbol is something that represents something else. The symbol of a culture includes language, gestures and objects whose meaning is commonly understood by members of society.

To function in the world as a global society it has become imperative to have knowledge of other cultures and the researcher therefore regarded it as necessary to look at cultural metaphors which give an indication of what members of a society consider as important. This study, therefore,

focused on the cultures of the Sotho, Venda, Zulu, Tswana, Xhosa students, even though there are also students from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Angola and Botswana at this University.

2.5 METAPHORS FOR CULTURE

Gannon (2004:2) defines “cultural metaphor” as any activity, phenomenon or institution which members of a given culture consider important and with which they identify emotionally and/or cognitively, holding that metaphor represents the underlying values expressive of the culture itself.

Cross-cultural psychologists and cultural anthropologists such as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Hall and Hall (1990) and Hofstede (2001) have devoted their lives to the study of culture and they emphasize a number of dimensions such as time and space when comparing one society to another (Gannon, 2004:8).

The first of these dimensional approaches was described by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961:56) who compare cultures across six dimensions. These dimensions are:

- What do members of a society assume about the nature of people; whether people are good, bad or a mixture?
- What do members of a society assume about the relationship between a person and nature; should we live in harmony with it or subjugate it?
- What do members of a society assume about the relationship between people; should a person act in an individual manner or consider the group before taking action?

- What is the primary mode of activity in a given society; being or accepting the status quo, enjoying the current situation or changing things to make them better.
- What is the conception of space in a given society; is it considered private in that meetings are held in private, people do not get too close to one another physically or would it be public, by having everyone participate in meetings and decision-making, allowing emotions to be expressed publicly and having people stand in close proximity to one another?
- What is the society's dominant temporal orientation: past, present or future?

Another well-known anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, has spent more than 40 years developing and writing about a similar dimensional classification system (Hall & Hall, 1990:45). He basically focuses on the second dimensional approach which includes communication patterns found within cultures, and he emphasizes four dimensions along which societies can be compared:

- context, or the amount of information that must be explicitly stated if a message or communication is to be successful;
- space, or the ways of communicating through specific handling of personal space;
- time, which is either monochronic (scheduling and completing one activity at a time) or polychronic (not distinguishing between activities and completing them simultaneously); and
- information flow, which is the structure and speed of messages between individuals and/or organizations.

A third major dimensional approach was developed by Hofstede (1991; 2001:11 - 30). Hofstede's approach has proved to be the most useful and it has served as the base from which other dimensional approaches evolved. The third dimension is composed of five dimensions of basic cultural values:

- power distance or the degree to which members of a society automatically accept a hierarchical or unequal distribution of power in organizations and the society;
- uncertainty avoidance or the degree to which members of a given society deal with the uncertainty and risk of everyday life and prefer to work with long-term acquaintances and friends rather than with strangers;
- individualism or the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be separate from a group and to be free from group pressure to conform;
- masculinity or the degree to which a society looks favourably on aggressive and materialistic behaviour; and
- time horizon (short-term to long-term) or the degree to which members of a culture are willing to defer present gratification to achieve long-term goals;

Although these three dimensional approaches have become influential, they have also become controversial. They leave out many features of the cultural mindsets that are activated in daily cultural activities as they are somewhat lifeless and narrow in that these dimensions leave out many facets of behaviour in cultures (Gannon, 2004: 9).

To have a full understanding of the place of culture in teaching in a L2, it is necessary to look at the work of earlier researchers in this field.

2.6 THE ROLE OF CULTURE WHEN TEACHING IN L2

According to Sysoyev (2002:102), systematic introduction of Culture Studies into the L2 curriculum traces back to the early 20th century, when Shweiter and Simonet during the 1920s argued about the necessity of including “a system of basic information” into L2 teaching. The system they proposed included general information about geography, history, customs, traditions, holidays and rituals of a L2 country. Shweiter and Simonet’s study (1921) was the first challenge to the shared view that language is a system of signs and that language awareness included only the knowledge of grammar, lexicon and phonetics.

According to Sysoyev (2002:103), American linguist Robert Lado proposed a method of comparing L1 and L2 cultures that would help L2 learners to get a better understanding of L2 realities in the middle of the 20th century. He argued that knowledge of a L2 culture is essential for creating the same atmosphere of native speakers’ interaction by L2 learners. In the 1970s, the rapid development of social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology, resulted in a considerable broadening in scholars’ understanding of the concept of culture. In 1972, Dell Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence, paying special attention to the sociolinguistic component which connected language and culture (Sysoyev, 2002:112).

A fundamental reason for studying culture is that the globalized world demands cross-cultural expertise if people are to survive. It should be

noted, however, that knowing a country's language, while clearly helpful, is no guarantee of understanding the cultural mindset. Key features for gaining cultural awareness, according to Baker (2008:131 – 146), include knowledge of roles of culture in communication, the nature of cultural norms and the kinds of relations that exist between people and cultures.

Extensive research in communicative language teaching (CLT) served as a theoretical and methodological basis for the emergence of several approaches that aimed to co-teach language and culture.

South Africa is a country of many languages and cultures and the need to incorporate a cultural component in L2 teaching and learning needs to be explored.

2.7 INCORPORATING CULTURE AS A VITAL COMPONENT OF L2 TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH A L2

2.7.1 Introduction

Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004:7) claim that cultural awareness is an approach to culture which emphasizes not information about a culture, but skills in exploring, observing and understanding difference and sameness.

The kinds of social climates that exist in lecture rooms also affect students' performances in academic tasks. Lecture rooms around the world are now multicultural, multinational, and multilingual, and this means that educators face new challenges in teaching students of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. According to Gitimu (2004:3), education relies on effective interaction between the lecturer and the students.

Intercultural communication thus, becomes important because educational institutions are becoming more diverse culturally.

Language and culture are inextricably interrelated and consequently influence each other (Thanasoulas, 2001:1). People involved in language teaching have begun to understand the intertwined relation between culture and language. L2 learners need to learn what is socio-culturally acceptable in a given context, as what is acceptable in one language may not be acceptable in another language (Pulverness, 2003:15).

Coltrane (2003: 3) states that language is an important part of culture. Language is learned, shared, evolves and changes over time, just like culture. Language is a way to access knowledge, skills and attitudes within and across cultural boundaries. According to Banks (2003:67), language is analyzed from many different points of view and at many different levels; from the creation of sound to word formation, sentence construction to physical gesture.

Language is a powerful force giving individuals, groups, regions and cultures their identity. Ovando, Collier and Combs (2003:112) assert that language has five culture-related domains which are culture-bound. These five areas illustrate the subtleties and cultural components of the language learning process:

- **Discourse:** This involves how language is organized in active production (speech and writing) beyond the level of simple sentence syntax (organization of ideas, logic and reasoning).
- **Appropriateness:** This refers to the language used in accordance with the social situation.

- **Paralinguistics:** This refers to the use of gestures, facial expressions, closeness of speakers, volume and pitch of speech intonation.
- **Pragmatics:** This brings together discourse, appropriateness and paralinguistics, for example, when to be direct or indirect in speech, how to make turns in conversation, how to listen and how to adapt language to social needs.
- **Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency (CALP):** This relates to the mastering of the skills needed to learn and develop abstract thoughts in subjects like physics, mathematics and philosophy.

L2 lecturers have an important role to play in the language learning process and the function that language plays in the educational/cultural fulfilment of individual language students. Viljoen and Molefe (2001: 125) assert that, with institutions of higher education currently being integrated, lecturers need to be sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs of their students, as the students' development may be negatively affected if cultural habits are not further developed at their institutions. This implies that lecturers should be aware of the cultures of the Sotho, Zulu, Venda, Tswana, Xhosa students, as well as of the cultures of foreign students, especially from North Africa.

2.7.2 The importance of understanding the cultural component in the teaching and learning through English L2

Wei (2005:56) claims that language has a dual character; both as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. Language without culture is unthinkable, so is human culture without language. According to

Gao (2006:59), the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning is so evident that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning and consequently, language teaching is cultural teaching.

According to Fouché (2008:3), people's expectations, values, sense of self and the world are rooted in culture. The author furthermore states that in terms of socially acceptable discourse conventions, behaviour and patterns, language is also firmly entrenched in culture and is used, among others, as a very distinct instrument to project and transmit culture and to construct reality.

Tomalin (2008:25) states that the international role of the English language and globalization are the two main reasons to teach culture as a fifth language skill, in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to the author, the fifth language skill would teach learners the mindset and technique to adapt their use of English to learn about, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures.

Gay (2000:85) stresses the importance of recognizing and valuing students' language and culture. The author continues by saying that lecturers must become more culturally responsive by working to expand their knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity in education. Students should be made aware of the important traits in the target culture that would make them realize that there are no such things as superior and inferior, and there are differences among people of distinctive cultures as well (Wang, 2008: 4).

Hinkel (1999:89) and Jiang (2000:101) note that the manner in which individuals express and interpret messages in their own and other languages is heavily influenced by their cultural backgrounds. This language/culture link has great significance for language education, for if students are to become truly proficient in their target language, it stands to reason that they must be familiar with that language's culture.

Cummins (2001:55) refers to language students' ability to acquire language and understand the cultural dimensions (incomplete responses, non verbal cues, etc.) as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). He also points out the advantage students have when exposed to a variety of native speakers. The learners acquire BICS through their observation and interaction. In turn, the exposure to native speakers serves as a platform in developing speakers of English, native and non-native.

Cummins (2003:2-33) makes a distinction between "basic interpersonal communicative skills" and "cognitive/academic language proficiency" (CALP). The author explains that CALP refers to the specific literary language this is required in academic settings.

Baker (2001:169-170) explains that BICS is said to occur when there are contextual supports and props for language delivery. Actions with eyes and hands, instant feedback, cues and clues support verbal language. The author states that CALP, on the other hand, is said to occur in context reduced academic situations, where language is cognitively and academically more advanced (Baker, 2001:169-170).

Cummins (2003: 45) and Corson (2001:23) both agree that significant changes need to be made within the educational structure to offer justice and equity to linguistically diverse students. These authors seek a change in attitude and policy among lecturers that would value the linguistic diversity of all students, but which would also address the special needs of linguistically diverse students to help them access the academic language that may be keeping them from excelling within the existing structure (Cummins, 2003:45; Corson, 2001:23).

According to Bonanni (2000:3), lecturers should know their students' constitutional rights to exercise cultural behaviour, including religious and linguistic behaviour, and learn to exercise respect for those rights. The author continues to say that the educator's role as an agent of empowerment, one who can encourage development of self-image, self-esteem, self-affirmation and resurgence of pride in roots, is crucial – not

only for the learners' academic success – but also to create a positive and co-operative environment in the multicultural classroom.

According to Savignon and Sysoyev (2002:510-524), the relevance of teaching culture with language is based on the belief that language and culture are interconnected. Their predominant view is that culture cannot be taught without language and similarly, that language cannot be taught without culture. Brock-Utne (2005:1) states that even though cultures partly exist through language, culture is more than language and language is also more than culture. Lai (2007:3) claims that without culture, people cannot understand the lives and motivations of others and connect with their concerns and interests.

Linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Agar (2007:13) states that communication is inseparable from culture. According to Nieto (2002:111), it is widely accepted nowadays, that culture and language are closely related. Krasner (1999:79) says that linguistic competence alone is not enough for students of a language to be competent in that language. Students who learn through English as a L2 need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests and agree or disagree with someone. They should know that

behaviours and that are appropriate in their own culture may be perceived differently by members of the target culture. This means that understanding a new culture is an important element in understanding the place of culture during teaching and learning in English as L2.

Education relies on effective interaction between the lecturer and the students. Intercultural communication has become important because schools and tertiary institutions are becoming more diverse culturally. Lustig and Koester (2003:49 – 51) claim that intercultural communication is a symbolic process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings. Lecturers should therefore be sensitive to the potentially problematic outcomes of intercultural communication in the culturally diverse setting. Hinkel (1999:56) observes that there is increased awareness in lecturers of the fact that culture and language are inseparable. According to Demeter (2005: 1), students' cultures in a multicultural lecture room usually have a few aspects that clash. These cross-cultural differences not only cause misunderstandings in communication, but can also interfere with the teaching/learning process, for example, students from different cultures have different learning styles which may cause misunderstanding (Demeter, 2005:1).

With the emergence of multi-national and global companies, the business sector is probably most affected with the issues of communication across

cultures. In order to communicate successfully cross culturally, knowledge and understanding of cultural factors such as values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour should be acquired. Crystal (1999:17) speculates that lecturers may soon have to prepare students for a world of staggering linguistic diversity and will have to develop their intercultural sensitivity.

Savignou (2002:11) posits that teaching culture as part of L2 is instrumental in enhancing communicative competence. Peterson and Coltrane (2003:2) state that in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behaviour. If this does not happen, students will learn utterances only and not the cultural appropriateness connected to these utterances.

Liddicoat and Crozet (2000:2) assert that culture underlies every part of communication. These authors furthermore state that L2 education should focus on the exploration of a comfortable unbounded and dynamic space which intercultural communicators create as they interact with one another in their attempt to bridge the gap between cultural differences.

Bateman (2002:318-333) states that if L2 students are taught about the target culture while simultaneously acquiring the language, the potential exists to affect students' perceptions and attitudes toward the target language speakers and their culture in a positive way. According to

Savignon (2002:15), it has long been the view of language theorists and researchers that a cultural component is essential in creating a complete and comprehensive language syllabus.

Genc and Bada (2005:75) postulate that culture classes have a humanizing and a motivating effect on the language student and the learning process. These culture classes help students to observe similarities and differences among various cultural groups.

Savignon (2007:212) asserts that interest in teaching culture along with learning in English as a L2 has led to the emergence of various integrative approaches.

According to Peterson and Coltrane (2003:3), culture must be fully incorporated as a vital component of learning and teaching through English as a L2. The importance of students to become linguistically, as well as culturally competent to qualify as communicatively competent will be discussed below.

2.8 LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Xiao and Petraki (2007:1-16) assert that one effect of the globalization of the English language is a significant increase in the number of intercultural interactions. More people than ever before are involved in interactions with foreigners and communities are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural.

Peterson and Coltrane (2003:1) state that linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. According to Krasner (1999:79), linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language.

Linguistic competence is "the capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency and L2 speakers, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, and individuals with disabilities" (Goode & Jones, 2004:31).

Cunningham (2001:218) states that many economists concede that language competence in more than one language has become imperative

because of the integral place of language competency in the global market-place. The art of knowing how to communicate with other cultures should be a work-place skill that is emphasized.

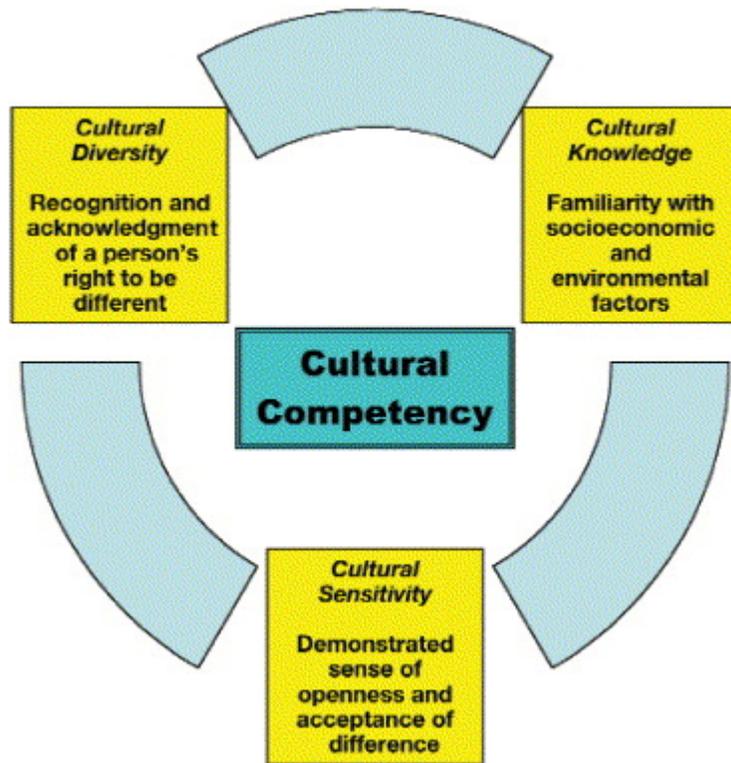
It is imperative for lecturers to be sensitive to the potentially problematic outcomes of intercultural communication in the culturally diverse lecture. Communication can be a useful source of intercultural knowledge and mutual enrichment between culturally diverse learners if managed proactively by the lecturer. On the other hand, if not managed sensitively, communication between different cultures in the classroom could lead to frustration, apprehension and intercultural conflict. Obstacles to effective intercultural communication include attitudes and dispositions, stereotyping and ethnocentrism. Cross-cultural communication is thus complex and potentially problematic in education (Roux, 2002:37).

Samovar and Porter (2001:295) describe intercultural communication as a difficult process, especially when it results in misunderstandings and a failure to achieve a common understanding. Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2004:2) state that the problems in intercultural experiences have motivated many research studies to examine the reasons for intercultural misunderstanding and cross-cultural difficulties.

Cultural competence refers to the learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms and language of the majority of members of the culture. When members of the culture come to view the person as an “insider,” it can be concluded that the person has attained complete competence in the new culture. However, acceptance as an insider is not a prerequisite for cultural competence *per se*. The important consideration is for the person to behave within an acceptable cultural band of normative behaviour (Padilla & Perez, 2003:42).

A culturally competent educator must reach three levels of learning and reasoning to complete the Cultural Competency Paradigm as depicted by Benavente’s (2004:25) model in figure 3.2 below.

Figure 2.2: Cultural Competency Paradigm



Source: Benavente (2004:25)

In a classroom situation, cultural competence requires a willingness to accept alternative perspectives about what things mean (Lynch & Hanson, 1992:23). It necessitates self-awareness, culture-specific awareness, and effective communication. Self-awareness begins with an understanding that everyone has a culture, but often individuals are not aware of the behaviours, habits and customs that are culturally based. Many educators are unaware that what they take for the norm is actually cultural bias. Increased self-awareness helps educators discover unknown biases that can have subtle, but pervasive effects on intercultural interaction. Cultural

self-awareness begins with an exploration of one's own heritage (Howard, 1999:12).

According to Gay (2000:181 - 187), lecturers create a paradox when they claim that their top priority is to treat all children like human beings, regardless of ethnic identity, cultural background or economic status. Therefore, to acknowledge and respect one another, to be fully human, requires mutual understanding and appreciation based on cultural understanding.

The diversity of students at universities and institutions of higher learning should be taken into consideration to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of information. It is therefore imperative to look at the impact of cultural differences in teaching and learning in a L2.

2.9 THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A L2

Nieto (2000:112) states that education accepts and affirms differences in race, ethnicity, religion, language, economics, sexual orientation, gender, and other differences that learners and educators encompass.

It is important to characterize the cultural differences involved when discussing education in a cross-cultural setting. This is a difficult task as culture is a highly politicized entity in South Africa. Du Plessis (2006:104) states that South Africa is a multicultural society evolving from a history where multiculturalism could not be celebrated because of the separation of cultures.

Lack of knowledge of how different cultures communicate and interact, and of their values and norms may lead to misunderstanding. Du Plessis (2006:88) claims that cultural differences in communication patterns between lecturers and students may predispose the lecturers towards misunderstanding and misjudgment of both the academic and communicative competence of the students.

Constandius (2007:4) claims that, in her research, she has come to realize the complexities that black African students face in their quest to adjust to their present environment. Learning about culture without understanding the context wherein that culture currently exists, and in which it existed in the past, becomes superficial and of little value for influencing classroom practices and curricula.

According to Viljoen and Molefe (2001:123), differences in pragmatic behaviour such as talkativeness, the loudness of verbal interactions, the proximity to conversational partners, among others, may be perceived as problematic or disruptive in class, when, in fact, these behaviours may be part of a cultural communication pattern and are not intended to be disruptive or aggressive. However, the major part of culture is the non-observable. It includes dimensions such as values, attitudes and concepts. For example, family bonds are formed on the basis of one's perceptions and feelings - things beyond what we can see and observe.

Neuliep and McCroskey (1997:389) claim that when a person interacts with people of other cultures and encounters cultural differences, he/she inclines to view people as strangers. Situations such as this may lead to intercultural communication apprehension, defined by Neuliep and McCroskey (1997: 389) as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people of different groups, especially cultural and ethnic and/or racial groups".

DuPraw and Axner (2002:10) claim that the way people communicate varies widely between, and even within, cultures. She identified six fundamental patterns of cultural differences:

- **Different communication styles:** One aspect of communication style is language usage. Words and phrases are used in different ways across cultures.

Another aspect of communication style is non-verbal communication and the degree of importance given to it. Non-verbal communication includes not only facial expressions and gestures; it also involves seating arrangements, personal distance and sense of time (*cf.* 2.14).

- **Different attitudes toward conflict**

Different cultures have different views of conflict; some view it as something to be avoided, while others see it as a positive thing. Western culture generally views conflict as something to be dealt with directly, while in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning and needs to be worked out quietly.

- **Different approaches to completing tasks**

There are different ways that move people from different cultures toward completing tasks. Some reasons include different access to resources, different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together.

- **Different decision-making styles**

The roles individuals play in decision-making vary widely from culture to culture. While decisions in the United States are frequently delegated, many Southern European and Latin American countries place a strong value on holding decision-making responsibilities to themselves.

- **Different attitudes toward disclosure**

it is not appropriate in some cultures to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding or about personal information. One therefore has to keep in mind, when dealing with conflict, that people may differ in what they feel comfortable at revealing.

- **Different approaches to knowing**

There are also notable differences in the way people from different cultures come to know things. European cultures tend to consider information acquired through cognitive means, such as counting and measuring, more valid than other ways of coming to know things. African cultures, on the other hand, prefer more affective ways of knowing, including symbolic imagery and rhythm.

When different cultures come into contact with each other it results in certain changes within these cultural groups, of which acculturation is one.

2.10 ACCULTURATION

Kovacev and Shute (2004:254-267) states that acculturation can be defined as changes that occur in members of a minority group in contact with another dominant culture. Berry (2003:17) defines acculturation as an overarching process of adjusting to a new culture that involves changes in identification with one's cultural group and the larger society.

Acculturation implies a mutual influence in which elements of two cultures mingle and merge. According to Hill (2007:323), sociologists and anthropologists such as Nagata (1969:34) and Pool (1965:90) have long recognized communication as playing an incidental role in acculturation. Acculturation includes changes not only at the individual psychological level, but also at the societal level. Social and environmental changes influence the development of acculturation attitudes (Trimble, 2003:3-13). Based on the people with whom immigrants interact (their family, peers, and significant others outside the family) and community environments in which they live (perceived discriminating actions or bias toward non-majority ethnic groups and social stratification by SES), the levels of immigrants' eagerness to obtain or avoid the new culture and maintain or give up the ethnic culture vary (Guarnizo, Portes & Haller, 2003; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996).

Berry (2008:328-336) produced four distinct patterns of acculturation:

- Integration: occurs when an individual maintains his/her original culture and at the same time interacts daily with the host culture.
- Assimilation: occurs when individuals do not maintain their original cultural identity, but rather seek daily interaction with the new culture.
- Separation: happens when the individual holds onto his/her original culture and avoids interaction with a new culture.
- Marginalization: describes a situation where there is little interest in maintaining the original culture or in having interaction with the new culture.

Berry (2008:328-336) associated each of the four acculturation attitudes with differing levels of acculturative stress and adaptation difficulties which can lead to a cultural shock. The most negative acculturation stress is described as resulting from marginalized or separated attitudes. Berry (2008:328-336) states that individuals with these acculturation attitudes are believed to be more likely to see intercultural experiences as threatening, while individuals with an integrated acculturation attitude, who maintain and extend contact with home and host cultures, are described as resulting in less acculturative stress.

According to Manz (2003:11) intercultural encounters can expose individuals to heavy acculturative stress which, in most cases, leads to culture shock. The term culture shock refers to the feelings of distress and unease when being exposed to a foreign culture.

There are many models of acculturation. Some of these models will be discussed below:

- **Unidimensional acculturation model** - The unidimensional model posits that if a person becomes more affiliated with the host culture, his/her affiliation towards the heritage culture weakens correspondingly (Laroche, Kim, Hui & Joy, 1996:114-131). Conversely, the more a person retains his/her heritage culture, the less that person adopts the host culture. “Assimilationists” in the unidimensional framework refers to people who adopt the host culture rather than their own. Occasionally, the term “marginalist” is used to refer to a person who borders between his/her own heritage and the host culture and does not particularly acculturate towards either culture.

- **Bidimensional acculturation model** - In contrast, the bidimensional model posits that a person's affiliation with the host culture is independent of his/her affiliation with the heritage culture. Individuals can then be classified as acculturating towards both (integrationists) and neither (marginalists) cultures, in addition to acculturation towards only one's own (separationists) or the other (assimilationists) culture (Berry, 1980 cited by Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008:22). In this theory, acculturation represents a continued long period of interaction between the two cultures.
- **Multidimensional acculturation model** – Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik (2010:238) propose an expanded, multidimensional model of acculturation and of the demographic and contextual forces that can influence the acculturation process. These authors posit that acculturation is multidimensional, not only in terms of the independence of heritage-culture and receiving-culture orientations, but also with respect to the components that are assumed to change. They also claim that there are separate literatures on cultural practices such as language use, media preferences, social affiliations and cultural customs and traditions, cultural values (belief systems associated with a specific context or group, such as the value placed on the individual person versus the value placed on the family or other group), and cultural

identifications (attachments to cultural groups, and the positive esteem drawn from these attachments).

In view of the above, the bi-dimensional model of acculturation appears to be a balanced model of acculturation and identity. According to Lena, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales and Bautista (2005:371) the bi-dimensional model of acculturation emphasizes integration or biculturalism, in that the model aims to characterize the experience by which individuals feel equally comfortable in both cultures, hold the values and respect for norms of both cultures, and retain a dual cultural identity.

This model would benefit both teaching and learning as there would be mutual respect for the values and norms of the home culture, as well as for the target culture.

2.11 THE NON-VERBAL COMPONENT OF CULTURE

Non-verbal communication includes the way humans use social and personal space; the way humans move their body parts; the way the vocal cords change the quality of the human; and the sounds emitted from the pharyngeal, oral or nasal cavities (Knapp & Hall, 2002:23).

Whereas language seems to be the obvious form of communication, much information is communicated beyond the pure words that are exchanged during a conversation. Herring (1990:91-7) defines non-verbal communication as behaviour that transcends verbal and written words. He notes that many ethnic groups use non-verbal communications more extensively than they use verbal communication, especially in expressions of feeling and attitudes. Culture variations can affect the way people communicate non-verbally.

Malandro, Barker and Barker (1991:68) list the following as classes of non-verbal communication:

- facial expression and eye behaviour
- body movement and gestures
- touching behaviour
- voice characteristics and qualities
- culture and time
- environment
- body types, shapes, and sizes
- clothing and personal artifacts.

Non-verbal communication constitutes a significant reason for learners' difficulties at universities or institutions of higher learning. According to Lustig and Koester (2006:214), "misunderstandings" often occur in the interpretations of non-verbal behaviours because different display rules create very different meanings about the appropriateness and effectiveness of particular interaction sequences.

Blatner (2009:7) claims the field of non-verbal communications has grown rapidly over the last few decades, and it has applications in business, media, international relations, education and, indeed, any field which significantly involves interpersonal and group dynamics. In most of the Black indigenous cultures it is regarded as rude for a youth to look his elder/lecturer in the eye when communicating. He will therefore keep his eyes lowered as a sign of respect (De Kadt, 1992:3). In the White South African culture, on the other hand, it is regarded negatively if a person does not make eye-contact when communicating. It can also be interpreted negatively that the person is lying; that is why s/he is not looking the other in the eye (De Kadt, 1992:3). This is only one example of how different cultures in a multicultural classroom in South Africa interpret non-verbal communication. Lack of knowledge of how different cultures communicate and interact, and of their values and norms may lead to misunderstanding. According to Louw (2004:261), cultural differences between the home and school may result in different

expectations in terms of communication skills from educators and learners.

According to Du Plessis (2006:88) cultural differences in communication patterns between lecturers and students may predispose the lecturers towards misunderstanding and misjudgment of both the academic and communicative competence of the students.

2.13 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher dealt with literature regarding the interaction between culture and language and the synergy that exists between the two. It came out clearly that culture is an important part of language and should be an important part of the classrooms. It was also clear that students need to be provided with the necessary linguistic, communicative and intercultural skills to reflect upon and portray their own society, to express themselves and to present their own culture in the target language.

The next chapter, Chapter 3 will look at teaching and learning in a L2.

CHAPTER 3

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A L2

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the relationship between culture and language. The role of culture in cultural diversity in South Africa and the cultural component in teaching and learning through English L2 was discussed. Information on the impact of cultural differences in teaching and learning through a L2 (*cf.* 2.9) and the non-verbal component of culture (*cf.* 2.11) which constitutes a significant reason for students' difficulties at the institutions of higher learning is also provided.

This chapter deals with the pros and cons of teaching and learning through English L2, models of language learning and acquisition, the role of language in learning and motivation of L2 students. It was necessary to investigate the role of the lecturer in L2 teaching and elaborate on the language policy in the institutions of learning in South Africa.

The language policies in South Africa, as well as the language policy at the University of Technology under investigation and the issue of mother-tongue instruction in South Africa are discussed in this chapter.

Terminology used in the study is clarified below.

3.2 CONCEPTUALIZATION

First language (L1): A first language (also native language, arterial language, L1, mother tongue or native language) is the language a person has learned from birth or speaks the best and is often the basis for sociolinguistic identity (Ritter, 2002:1).

Second language (L2): is any language learned after the first language or mother tongue (L1) (Wikipedia, 2008).

Second language acquisition (SLA): De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor, (2005:3) define second language acquisition as the process by which people learn a second language in addition to their native language(s). “Second language acquisition” or “SLA” has become established as the preferred term for this academic discipline.

Medium of Instruction (MOI) or Language of Instruction (LoI): Medium of instruction refers to the language through which teaching and learning is conducted in a given educational institution (Ellis, 1985:118-131). The language of instruction (English) at South African institutions of higher learning is perceived as a status symbol. Nieto (2000:193) states that this is caused by the fact that the MOI is usually linked to the

students' future economic and social welfare. A result of this choice is that many English Second Language (ESL) students experience barriers to learning because of limited English proficiency (De Vries, 2006:9).

Kyeyune (2003:173) states that MOI is an enabling tool. It facilitates the learning of subject content, and is also a means by which learners student reflect on different facts and viewpoints in order to construct a new view of the world, including the values they attach to them.

According to Doughty and Long (2007:2), SLA has long been a common activity for a majority of the human species and is becoming ever more vital as L2s themselves increase in importance. To gain more insight into the world of the L2 student, the researcher thought it necessary to look at the models to different approaches to SLA.

3.3 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN LEARNING

According to Kuo (2006:213-221), language is formed to present ideas or concepts. These can change, depending on which cultural elements are dominant at any given moment. Thus the meaning of a word can be changed, and then a new symbolism is created.

Language, literacy and communication are intrinsic to human development and central to lifelong learning (Van Tonder, 1999:1). Monica (1998:160) asserts that the human mind is endowed with the ability (not shared by any other species) to extract from natural experience an essence in an abstract form and articulate it in a manner that permits its transmission and manipulation. The human mind therefore has the ability to manipulate knowledge in a symbolic framework that makes it possible for humans to derive deeper meanings from their experiences.

Webb (2005:1) argues that language is the mediator in cognitive development (acquisition of knowledge and understanding, internalizing concepts, developing reasoning skills), affective development (emotional security, self-esteem) and social skills development. Language is therefore a facilitating developmental instrument and is important in specifically developing linguistic proficiency. Kembo (2000:289) claims that cognitive development, affective development and social development occur more effectively through mother-tongue. The author continues by saying that learning in general occurs more effectively if the required cognitive development has already occurred through the use of a first language as a language of learning. Webb (2005:1) furthermore states that South African students for whom English is a L2 (ESL students) generally do not have the required academic language proficiency in

English. According to Phillips (2004:3) many students learn by means of rote memorization of concepts they barely understand.

Biseth (2005:2) states that English is a globally used language and often associated with globalization. The author continues to say that through English, people are able to communicate with one another world-wide and that widespread knowledge of the language enables everyone to interact, hence making this a part of the cultural dimension of globalization.

According to Noels (2001:107-144), it is generally accepted that motivation to learn **through** a L2 is at least as important as language aptitude for the successful acquisition of such language. I therefore looked into the different aspects of motivation and what motivates a student to learn through a L2.

3.4 MOTIVATION OF THE L2 STUDENT IN LEARNING

Motivation is a complex phenomenon and plays a major role in learning through a L2. Keuning (1998:367) defines motivation as the “will to do something, and is influenced by the degree in which certain behaviour can satisfy the needs of an individual”. According to Van Lier (2000:245) motivation in general is seen as a response to a certain need and intrinsic motivation “arises out of certain basic psychological needs, which are

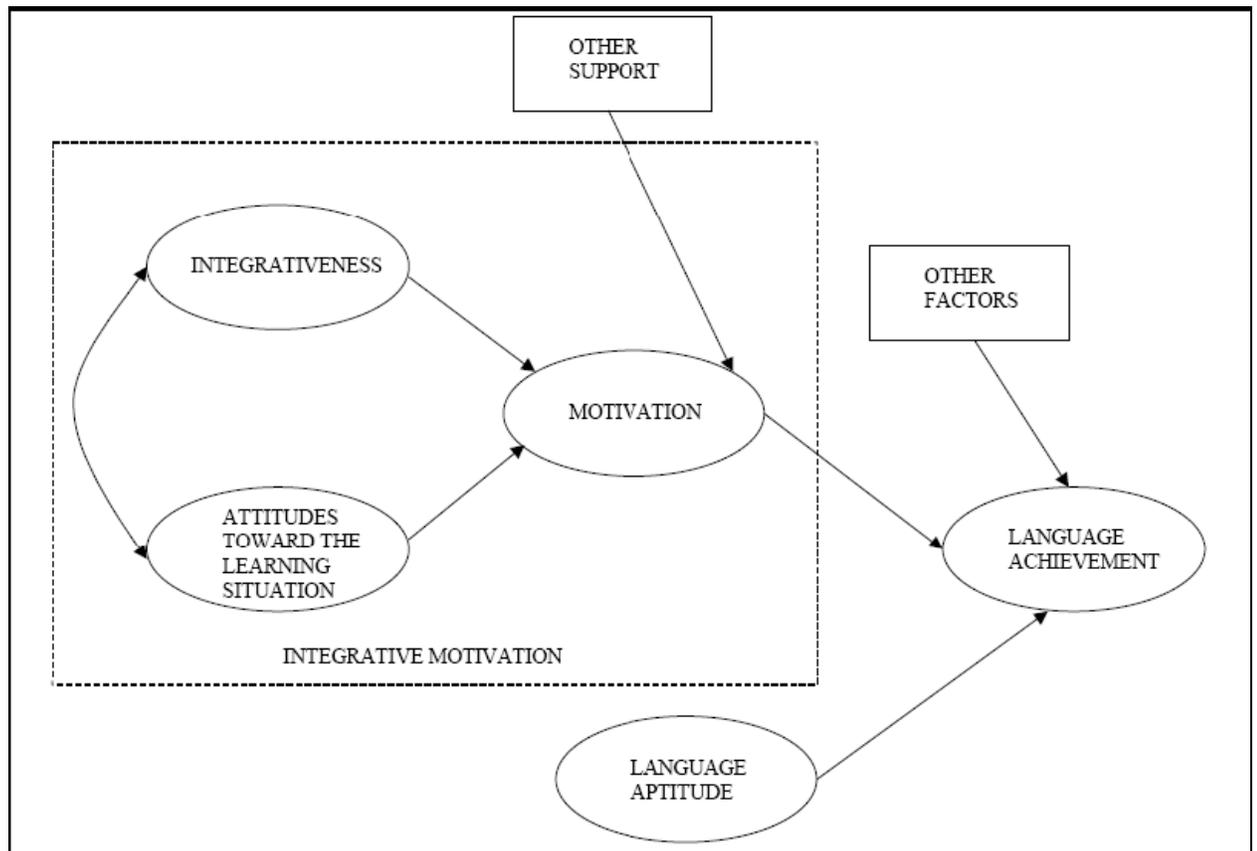
innate in the human being". These needs are then transformed into goals and are extremely important in education as this transformation process is at the core of all pedagogical action.

Kalaja and Leppanen (1998:169) view motivation as a "learner-internal state or trait, or alternatively, choices or stages in a decision process in the learner's mind". It is important to recognize that people are motivated in different ways and to different degrees of intensity. It is also of crucial importance in L2 learning to determine which sources of motivation are most conducive to learning.

According to Gardner (2001a:5), motivation in learning in a L2 is influenced by intergrativeness and learners' attitudes. The interaction between intergrativeness, attitudes and motivation are indicated in figure 3.2 below.

Gardner and Lambert (1972:132) indicate that students' attitudes, which determine their motivation for learning in a L2, should be taken into consideration. Culhane (2004:50-61) claims that a L2 student holds attitudes towards the need to acquire the L2 and about members of communities who use this language.

Figure 3.2: Socio-Educational Model



Source: Gardner (2001a: 1-18)

As demonstrated in the figure above, two classes of variables, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation are two correlated variables that influence motivation to learn through a L2. Integrativeness, reflects “a genuine interest in learning the L2 in order to come closer psychologically to the other language community” (Gardner, 2001b:8). Since integrativeness involves emotional identification with another cultural group, Gardner indicates that integrativeness would be reflected in an integrative orientation toward leaning through the L2, a favourable attitude toward the language community and openness to other

groups in general. The variable, attitudes toward the learning situation, involves “attitudes toward any aspect of the situation in which the language is learned” (Gardner, 2001b:9). At the school and in higher institution contexts, these attitudes could be directed toward the teacher/lecturer, course/learning area, course materials/learning materials, classroom activities and extra-curriculum activities. Although likelihood of the existence of some negative attitudes toward the above school/higher institution dimensions is a concern, the social-educational model (fig. 2.2) recognizes that “in any situation, some individuals will express more positive attitudes than others, and it is these differences in attitudes toward the learning situation that are the focus of the model” (Gardner, 2001b: 9).

According to Littlewood (2001:13), attitude and motivation of L2 students usually play an important role in the learning process. Students with a negative attitude toward a language, the cultural group speaking that language or even the target language environment, may not be willing to learn through the target language, as they are not motivated (Zhongganggao, 2001:329). Zhongganggao (2001:329) claims that the attitude of L2 students may thus result in social distance, which influences the degree to which learning through the target language is achieved.

3.4.1 Different types of motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972:89) have done pioneering work to explore the nature of motivation specific to language study. Gardner highlights the following types of motivation:

- Instrumental motivation: This refers to the desire to learn a language or learn in a language because it would fulfil certain utilitarian goals, such as getting a job, passing an examination, etc. Based on his research, Culhane (2001:103) concludes that students with stronger instrumental motivation are likely to feel the educational setting alone is sufficient to accomplish their linguistic goals in acquiring the L2. These students therefore are expected to therefore, make less effort to interact with members of cultural groups who use the L2.
- Integrative motivation: This refers to the desire to learn a language or learn in a language in order to communicate with people from another culture that speak that language. The desire is also to identify closely with the target language group. Culhane (2001:103) furthermore claims that, in contrast, students with a higher degree of integrative motivation are likely to make more extensive efforts to form bonds with culturally different others when given the opportunity, as a means of learning the linguistic and cultural knowledge needed for socio-cultural competence.

- Interaction motivation: According to Culhane (2001:102), students' attitude toward interacting with the L2 and its speakers impact on their opportunities of acquiring the cultural-based competencies required for the appropriate use of a L2 and development of intercultural competence.

A distinction has been made between integrative and instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972:91) show that success in L2 is likely to be lower if the underlying motivational orientation is instrumental rather than integrative.

Another important concept in Gardner's socio-educational model which has aroused plenty of attention is orientation. Gardner (2001a:1-18) defines orientation as a collection of reasons that reflect common or conceptually similar goals to learn a language. People may be interested in learning through a second language for different reasons. Therefore an integrative orientation, which is a part of integrativeness, refers to the language learning goals involving a genuine interest in approaching emotionally and physically toward the population who speak the target language. An instrumental orientation, according to Gardner and Lambert (1972:91), reflects practical and utilitarian purposes of learning a language.

However, it is possible that both sets of orientation could apply in the situation if an individual wants to learn through a L2. For instance, people want to move to a language community and intermingle with the new people and culture and meanwhile find a good job. Other than the two dichotomy orientations of language learning, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993:157) also suggest that there are complex reasons for studying another language.

It can thus not be disputed that motivation is an important variable in successful SLA, as well as L2. Another important role player in learning through English as a L2, is the lecturer and it is therefore essential to look at the role of the lecturer in teaching through a L2.

3.6 THE ROLE OF THE LECTURER IN L2 TEACHING

The lecturer plays the main role in teaching in a L2. Students' interpretation of interpersonal lecturer behaviour undoubtedly influences the learning outcomes. Hall (2003:252) claims that the moment a lecturer walks into the learning environment, he/she brings his/her experiences and values to the learning. The White Afrikaans-speaking female lecturers, according to Hall (2003:252), bring their experiences into the learning environment, which at the University of Technology, consist primarily of students from different Black cultures.

It is imperative for lecturers to be sensitive to the potentially problematic outcomes of intercultural communication in the culturally diverse lecture. Communication can be a useful source of intercultural knowledge and mutual enrichment between culturally diverse students if managed proactively by the lecturer. On the other hand, if not managed sensitively, communication between different cultures in the classroom could lead to frustration, apprehension and intercultural conflict. Obstacles to effective intercultural communication include attitudes and dispositions, stereotyping and ethnocentrism (Targowski & Metwalli, 2003:49).

In order to make learning through a L2 process a more motivating experience, lecturers need to put a great deal of thought into developing programmes which maintain student interest and have obtainable short term goals (Norris-Holt, 2001:5). Lecturers need to create interesting lessons in which the students' attention is gained. This can sometimes be accomplished by the use of teaching strategies which are not often called upon by other lecturers in mainstream subject areas. Encouraging students to become more active participants in a lesson can sometimes assist them to see a purpose for improving their communication skills in the L2. Successful communication using the target language should result in students feeling some sense of accomplishment. According to Ellis (1997:101), research into the role of the lecturers in teaching through

English as a L2 suggests that L2 achievement strongly affects student motivation.

The use of an interesting text can also help to increase the motivation level of students in the classroom. These texts should contain topics which can create a great deal of classroom interaction and help to motivate students to develop their language skills. According to Norris-Holt (2001: 3), it is important for lecturers to take advantage of discussion topics and help students to realize that, even though they may see no need to become proficient in a L2, the study of another culture can only enhance their perception and understanding of those cultures. Hall (2003: 252) suggests that a useful starting point to applying cultural awareness to learning through a L2 is to recognize that people carry their own cultural values to any learning.

3.6.1 Importance of professional development and teaching in a L2

Richards and Farrell (2005:9) assert that development generally refers to general growth and is not focused on a specific job. It serves a long-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of lecturers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as lecturers. Diaz-Maggioli (2003:1) defines professional development as an ongoing learning process in which

lecturers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students. It is “an evolving process of professional self-disclosure, reflection, and growth that yields the best results when sustained over time in communities of practice and when focused on job-embedded responsibilities”. It serves a long-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of lecturers’ understanding of teaching and of themselves as lecturers.

According to Lé and Lé (2008:23), professional development, for many lecturers, may invoke ideas of in-service days, workshops, conferences and seminars, all of which provide useful venues for disseminating information. Richards and Farrell (2005:14) state that strategies for professional development often involve documenting different kinds of teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices; examining beliefs, values and principles; conversation with peers on core issues; and collaborating with peers on classroom projects.

Danielewicz (2001:133) views professional development as part of the process of transformative re-imagining of the self. Sparks (2002:14) asserts that professional development should be entrenched into the daily activities of every lecturer and should receive the support of their administrators. He furthermore states that the professional learning of lecturers is a central factor in determining the quality of teaching.

Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001:247) state that the main tenet of professional development is not to judge what lecturers do, but to describe and understand what they are now by reflecting on how they got to be here. The authors further state that self-awareness and self-observation are the cornerstones of all professional development.

Yates and Brindley (2000:1) note that one insight that emerges consistently from studies of lecturers who teach in a L2 at work is that lecturers learn by doing, by reflecting and solving problems, and by working together in a supportive environment.

Gebhard (2005:3) claims that through exploration, lecturers can learn a lot about their own teaching by changing the way they teach, making small changes to their teaching or trying new behaviours.

Diaz-Maggioli (2003:1) states that, in the realm of L2 lecturers, professional development is required to enable lecturers to help the students develop target language proficiency and increase their understanding of the culture associated with the target language.

According to Ohta (2005:503-517), the research focus in L2 teacher education for the last decade has undergone a shift from searching for better ways to train teachers to trying to describe and understand the process of how teachers learn to teach through their self-awareness or reflection. The idea is that through exploration, a lot can be learned and discovered about teaching by changing ways of teaching, making small changes to teaching, or trying new behaviours.

According to Cross and Gearon (2004:1), the field of L2 teacher education, whether focusing on pre-service or in-service training, has a broad and chequered history. Pedagogy has tended to be driven by the linguistic theories of the day rather than by educational research into teaching through a L2 teaching itself as it occurs in natural, realistic settings.

Freeman and Johnson (1998:398) observe that research into L2 lecturer education lags a decade behind other areas of teacher education in general. Velez-Rendon (2002:457) states that L2 lecturer education over the past decade has reached a juncture where understanding how lecturers actually learn the “how to” of teaching and their evolution into language teaching professionals requires an inquiry into the cognitive worlds and personal teaching practices of L2 lecturers. She continues to say that research into our understanding how L2 lecturers learn how to

teach, develop their teaching skills and link theory to practice, as well as the influence of their own experiences and belief systems on their classroom practices, is inadequate.

Cross and Gearon (2004:3) claim that the only substantial research addressing L2 lecturer practice and pedagogy over the last three decades tends to fall into either of two main categories: teacher talk or classroom interaction. These authors furthermore say that both these categories still ultimately focus on the relationship of these issues within a framework of understanding language acquisition and learning – the affect of instruction more generally, rather than an appreciation of focusing on teaching for the sake of attempting to understand the nature and practice of L2 itself.

Klapper (2001:17) states that the art of teaching does not lie in accessing a checklist of skills, but rather in knowing which approach to adopt with different students, in different curricular circumstances or in different cultural settings.

There is a wide divergence in the various aims of teaching and learning through ESL. Quist (2000:131) indicates that there is a clash of cultures in teaching through a second language in institutions of learning; this also applies to universities. This clash is between the liberal tradition which

emphasizes the cultural and intellectual aims of language teaching and learning in Higher Education, and the instrumental paradigm which emphasizes real-world skills with an emphasis on speaking and interpersonal skills at the cost of writing or accuracy.

Cross (2004:34) argues that “teaching” has no meaning in and by itself, and there is no “one teacher” who has sole authority over absolutely everything related to the act of teaching. Lecturers, their work (goals, activities) and how they do their work is derived from where they are situated within a wider social, cultural and historical context.

3.7 A BRIEF OUTLINE OF EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICIES IN SA

The Department of Education (2002: 9) acknowledges that the implementation of multilingualism in South Africa will, in practice, be in tension with other imperatives and considerations such as the need for financial affordability and the rights of others.

The role of all languages working together to build a common sense of nationhood is consistent with the values of democracy, social justice and fundamental rights, which are enshrined in the South African Constitution.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (SA, 1996), furthermore, in the Bill of Rights, grants that:

- Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights (Section 30 of the Constitution).
- Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right: the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account: equity; practicability; and the need to redress the results of the past racially discriminatory laws and practices (Section 29(2) of the constitution) (SA, 1996).

The role of language and access to language skills is critical to ensure the rights of individuals to realise their full potential, to participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, intellectual, economic and political life of South African society (Department of Education, November 2002:4).

Biseth (2005:10) states that South Africa has a system where tertiary education is not available in the African languages. According to McGroarty (2002:20), higher education is desirable in order to experience social mobility and negotiate tertiary institutions. Biseth (2005:10) claims that since English and Afrikaans are the only languages of instruction in tertiary education institutions, this becomes a problem to the masses for whom English and Afrikaans are either a L2 or L3.

Language, according to the Department of Education (2002:4), has been and continues to be a barrier to access and success in higher education; both in the sense that African and other languages have not been developed as academic/scientific languages and in so far as the majority of students entering higher education are not fully proficient in English and Afrikaans.

The challenge facing higher education is to ensure the simultaneous development of a multilingual environment in which all languages are developed as academic/scientific languages, while at the same time ensuring that the existing languages of instruction do not serve as a barrier to access and success (Department of Education, 2002:5).

The framework for language in higher education takes into account the requirements of the Constitution, as well as the objectives and goals of the Higher Education Policy (2001). This framework recognizes the need to ensure equity of access and fair chances of success for all who seek to realize their potential through higher education. The framework also reflects the values and obligations of the Constitution, especially the need to promote multilingualism.

The Department of Education (2002:6) acknowledges that the implementation of multilingualism will, in practice, be in tension with other imperatives and considerations such as the need for financial affordability and the rights of others.

The policy framework for language in higher education addresses the following issues:

- languages of instruction;
- the future of South African languages as fields of academic study and research;
- the study of foreign languages; and
- the promotion of multilingualism in the institutional policies and practices of institutions of higher education (Department of Education, 2002:9)

It is important to note that the South African student population in higher education is linguistically diverse and it is not uncommon to find a variety of home languages represented in the student body of a single institution.

3.8 LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEHCNOLOGY UNDER INVESTIGATION

The language policy at this university of technology was adopted in 1999 with English as the official language of teaching, learning and administration. The university of technology registered 21 871 students in 2010 of which 4,4 % are EFL speaking students and the remaining 95,6% are ESL speakers and speakers for who English is a L3.

Table 3.1: Language distribution of students at the University of Technology under investigation- 2005 - 2010

Note: Headcount is calculated based on the following criteria: The primary qualification of the student; the qualification has not been cancelled; the student is registered for a subject.

Language	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
AFRIKAANS	1054	913	837	823	957	964
AFRIKAANS/ENGLISH	50	45	33	44	46	59
ENGLISH	623	567	524	570	629	662
FRENCH	128	216	262	340	403	555
GERMAN				2		
GREEK					1	
GUJERATI	7	9	5	6	2	1
HINDU	1	1	1	1	1	1
LATIN	3	1	2			
NDEBELE	37	61	69	82	96	105

NETHERLANDS	1					
OTHER BLACK LANG	118	127	170	182	212	252
OTHER EUROPEAN LANG	69	62	54	53	71	78
SOTHO(NORTH)	2499	2411	2367	2500	2950	3369
SOTHO(SOUTH)	4171	4104	3667	3741	4102	4386
SWAZI	395	442	444	538	698	849
TSONGA	1438	1507	1451	1526	1712	1900
TSWANA	2439	2365	2080	2134	2251	2347
UNKNOWN	126	99	62	36	27	24
VENDA	1288	1302	1248	1340	1579	1822
XHOSA	1012	983	937	926	1091	1217
ZULU	2512	2400	2275	2471	2936	3280
Grand Total	17971	17615	16488	17315	19764	21871

From the table above it is clear that the student number of English L2 and L3 speakers at this University of Technology has grown systematically over the past five years. There was a marked growth in the number of French-speaking students.

Fouché (2008:8) states that when looking at the composition of the student population, one cannot help to question the impact of English on the students' adjustment in a tertiary environment and their academic development. The author continues to say that the University of Technology's transformation in learner population and MOI resulted in an influx of students from social environments and cultures vastly different to the culture and environment previously reflected by the University of Technology. There is an increase in student numbers from countries in Northern Africa, for example the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory

Coast, Cameroon and Gabon, which is very different from the cultures of students from the Sotho, Swazi, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda and Tswana cultures. Students are expected to adapt and succeed in an institutional culture that displays customs, conduct and principles different from their own. The MOI can therefore, either facilitate or hinder students' academic development and acculturation process.

To address the low academic pass and throughput rates and to improve students' English proficiency levels, the University of Technology under investigation implemented a computer-based English language and cognitive development program called the English Development Language (EDL) (Fouché, 2008:9). The EDL organizes the curriculum into different cycles that are carefully planned sequences of integrated learning activities that introduce, reinforce and apply vocabulary, language skills and reading comprehension. According to Fouché (2008:10), the introduction of EDL has brought about a remarkable change in students' attitudes and attendance of lectures that could be ascribed to the change from talk-and-chalk teaching to computer-interactive learning supplemented by individual and small group educator/teaching intervention.

EDL primarily focuses on grammar instruction and it is therefore essential to address the problems that differences in cultures pose in teaching and learning in a L2.

3.9 THE MOTHER TONGUE DEBATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Political changes in South Africa have also brought about changes in the country's educational system. According to Myburgh, Poggenpoel and Van Rensburg (2004:573-584), reflections of the change in the educational system are becoming more evident at the schools and in classrooms. Students from different cultural and language backgrounds are found in the same lecture room. The majority of South African learners/students learn through a language other than their mother tongue.

Vermeulen (2001:134) states that English is the dominant language of communication, academics, business and technology in the world. It is therefore one of the main reasons many parents/caregivers in South Africa believe that English is the best choice of MOI for their children (Nkabinde, 1997:45). English is generally understood across South Africa, being the language of business, politics and the media (Mulholland, 2006: 18).

Nel (2005:151) notes that for many students in South African institutions of higher learning, English is learnt as a L2 or a L3 even though it is the MOI in the majority of lecture rooms and institutions of higher learning. According to Monica (1998:160), this kind of learning is referred to as subtractive bilingualism, which means that students learn through a L2 and it is subtractive because it denies the place and value of mother-tongue language in the context of formal learning.

Cummins (1994:51) invokes the notion of semi-lingualism as one of three “types of bilingualism” in his idea of a *Threshold Hypothesis*. The types of bilingualism includes *additive bilingualism*, defined as having “high levels in both languages,” *dominant bilingualism*, having “native-like level in one of the languages,” and *semi-lingualism*, the condition of having a “low level in both languages.” The Threshold Hypothesis posits that the level of language ability attained by a bilingual child in her/his L1 and L2 may affect cognitive growth in academic subjects.

According to Vermeulen (2001:12), there is sufficient evidence these days to show that mother tongue in the early years of school is essential for full cognitive development. A person’s mother tongue and culture, in short, are passports to reaching his/her full potential.

It is acknowledged in White Paper 5 (SA, 2001) that the early years of a child's life are critical for the acquisition of language. Viljoen and Molefe (2001:125) assert that students who are proficient in L1 will acquire English as L2 more readily and be more proficient in English than students with poor language skills in L1. Moyo (2000:101) states that educational psychologists and linguists agree that the use of the mother tongues is beneficial for the students' cognitive development.

According to Bosman and Van der Merwe (2000:221-228) the present situation in which English is the preferred MOI is thought to impede learning, and that it only leads to poor mastery of both English and the mother tongues. Banda (2000:51) asserts that the poor Grade 12 results and the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth among Blacks at high school and tertiary levels, have most often been attributed to the use of English as a L2 MOI in South Africa. According to Radebe (2004:4), it is therefore one of the main reasons why many parents/caregivers believe that English is the best choice of MOI for their children.

Monica (1998:160) states that research has shown that language, thinking and learning are intimately fielded together and because of this

relationship, cognitive development and academic performance are negatively affected when learning is not from students' mother tongue during formal learning. Not receiving instruction in a mother-tongue, has led to a very high repeat rate among speakers of indigenous African languages. Monica (1998:160) furthermore claims that many students take a long time to learn the L2 and because of a feeling of inadequacy, these students lose confidence and develop negative self-concepts and low senses of self-worth. The author says that students come to view their own language and culture as devalued and inferior because the primary language is not given a positive value in educational institutions.

Heugh (2002:171) argues that despite a growing awareness that mother tongue education is more effective than bilingual or L2 MOI, English, as a L2, has become the dominant MOI in South Africa. In a paper delivered at the NETREED conference at Beitolsolen, Biseth (2005:4) says that the Black disempowered South African population, in particular, sees English as a ticket to upward mobility. Since English is deemed important in a globalized world, the local response is increasing the use of English as the language of MOI although it is not the mother tongue of the children.

Du Plessis (2006:28) argues that the poor proficiency of Black students in English is an area of great concern to lecturers. According to Bosman and Van der Merwe (2000:225), some believe that the learners' command of

English is totally inadequate to deliver results and that Black students often fail examinations purely because of their inadequate command of English. Even on tertiary level, the students' academic performance is influenced by their poor command of English.

Horne (2005:40-45) states the alarming fact, which was made available in a study by consultants Horne and Hough, that in contrast to the 20% of Grade 11 learners who could read and write English on the appropriate level in 1998, only 12% of the Grade 11s who applied for bursaries for tertiary education in 2005 demonstrated a corresponding level of literacy.

Although English is the main MOI in South Africa, Webb (2001:1) claims that available information on the language proficiency of Black students indicates that for many, English is not an effective instrument of knowledge acquisition and skills development. The author continues to say that improving English language skills for all learners up to the point where high-level communication can efficiently take place in English, may not be an achievable goal within the reasonable time horizon. Webb (2001:1) asserts that serious consideration should be given to students' first languages, in particular African languages, as students already have oral fluency in these languages when they enter the education system.

Hay and Marais (2004:59) indicate that sufficient proficiency in English to guarantee success in studies at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) still eludes the majority of ESL speaking students, and students even on postgraduate level, cannot reason and conceptualize in English. Low academic pass and throughput rates are two implications of having to teach or learn either in English as a L2 or an additional language.

According to research done by Du Plessis (2006:32), Black students in their third year at a South African university still struggled to master English and were unable to formulate even simple coherent sentences in English. Linguistic inadequacies, therefore, often limit the Black students' opportunities to higher education.

Webb (2001:234) is of the opinion that the use of educational purposes of a language that is not known adequately constitutes a barrier to educational development, and could even lead to a form of culture shock for entrance level students.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to present a review of the literature that is associated with the research topic. The researcher researched literature regarding the motivation of students who learn through English as L2, as

well as teaching courses in L2. Taking into account that South Africa is a multicultural and a multilingual country, it was also important to outline language policies in institutions of learning. The mother tongue debate in South Africa often leads to very different opinions and also deserved attention in this research.

From the research it became clear that professional development for L2 lecturers is required to enable them to help the students develop target language proficiency and increase their understanding of the culture associated with the target language.

Chapter 4 will focus on the research design, methods of data collection and data processing techniques used in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This research is dependent on capturing the perceptions of the participants regarding their experiences of the role that culture plays in teaching and learning through English L2. As was indicated in Chapter 1 a qualitative approach was used. This chapter elaborates on the research design, the strategy of enquiry, data collection strategies, population and sampling and how trustworthiness was ensured.

The research design employed by the researcher will now be presented.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is defined as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in order to reach a certain goal. It is a tour planner and the researcher has a route to follow to reach a destination (Mouton, 2001:107). Fouché (2002:271) and Hagan (2000:68) contend that research design could be viewed as the “blue print” of the research project

that precedes the actual research process. Babbie and Mouton (2001:74) state that a research design involves deciding what the research purpose and questions will be; what information would appropriately answer specific research questions and which strategies are most effective in obtaining this. In addition, the research design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to the study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions.

I used the research design as a guideline according to which a choice about data collection and sampling methods were made. In choosing such methods, it was necessary to provide reasons for their choice.

The research design of this study is qualitative in nature. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003b:5), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. A qualitative approach is seen as a feasible technique, as it validates an in-depth analysis of the problem in order to understand the "what and why" of human behaviour.

Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret the socially constructed nature of reality and make sense of their experiences and the world they live in (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:

15). Qualitative means quality, which is inherent in the phenomena of something, be it an object or experience (Schwandt, 2001:213). According to Rubin and Babbie (2001:45), the qualitative method pursues a deeper understanding of the human experience, especially when observations and theories cannot easily be reduced to numbers. In this study I focused on the experiences of first-year, L2 students regarding the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2. The method of qualitative research is inductive as opposed to deductive. Rubin and Babbie (2001:46) indicate that inductive research involves the developments of generalizations from specific observations.

The qualitative approach is grounded in the interpretive social sciences paradigm as indicated in Chapter 1 (*cf.* 1.5.1). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:43) and Jennings (2002:26-43) note that the qualitative methodology gathers information as text-based units, which represent the social reality, context and attributes of the phenomenon under study.

Qualitative research aims to develop a meaningful understanding of human experience without taking into account the interplay of both the inquirers and participants' values and beliefs (Rubin & Babbie, 2001:45). In this research there was frequent, continuing and meaningful interaction between me and the participants.

The choice of using a qualitative research method was influenced by the fact that I was going to be able to explore the participants' views with respect to understanding the role of culture on teaching and learning through English L2.

According to Hardy and Bryman (2004:542) validity (the accuracy or truthfulness or a measurement) and reliability (the possibility of replicating the study) are often seen as problematic within qualitative research. These authors underline the fact that absolute objectivity is impossible (Hardy & Bryman, 2003:543). I was aware of the fact that the students were subjective and that, because I was very involved with the students in the study, it could cloud my interpretation of the data. I nevertheless made every effort to ensure the maximum degree of objectivity within the scope of the study.

4.2.1 The roles of the researcher

Strauss and Myburg (2001:59) cite that researchers are typically found to be the focal point in more traditional research approaches and hence, in qualitative research. I became a collector and culler of the data in this research. Furthermore, I became a facilitator as I had to interview participants and make follow-up questions to ensure that rich data was gathered. I collected data by means of interviews, transcripts, field notes,

audio-recordings and participant comments and then analysed and interpreted the outcomes as indicated in Chapter 5.

4.3 THE STRATEGY OF INQUIRY

A phenomenological study that was used in this research is discussed in detail below.

4.3.1 Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach was used to understand a social situation which in this research is the understanding of the place of culture in teaching and learning through English L2. The phenomenological approach is concerned with assumptions that are taken for granted in everyday life. My intention was to understand the meaning of events and interactions of students and lectures and their behavior, therefore I had to identify and describe the subjective experiences of first year L2 language speakers of English and their lecturers as suggested by Schwandt (2001:191 – 192).

According to Welman and Kruger (2001:373), the phenomenologist is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved. Fourtounas (2003:83) claims that phenomenological research is descriptive and qualitative, yet differs from other qualitative approaches in that attention is paid to the experienced

meaning of the phenomenon under investigation, rather than to descriptions or visible actions and behaviour. The result of this research provided a broader understanding of experiences from the perspective of the selected participants.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The process of collecting data in this research was not a haphazard exercise, but it took place according to the selected and appropriate methods, otherwise the research would have lost its meaning as a systematic inquiry. Creswell (2003:176) endorses this by saying that data collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information from research questions.

Schurink (2001:240) states that, in a qualitative study, different techniques and data collection methods are utilized in order to “describe, observe, make sense of or interpret the phenomenon under investigation from the perspective of the subjects”. The interpretation and the description of the phenomenon that is the understanding of the role of culture in teaching and learning through English L2 was achieved by the interaction I had with the research participants. The interpretation and description were done, based on the perspectives of the participants.

The natural setting is the place where the researcher is most likely to discover, or uncover, what is known about the incident of interest (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000:45). In this research, students who learn through English L2 and their lecturers who are all L2 speakers in the Department of Engineering at a University of Technology were interviewed at their offices and lecture rooms (after contact sessions). Some lecturers were interviewed individually at their homes.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used. The method or technique of collecting the data and how it was used in the study is discussed below.

4.4.1 Interviews

Sussman (2002:2) defines an interview as a diagnosis which implies the gathering of information about the course of a specific type of learning disability that an individual may have, based on the current state of events. These Interviews centred on the experiences of the research participants. My reason for choosing interviews was motivated by Bogdan, Taylor, Kun and Adreas (in Maykut & Morehouse, 2000:80) who maintain that the interview has the potential to illuminate salient features of culture and human

experience and is a form of discourse where the conversation moves beyond the surface talk to a discussion on the thoughts and feelings of a human being. The interviews not only gave me access to participants' perspectives; they are flexible in that I could interview participants at any time.

Interview questions were open-ended. Hagan (2000:174) defines open-ended interviews as a social interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee with the aim of understanding the interviewees' life experiences or situations as expressed in their own words. In the literature different types of culture are indicated. As culture is broad, the interview questions focused on surface culture, participants perspectives on the solutions to the problems that are created by the influence of culture on teaching and learning, importance of culture, problems encountered in multicultural lecture rooms, mother tongue instruction versus English L2 and participants' experiences with interactions with other cultures (*cf.* 5.3; 5.4). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with an aim to gather information from the research participants. Hagan (2000:174) describes an interview as a face-to-face situation in which the researcher orally solicits responses from participants. It is essentially the oral, in-person, administration of a questionnaire to each member of the sample. During the individual interviews with students and lecturers who participated in this research, I had a one-on-one encounter with the participants with the aim to elicit information from them. I interacted

with the participants face-to-face and could observe their non-verbal expressions.

I set the agenda for each interview and I was guided by the interview schedule (*cf.* Appendix 3). According to Hollway and Jefferson (2000:34), an interview schedule refers to a schedule whereby an interviewer asks questions to a participant from a list of topics or sub-topics within an area of inquiry. This interview schedule served as a guideline that I compiled to guide me through the interview process. The use of an interview schedule was considered advantageous for this study as it provided clearly defined purposes during the interview. Although I had an interview schedule that I had to follow when I was interviewing participants, I had to use my own discretion over the timing, the content of the discussions and the issues raised.

The procedures that I followed when I conducted the interviews are indicated below:

- Procedure to ask questions and for probing inadequate answers in a non-directive way.
- Procedure for recording responses to open-ended questions; as I could not remember everything that the participants said, it

was important to have a clear method of collecting data. I recorded data verbatim.

- Rules and guidelines for handling the interpersonal aspects of the interview in a non-biased way. It was of particular importance to focus on the task at hand and to avoid expressing participants' views or opinions according to my own beliefs.

The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. I also made use of field notes. Field notes presented an additional opportunity to collect data during semi-structured interviews. De Vos *et al.* (2002:304) explains that field notes are used to record data that are presented during the course of the discussion and serve the purpose of supporting data. The notes mostly included the responses of the interviewees.

According to Hancock (2002:10), qualitative interviews are semi-structured, structured or unstructured. In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2, I used semi-structured interviews, since they refrain from a structured question and answer approach.

4.4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Researchers such as Greeff (2002:302), state that semi-structured interviews primarily focus on obtaining a detailed picture of the respondent's beliefs, feelings or perceptions regarding a particular topic. In addition to this, this type of interview is not fixed in its ways. This allowed me to pursue particularly interesting avenues that came up during the interviews.

According to Jarratt (1996:10) a semi-structured interview approach allows the researcher to cover a specific list of topic areas with the time allocated to each topic area being left to the discretion of the interviewer. This allowed for easy exploration of unexpected facts or attitudes.

Robson (2002:227) and Bailey (2001:1-18) maintain that a semi-structured interview also provides opportunity to conduct the interviews freely through "flexible wording, freedom in the sequence of questions as well as the amount of time the interviewer gives to each question". I did not follow the interview schedule as it was, I sometimes started with questions in the third section or the second section, but by the end of each session all questions were asked. Each participant was interviewed for at least an hour. This gave the participants enough time to think about their

experiences and reflect on the role of culture on teaching and learning. I did not rush the participants for responses. If they took longer to respond I had to rephrase the question or ask what the participant was thinking. Allowing the participants time, helped in making them relax and think about understanding the role of culture in teaching and learning in a L2 and how it affects them. Having enough time also gave me an opportunity to observe their facial expressions.

The flexibility of the semi-structured interviews was advantageous in the sense that I could probe for more specific answers and interviewees could ask clarity-seeking questions on the spot. I also had an opportunity to probe and pause in order to get more information from the interviewees. The probing helped in gaining an in-depth understanding of the role of culture in teaching and learning through a L2 and how participants perceive this phenomenon.

Even though some participants prefer writing, I realized that interviews as a technique have a high response rate, and that most participants feel more comfortable speaking than writing. As I received responses immediately I could sense if the question was sensitive. Then I could explain why it was important to get a response to that particular question. I could easily assess the validity of a response since I could observe

participants' non-verbal behavior during an interview. Moreover, I could ensure that all questions were completed before the end of each session.

However, interviews, according to Cohen and Manion (2000:272) are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. I avoided being biased by not being inclined to lead the participants to the responses I expected. Probing and pausing to give the interviewees time to think and respond also helped. I recorded the data by means of note-taking and audio-taping.

The end result of the data collection was to establish and validate the relationship between different categories, and analyse and interpret these accordingly (*cf.* 3.5).

- **Disadvantages of interviewing**

Interviews are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. Cohen and Manion (2000: 272) state that the interviewer may be inclined to lead the respondent to the expected answers. To avoid this, the interviewer should bracket his/her philosophy of life and probe or pause to give the interviewee time to think and respond.

4.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

In this section the population and sample that were targeted for the research will be discussed.

4.5.1 Research population

Mouton (2001:134) state that population can be defined as the totality of all participants that conform to a set of specifications. The population in this study comprised of all first-year L2 students and their lecturers at a University of Technology.

4.5.2 Sampling method

A sample in the context of this study is a subset of a larger population, for whom information is gathered and selected for research purposes (Walliman, 2001:232). According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002:191), a sample is the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. A sample is thus, according to De Vos *et al.* (2002:191), a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons which together comprise the subject of a study. It assists in explaining some facet of the population. In my sampling I selected participants and focused on a portion of a population. My reason for the sampling was to understand the population from which the sample was drawn.

Holloway and Wheeler (2002:128) assert that sample size does not influence the importance or quality of the study and note that there are no guidelines in determining sample size in qualitative research.

A non-probability, purposive sampling method was used in this research. Hagan (2000:144) defines purposive sampling as a sampling procedure in which the sample is selected on the basis of one's own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims. In short, purposive sampling allows the researcher to select a sample based on his/her own judgment and the purpose of the study.

The sample was purposively selected from among the Black participants from most ethnic groups studying at the university. I was committed to interviewing individuals who had an experience of teaching or learning in a L2. I had to decide what data I wanted to collect and where it should be collected.

The aim was to gain insight into, and to explore the depth, richness and complexity inherent in the perceptions of the students and their lecturers in relation to the cultural influences on L2 teaching and learning. The following criteria for inclusion into the study were used:

- First year L2 students from the Department of Engineering at a University of Technology
- Lecturers offering modules through English L2

Participants in this study were selected because they had personal experiences in teaching and learning through English L2 and the influence that their different cultures might exert on L2 learning and teaching. The fact that all lecturers were L2 speakers was a conscious decision. I do however feel that lecturers, who are also L2 speakers, could have a better understanding of the problems that the L2 students experience.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:123) state that research methods in qualitative research usually work with samples of people that are numerically small but dealt with in-depth. The sample of this study was composed of students learning through English L2 (n=10) and their lecturers (n=5). I conducted three interview sessions with each of the participants. The second and the third interviews were conducted to see if the participants would not come forward with new information, thus collecting data until it was saturated and no new data emerged.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to TerreBlanche and Durrheim (2000:78), qualitative data analysis tends to be primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:464) assert that the researcher needs to select and interpret data, then incorporate all this data into a rich descriptive report.

The approach that was followed was based on the content data analysis method, as suggested by Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004:102). Henning *et al.* (2004:104) state that qualitative content analysis is the preferred choice of novice researchers because it is easy to access and it works on one level of meaning. For the purpose of this study, a tape recorder was used to record all interviews with participants. I also took field notes. I was faced with the task of making sense of the data gathered through the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the data collected. The set of data was then transcribed to a written format and the transcriptions were verbatim. It is in the transcription of data that Henning *et al.* (2004:105) indicate that 'the process of inductive making of meaning, which is highly interpretative, is then preceded by a more technical process – the conversion of spoken to written language'.

As a novice researcher I started the analysis with a set of data that I transcribed after the interviews were conducted. According to De Vos *et al.* (2002:48), a fundamental technique used in the analysis and interpretation of data in qualitative research is that of discovering the classes of things, persons and events and the properties that characterize them. I made use of the following analysing procedures as identified by De Vos *et al.* (2002:340): collection and recording of data; managing the data; reading; describing; classifying and interpreting; and, lastly, representing. Collection and recording of data refers to the initial planning which includes how the data will be collected and recorded. I had to plan ahead regarding the instruments to be utilized and their effectiveness for collecting data. I also had to plan how the gathered data would be retrieved.

Stake (2000:78) explains that categorization of data is used to aid understanding and to find meaning by identifying and comparing consistent patterns. I categorized the data immediately after reviewing the data, by coding and aggregating it into patterns. I identified codes which led to the development of themes and attempted to demonstrate support for these themes by means of excerpts from the participants' responses (*cf.* Chapter 5). The pages of data were coded according to each theme.

Streubel and Carpenter (1999:40) warn that the researcher should keep personal biases aside throughout the investigation, especially since qualitative investigation such as interviews are intense and personal in nature. These authors suggest the use of a technique called “bracketing” to prevent the development of close relationships between participants and the researcher. I embarked on the process of the technique of bracketing by putting aside my own beliefs, not making judgments about what I observed or heard and by remaining open to the data as it was revealed.

4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Meyers and Sylvester (2006:4), trustworthiness is a general term that refers to the overall reliability and validity of qualitative research. The following four concepts can be construed as dimensions of trustworthiness:

- **Credibility** refers to the appropriateness and accuracy of the data sources and interpretations. To achieve credibility, I identified respondents who fit the sample profile and interviewed them. I clearly stated the parameters of the study, including those pertaining to the setting, population and theoretical framework. I also made segments of the raw data available to participants in

order to corroborate findings. According to Pollit *et al.* (2006:32) credibility exists when the research findings reflect the perceptions of the people under study. Data saturation enhanced the credibility of my study.

- **Transferability** is related to the idea of representativeness and is concerned with the contextual boundaries of the findings. I attempted to provide a rich, contextualized description of the understanding of culture during teaching and learning through English L2 to enable the reader to make inferences about the transferability of the findings. I also enhanced transferability by describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research to the best of my ability.
- **Dependability** is similar to the idea of replicability; it is the criterion of having another study confirming the findings of a particular study. To achieve dependability, I reported the processes within the study in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work.
- **Confirmability** refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. I documented the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. To obtain confirmability in the research, I made use of my supervisor

as an auditor to help me ensure that the findings were objective and neutral (Trochim, 2006:19). I also kept detailed records (also referred to as an audit trail) that would allow for an independent review of the data collection, coding and analysis procedures.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is typically associated with morality and deals with matters of right and wrong. According to Parse (2001:19), ethical issues are always an important consideration in any type of research as they are intended to protect participants from any harm, emotional or physical, befalling them during the course of the research study.

According to Strydom (2002:62), involvement in research requires a general awareness and acknowledgement of appropriate and inappropriate conduct. The fact that research in the human sciences requires the researcher to use human beings as objects of study, means that the researcher should be bound by these conducts. As a novice researcher I realized that I had a responsibility of conducting my research in an honest, responsible, open and ethically justifiable manner. I was therefore, guided by the following ethical principles, namely informed consent, no deception, voluntary participation, no violation of privacy, as

well as the responsibility towards the participants which is discussed below.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:198) assert that participants should never be coerced into participating. I therefore assured the participants that any data collected from or about them would be held in confidence. All participants expressed eagerness to take part in the study.

Informed consent - The most fundamental principle for ethical acceptability is informed consent. According to De Vos *et al.* (2002:25), obtaining informed consent means that all information on the aim of the investigation, the procedures, advantages, disadvantages is rendered to participants. I informed all involved participants about the nature and purpose of the research, its risks and benefits, and they consented orally to participate without coercion. I explained the whole process of interviewing, as well as the aims of the research, to each participant.

Voluntary participation - All the participants in this study were told that they were not obligated to take part in the study and that their participation was voluntary. They were informed that they could leave at any point of the study, should they feel like doing so. I informed each participant at the

beginning of the interview of the time requirements of the study and the type of participation expected of them.

No deception - Strydom (2002:66) states that qualitative researchers sometimes lie by giving wrong information about the aims or goals of the research. This is mainly done to hide what the research participants will experience when they participate in the study. The goals of this study and research procedures to be followed during the investigation were stated clearly during various phases of the research.

The researcher allowed participants ample time to ask questions relating to the research. Participants were informed of the fact that they would have access to the research report if they wanted to verify any aspect of the research.

Permission to do research - I obtained permission to carry out this research from The Research Faculty Board of the University of Technology (*cf.* Appendix 1); and The Dean of the Faculty Engineering (*cf.* Appendix 2).

Violations of privacy/confidentiality - All participants were reassured that they would not be identified by their responses in the study. Their

names were not used in the transcriptions, as a form of protecting their privacy. Participants are presented as Lecturer 1 or 2 and students as interviewee 1 or 2. The tape recorder was used with the consent of the participants. Permission was obtained from the participants to record the interviews and the role of the tape recorder was explained to them.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The research methodology employed in this study was discussed in this chapter. The methodology entailed the description of the research design, strategy of inquiry, the population and sampling, the data collection methods, the data analysis and measures to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

In Chapter 5 the analysis, findings and interpretation of results concerning the possible influence of culture on second-language learning will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 focused on the requirements of qualitative research and the research process of this study. Chapter 5 presents analysis and interpretation of the data collected by means of interviews from first year students of a Department of Engineering at a University of Technology and their lecturers who participated in this research.

Information on the background of the participants and the results of individual interviews with students and lecturers are presented below.

5.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDENTS AND LECTURERS INTERVIEWED

The participants in this study were limited to 20 students and 5 lecturers as stated in Chapter 4. The students were all Black and between the ages of 18 to 21. Eleven of the participants were female and 9 were male. All

the students were L2 speakers; some of them were more proficient in English than others due to the fact that they attended English-medium schools/former Model C schools.

Four of the lecturers were females and one male. Four lecturers were Afrikaans speaking and one was Sotho-speaking. The background information of the lecturers interviewed can be summarized as follows:

Lecturer 1: is a 48-year old White female whose home language is Afrikaans. She is in possession of a MEd degree.

Lecturer 2: is a 60-year old Sotho male. He used to be a school principal before obtaining his doctor's degree in Theology.

Lecturer 3: is a 27-year old White female whose mother tongue is Afrikaans and who has BA Hons.

Lecturer 4: is a 40-year old White female. Her mother tongue is Afrikaans and she is a Master's graduate.

Lecturer 5: is a 50-year old White female whose mother tongue is Afrikaans. She has BA Hons (TESOL).

The lecturers were L2 speakers who qualified as English educators and who are fluent in English.

5.3 RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The results will be discussed question by question by documenting themes emerging from the questions.

5.3.1 Culture and academic matters

Question 1: In what language were you instructed at school/when did you start being taught in English?

5.3.1.1 Early commencement of English instruction

All 20 students verbalized this theme

Student responses:

“I was in an English nursery school” (interviewee 1); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 1” (Interviewee 2); “I was in Grade 3 when I was first taught in English.” (Interviewee 3); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 3” (Interviewee 4); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 3” (Interviewee 5); “I was in Grade 3 when I first started

receiving instruction in English” (Interviewee 6); “I was first taught in English in Grade 1” (Interviewee 7); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 3” (Interviewee 8); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 3” (Interviewee 9); “I already received instruction in English in crèche” (interviewee 10); “I was in nursery school when I first started receiving instruction in English” (Interviewee 11); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 1” (Interviewee 12); “My English instruction started in Grade 3” (Interviewee 13); When I was in crèche I was already taught in English” (Interviewee 14); “I received instruction, for the first time in English, in Grade 3” (Interviewee 15); “It was already in crèche that I received instruction in English” (Interviewee 16); “I was in Grade 3 when I received instruction in English for the first time” (Interviewee 17); “I was in Grade 3 when I was first taught in English” (Interviewee 18); “I started receiving instruction in English in Grade 3” (Interviewee 19); “I was in Grade 3 when I started receiving instruction in English” (Interviewee 20).

The students who participated in the research all received instruction in English at a young age, which varied from nursery school to Grade 3. Students in South African schools start receiving instruction in English at a young age.

The majority of South African children learn through a language other than their first language (primary language or mother tongue). For many students at South African schools, English is learnt as a second or even third language even though it is the MOI in the majority of classrooms and schools (Nel, 2005:151) (cf. 2.17). Sufficient evidence exists these days to show that mother-tongue in the early years of school is essential for full cognitive development (Vermeulen, 2001:12) (cf. 3.9)

Question 2: Do you think that language and culture are interrelated and consequently influence each other?

5.3.1.2: Students regard culture and language as interrelated

All 20 students verbalized this theme.

“I cannot imagine culture without my language. I definitely think that culture and language are inter-related” (Interviewee 1); “Yes, I can say things in my language that only people in my culture will understand” (Interviewee 2); “Yes, I think it would be difficult to practice my culture if I cannot speak my language” (Interviewee 3); “Yes, I believe culture and language go hand in hand and influence each other” (Interviewee 4); “I can express myself so much better in my language and being able to speak my mother-tongue makes me feel more in touch with my culture”

(Interviewee 5); "I cannot think about my culture without thinking about my mother-tongue also" (Interview 6); "I cannot think about my culture without thinking about my language and I would say the one influences the other" (Interviewee 7); "I love being a Sotho and practicing my culture and to me culture and language go hand in hand" (Interviewee 8); "I would say yes, but I haven't really thought about it" (Interviewee 9); "Culture and language to me is one thing. I don't think you can have the one without the other" (Interviewee 10); "I cannot imagine the one without the other. practicing my culture without speaking my language is something I would not be able to do" (Interviewee 11); "I've never thought about it, but when I think about it now, culture and language are definitely interrelated" (Interviewee 12); "Culture and language go hand in hand. Speaking my mother-tongue and practicing my culture define who I am" (Interviewee 13); "To me culture and language is inseparable and definitely influence one another" (Interviewee 14); "Culture and language cannot be separated and the one has an influence over the other" (Interviewee 15); "It is unthinkable to separate culture and language; they are interrelated and definitely influence one another" (Interviewee 16); "The moment I speak my mother-tongue, people immediately know to which culture I belong. To me, therefore, culture and language are interrelated and influence one another" (Interviewee 17); "Speaking my mother-tongue and practicing my culture give me a sense of pride and I feel the two are inseparable and influence one another" (Interviewee 18); "Yes, I agree, culture and

language are interrelated and influence one another” (Interviewee 19);
“Culture and language cannot be separated, they go hand in hand”
(Interviewee 20).

Students who were interviewed agreed that culture and language are interrelated and influence one another. They felt that language without culture is unthinkable and that their cultures define them. Participants all expressed feelings of pride about their cultures and language. Culture is constructed by people in their daily lives, and language is the chief instrument for doing so (Bateman, 2002:102) (*cf.* 2.7.2). It seems that participants in this research are aware of the influence of culture in a language.

This finding is in line with literature where it indicates that there is an increased awareness in language educators and applied linguists for the fact that the teaching of a L2 goes hand in hand with the teaching of its culture, as culture and language are inseparable (Hinkel, 1999:56) (*cf.* 2.7.1).

Question 3: Would you rather be taught in your mother tongue than in English, as a second language?

Fifteen students preferred being taught in English, rather than in their mother tongue, for various reasons such as:

- It would help them in communicating with other people

- It would prepare them for the world of work and
- Because they have been introduced to English from a very young age.

Five students preferred being taught in their mother tongue, for reasons as better performance and better understanding of subject content.

5.3.1.3: Preference for English for the purpose of communication

4 students verbalized this theme

“I’d rather be taught in English than in my mother-tongue, because if I speak and understand English better, I would be able to communicate with more people” (Interviewee 3); “I think it would be better if I receive instruction in English, because it would help me communicate better with different people” (Interviewee 9); “We live in a multi-cultural society with English as the language understood by most people. I therefore would rather be taught in English in order for me to become more competent in speaking English. I would then communicate more easily with different people” (Interviewee 17); “I would rather be taught in English, because I would like to become more competent in speaking English in order to speak to other people with confidence” (Interviewee 19)

5.3.1.4: Preference for English for the purpose of preparation for work

9 students verbalized this theme

“No, I prefer being taught in English. It would prepare me for when I work one day” (Interviewee 1); “Receiving instruction in English would be of help when job hunting” (Interviewee 6); “I prefer being taught in English, because it would prepare me when I have to find a job one day” (Interviewee 8); “Rather in English. I would be better prepared to work” (Interviewee 11); “Much rather in English, because I think it would help me find a job one day” (Interviewee 12); “English is the language spoken in the world of work. I would therefore prefer to be taught in English so that I’ll be better prepared to find a job one day” (Interviewee 13); “I prefer being taught in English. It would prepare me for when I start to work one day” (Interviewee 14); “I would like to go overseas one day and work there for a while. I therefore prefer to be taught in English, because it would prepare me for the world of work” (Interviewee 16); “I prefer receiving instruction in English, because being competent in speaking English would help me when I start looking for work one day” (Interviewee 18).

This links with literature as Vermeulen (2001:134) (cf. 3.9) states that English is the dominant language of communication, academics, business and technology in the world. It is therefore one of the main reasons many

parents/caregivers in South Africa believe that English is the best choice of MOI for their children (Nkabinde, 1997:45) (cf. 3.9).

5.3.1.5: Preference for English L2 because of being introduced to it at a very young age

2 students verbalized this theme.

“I prefer receiving instruction in English, because I speak English as my first language. I struggle with some words in my mother-tongue, because I have been speaking English since I’ve been very small” (Interview 5); “I prefer receiving instruction in English; I went to an English-medium school and started receiving English in Grade 1” (interview 7).

5.3.1.6: Preference for instruction in mother-tongue for better performance

5 students verbalised this theme

“I know I would perform better if I would receive instruction in my mother tongue” (Interview 2); “If I could choose, I would rather receive instruction in my mother-tongue. I would perform much better” (Interview 4); “I know that it would be better for me to receive instruction in English for many reasons, but

I had a choice, I would rather be taught in my mother tongue, because I would perform better” (Interview 10); “I would much rather be taught in my mother-tongue, because then I would perform better” (Interview 15); “I would prefer to be taught in my mother-tongue, because my results would be better” (Interview 20).

The students were in favour of receiving instruction in English as they expressed the need to become competent at communicating. As students realize that they have to compete globally, they understand the importance of being taught in a L2. Literature indicates that English is generally understood across South Africa, being the language of business, politics and the media, and through English, people are able to communicate with one another worldwide and that widespread knowledge of the language enables everyone to interact (Biseth, 2005:2; Mulholland, 2006:18) (*cf.* 3.7; *cf.* 3.9).

The feeling among the interviewees was that instruction in English as a L2 would better their chances for finding work. It seems that the participants' preference for instruction in English is caused by the fact that the language of instruction is usually linked to the students' future economic and social welfare. The Black disempowered South African population, in particular, sees English as a ticket to upward mobility (Biseth, 2005:4) (*cf.* 3.7; 3.9).

From the interviews it became clear that respondents started receiving instruction in English at a very young age. It seems that receiving instruction in a L2 from a young age has an influence on the choice of language of instruction in later years. Researchers, however, disagree with early instruction in English. There is sufficient evidence these days to show that mother tongue in the early years of school is essential for full cognitive development. Literature indicates that a person's mother tongue and culture are passports to reaching his/her full potential (Vermeulen, 2001:12; Banda, 2000:51) (*cf.* 3.9).

Some of the students acknowledged the fact that receiving instruction in their mother tongue would influence their performance positively. They expressed the opinion that instruction in the mother tongue would help them to understand subject content better. It seems that there are students who prefer to be taught in their mother tongue, unfortunately this cannot happen as the literature indicates that South Africa, has an educational system where tertiary education is not available in the African languages (Biseth, 2005: 10) (*cf.* 3.7). Due to the relationship between language, thinking and learning, it has become clear that when learning is not through students' mother tongue during formal learning, cognitive development and academic performance are negatively affected (Monica, 1998:160) (*cf.* 1.2).

Question 4: Does receiving instruction in a L2, or a language other than your mother tongue, influence your performance at university? If so, how?

When asked whether receiving instruction in a L2, or a language other than their mother tongue, would influence their performance at university, all twenty students agreed. Eleven of the students indicated that receiving instruction in a L2 has a restrictive effect on their performance, while nine of the students felt that it impacts negatively on their understanding of, for instance, subject content.

5.3.1.7: Receiving instruction in a L2 has a restrictive effect on performance

11 students verbalized this theme

“Yes, I feel that I would perform better if I received instruction in my mother-tongue” (Interviewee 1); “Yes, it takes me much longer to study in English” (Interviewee 2); “Yes, I would definitely perform better. It would not take so much time to study and write tests and exams” (Interviewee 3); “At first I struggled, because there were many words that I didn’t understand, but I am coping now. I do think that I would perform better if I would receive instruction in my mother-tongue” (Interviewee 4); “Yes, I

would perform better if I would receive instruction in my mother-tongue” (Interviewee 6); “I would perform better if I would receive instruction in my mother-tongue” (Interviewee 7); “It takes double the time to summarise my work as I struggle understanding the content” (Interviewee 8); “Yes, it does. I think I would perform better if I received instruction in my mother-tongue” (Interviewee 9); “Receiving instruction in English has definitely influenced my performance as there are many words used during lectures that I don’t understand” (Interviewee 15); “Since receiving instruction in English, my marks have dropped” (Interviewee 16); “I have received instruction in my mother-tongue and being taught in English now, has definitely had an influence on my results” (Interviewee 18).

The interviewees felt that they would perform better if they would receive instruction in their mother-tongue and that receiving instruction in English L2 impacted negatively on their performance. This is supported by literature where it indicates that on a tertiary level, the students’ academic performance is influenced by the fact that they receive instruction in English L2 and not in their mother-tongue (Bosman, 2000:225) (cf. 3.9).

5.3.1.8: Receiving instruction in a L2 impacts negatively on understanding

9 students verbalized this theme

“Yes, it has influenced my performance. I struggle understanding the work” (Interviewee 5); “Yes, it does influence my performance. I find it difficult because I don’t understand a lot of the terminology” (Interviewee 10); “It takes me double the time to summarise my work as I struggle understanding the content” (Interviewee 11); “I come from a small rural town and my English is not very good. There are a lot of words that I don’t understand during lectures. I then have to write them down and look them up. It takes up a lot of my time” (Interviewee 12); “I’ve never had too much contact with English before I came to the university and I struggle understanding what is going on in class” (Interviewee 13); “Receiving instruction in English definitely influences my understanding and I struggle” (Interviewee 14); “There is a lot of information that I do not understand during lectures, because of receiving instruction in English” (Interviewee 17); “Receiving instruction in English influences my understanding of the work. I have to look up a lot of the terminology used during lectures before I can start studying” (Interviewee 19); “Yes, receiving instruction in a second language has a negative influence on my understanding” (Interviewee 20).

The interviewees felt that receiving instruction in English as L2 has a restrictive influence on their understanding of their subject content and negatively influences their performance. They felt that terminology used in

subject content was unknown and new to them. The participants are aware of not only the advantages of being given instruction in English L2, but also its problems. It seems that these students' command of English is totally inadequate to deliver good results. This is supported by literature where it indicates that on a tertiary level, the students' academic performance is influenced by their poor command of English (Du Plessis, 2006:32). (cf. 3.9). This could result in low academic pass rate.

To most of the students, receiving instruction in English as a L2 poses a barrier to understanding as a lot of the terminology used in class is unknown to them and they have to take time to look up these words. It appears that students experienced a feeling of helplessness as receiving instruction in a L2 impacts negatively on their understanding of subject content. Literature confirms that research has shown that language, thinking and learning are intimately fielded together and because of this relationship, cognitive development and academic performance are negatively affected when formal learning is not done in students' mother tongue (Monica, 1998: 160) (cf. 3.9). It is furthermore stated that many students take a long time to learn the L2 and because of a feeling of inadequacy, these students lose confidence and develop negative self-concepts and low senses of self-worth (Monica, 1998:160) (cf. 3.9).

Question 5: Do you feel that if learners' cultures were more clearly understood, teaching and learning in a L2 would be more accessible and equitable for more learners?

Students were asked if teaching and learning in a L2 would be more accessible for learners if lecturers understood their cultures and only two of these students were of the opinion that it would not have an influence on teaching and learning.

Nine of the students agreed that knowledge of their cultures would promote a better understanding of their actions, while another nine felt that it would definitely promote teaching and learning.

5.3.1.9: Knowledge of students' culture does not have an influence on teaching and learning.

2 students verbalized these themes.

"I don't really think it would have an influence. We are students and are here to learn. So, I don't think it has an influence on teaching and learning."(Interviewee 4) "I have never thought about this, but I don't think so."(Interviewee 5)

5.3.1.10: Knowledge of students' cultures would promote understanding of their actions

9 students verbalized these themes.

"Yes, I think so. If lecturers knew more about the different cultures of the students sitting in front of them, I am sure they will understand the students better." (Interviewee 1) "I think that lecturers sometimes have a specific ideas about students from cultures different than their own and they then treat the students according to their perception. If these lecturers knew more about the different cultures of students, there would be an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding."(Interviewee 2) "Yes, I think so. A lot of misunderstanding will be eliminated and learning would b easier."(Interviewee 3) "I would definitely make learning and teaching easier if we all know more about one another's cultures. There would be an atmosphere of trust and understanding." (Interviewee 6) "Absolutely. If lecturers were more informed about students' cultures, they would understand their actions better.(Interviewee 12) "Yes, it would be so interesting to know why people from other cultures act in a certain way and I am sure that this knowledge would make lecturers understand us so much better."(Interviewee 15) "Knowledge of students' cultures would definitely promote understanding." (Interviewee 16) "It would be a very good thing if lecturers could understand the cultures of students better, because then they would understand us

better.”(Interviewee 18) “Yes, I do think that knowledge of students’ cultures would help lecturers understand students much better (Interviewee 19)

The general feeling amongst students was that lecturers should have knowledge of their cultures as it would promote better understanding of their actions. This is confirmed in literature where it is noted that the manner in which individuals express and interpret messages in their own and other languages is heavily influenced by their cultural backgrounds (Hinkel, 1999:89; Jiang, 2000:101) (cf. 2.7.2).

5.3.1.11: Knowledge of students’ cultures would promote teaching and learning.

9 students verbalized these themes.

“I have never thought about this before, but I do think that knowledge of one another’s cultures would promote learning.”(Interviewee 7) “I think that would be a very good idea. If somebody shows interest in my culture, it makes me feel positive about that person and I think it would influence my learning. (Interviewee 8) “I really think so. If lecturers knew more about their students cultures and their behaviour, it would be positive for the learning environment.”(Interviewee 9) “Knowing more about one another’s cultures would be very interesting, but I don’t know if it would have an influence on

teaching and learning.” (Interviewee 10) “Yes, it would definitely make me more positive about a lecturer and a subject if he/she would show interest in my culture and this would be good for teaching and learning.”(Interviewee 11) “If lecturers show interest in students’ cultures, it would create an atmosphere of trust and would promote teaching and learning.”(Interviewee 13) “If lecturers know more about students’ cultures, I’m sure teaching and learning would improve.(Interviewee 14) “Yes, I think knowledge of students’ cultures would be a good thing for teaching and learning.”(Interviewee 17) “I agree that if lecturers know more about students’ cultures, teaching and learning would improve.”(Interviewee 20)

Only 2 of the participants stated that knowledge of students’ culture does not have an influence on teaching and learning. They reasoned that they were at university to learn and something like cultural differences were not supposed to influence teaching and learning.

According to the interviewees, knowledge of the students’ cultures would promote understanding and would benefit teaching and learning. It seems that students felt very positive about lecturers acquiring knowledge of students they are lecturing and they agreed that knowledge of students’ cultures would also create understanding. They mentioned the fact that lecturers would better understand the behaviour of students. It seems that cultural differences affect the way individuals judge the behaviour of others.

Not understanding students' cultures will certainly result in a lack of understanding their behaviour.

Knowing that lecturers wanted to know more about them, their values and norms would also make them feel more positive towards teaching and learning. Literature confirms this and states that cross-cultural differences not only cause misunderstandings in communication, but can also interfere with the teaching/learning process (Demeter, 2005:1) (*cf.* 2.7.2).

Question 6: Do you think that misunderstanding may occur in a classroom where the lecturer may misunderstand your behaviour because he/she hasn't enough or no knowledge of your culture?

5.3.1.12: Lack of cultural knowledge may cause misunderstanding in the classroom.

All 20 students verbalized these themes

"Yes, I think so. I might do something that may have a different meaning in another culture and the lecturer might see me as disrespectful."(Interviewee 1) "Definitely. I had an experience where a lecture asked me why do Black men not have manners; they do not let women enter or leave a room first. I then explained to her that in our culture, the men would walk first in case of

danger.”(Interviewee 2) “Yes, different cultures do things differently and if we do not know about this, it may cause a lot of misunderstanding.”(Interviewee 3) “Yes, we have lecturers who come from other countries in Africa and who do not know much about our cultures. This can cause them to misunderstand our actions.”(Interviewee 4) “Yes, I do think that a lack of knowledge of the cultures of students can cause lecturers to misunderstand the behaviour of students.”(Interviewee 5) “Yes, different cultures interpret different things in different ways and if lecturers do not know about this, it will cause misunderstanding.”(Interviewee 6) “Yes, there is the case of eye-contact. If lecturers do not know that looking down when talking to a superior is a sign of respect, they would think that the student hiding something.”(Interviewee 7) “Yes, I have been in a situation where I thought that a lecturer was discriminating against me when she asked me not to stand so close to her. It was only when she explained about the interpretation of space in the Western culture, that I understood.”(Interviewee 8) “Yes, they might not understand why we do something and interpret it incorrectly.”(Interviewee 9) “Yes, when lecturers do not have knowledge of our cultures, they may for instance think we are acting disrespectful.”(Interviewee 10) “Different cultures do things differently and because of a lack of knowledge about different cultures may cause misunderstanding.”(Interviewee 11) “I’ve always found it insulting that White lecturers move away when they feel that a Black student stands too close to them, until I was made aware of the fact that people from the Western culture do not like people to stand too close to them. For many

years I misunderstood that; I therefore think that a lack of knowledge of other cultures will cause misunderstanding.(Interviewee 12) *“Yes, I think that a lack of knowledge of the different cultures in South Africa may cause misunderstanding.”*(Interviewee 13) *“I only realized it when I came to the university that different cultures do things differently and that I have misunderstood certain actions incorrectly.”* (Interviewee 14). *“I agree; if one does not have knowledge of other cultures, misunderstanding may occur.”* (Interviewee 15) *“People from different cultures do things differently and if one is unaware of this, one might misunderstand the actions of people from another culture.”* (Interviewee 16) *“I agree; I never realised that different cultures do things differently until I came into contact with people from other cultures. That made me aware of the fact that people can easily misunderstand each other.”* (Interviewee 17) *“I only became aware of how cultures differ, for instance with things like eye-contact, when I became a student and I realised that a lot of misunderstanding I had about other cultures was because I did not have enough knowledge about these cultures.”* (Interviewee 18) *“A lack of knowledge of other cultures definitely causes misunderstanding and the more I come into contact with other cultures, the more I realise it.”* (Interviewee 19) *“We easily judge other people’s actions without knowing why they do these things. It is therefore important that we have knowledge of other people’s cultures.”* (Interviewee 20)

The participants admitted to having misconceptions about the actions of people from other cultures. These misconceptions had often led to misunderstanding. Most of the students could quote an experience which was caused by misunderstanding of another person's culture. These misunderstandings were often a result of stereotypical ideas different cultures have about one another. It seems that participants lacked knowledge of the interpretation of non-verbal communication practised by cultures hence the misunderstanding. This is confirmed in literature where intercultural communication is described as a difficult process, especially when it results in misunderstandings and a failure to achieve a common understanding (Samovar & Porter, 2001:295) (*cf.* 2.8). The importance of recognizing and valuing students' language and culture is stressed (Gay, 2000:85) (*cf.* 2.7.2). Perhaps some of these problems could be solved if lecturers and students could become more culturally responsive by working to expand their knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity.

Question 7: Do you think that incorporating a module on the different cultures at the University of Technology would promote a better understanding and eliminate misunderstanding?

Students responded to the question whether they thought that incorporating a module on the different cultures at the University of Technology would promote a better understanding and eliminate misunderstanding, as follows:

- Incorporating a module on different cultures would promote understanding of other cultures; and
- Incorporating a module on different cultures would promote trust and prevent conflict.

5.3.1.13: Incorporating a module on different cultures would promote understanding of other cultures

13 students verbalized this theme.

“Yes, I do. It would help us understand each other.”(Interviewee1)

“Definitely. If we have a better understanding of other cultures, there will be less fighting amongst students of different cultures.”(Interviewee 2)

“I do. We could learn more about one another.”(Interview 3)

“That would be wonderful. We could learn more about one another and then understand one another better.”(Interviewee 5)

“Yes, it would definitely help us understand one another better.”(Interviewee 7)

“There have always been things about other cultures that I have been inquisitive about. This would provide me with the necessary information and I would then understand better.”(Interviewee 8)

“Yes, it would help me understand why some lecturers act the way they do.”(Interviewee 9)

“Yes, I think everybody would understand other people’s actions better.”(Interviewee 10)

“If all of us are better informed about different

cultures, we would understand one another better.”(Interviewee 12) “It would be a good thing if all of us could receive information about the different cultures on our campus. We will then understand why people act in certain ways.”(Interviewee 13) “I think it would be a very good idea to incorporate a module on the different cultures on our campus in our studies. By doing so, we will all have a better understanding of other people’s cultures.”(Interviewee 17) “There are students from so many different cultures on our campus and I live in a multi-cultural neighbourhood and I agree that a module about different cultures would promote a better understanding.”(Interviewee 18) “I believe that knowledge is powerful and that knowledge of other people’s cultures would create an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance.” (Interviewee 20)

Participants agreed that incorporating a module on different cultures would promote trust and prevent conflict. It seems that misunderstanding could be avoided by gaining knowledge of others’ culture. Literature states that institutionalized separation of racial and cultural groups during Apartheid left a legacy of intercultural ignorance in South Africa (Bonanni, 2000:1) (cf. 2.2).

5.3.1.14: Incorporating a module on different cultures would promote trust and prevent conflict.

12 students verbalized this theme.

"I agree. Maybe then we will trust one another."(Interviewee 4) "Definitely. If we have a better understanding of other cultures, there will be less fighting amongst students of different cultures." (Interviewee 6) "People from different cultures often fight with one another because they don't trust one another."(Interviewee 9). "Yes, I think everybody would understand other people's actions better."(Interviewee 10) "We sometimes don't understand the actions of people from other cultures and that causes us to mistrust them. I therefore agree that if we know more about one another's cultures, we would trust one another more."(Interviewee 11) "If all of us are better informed about different cultures, we would understand one another better."(Interviewee 12) "It would be a good thing if all of us could receive information about the different cultures on our campus. We will then understand why people act in certain ways."(Interviewee 13) "If I understand other people's cultural behaviour, I would probably trust them better."(Interviewee 14) "We grew up with certain perceptions about people from other cultures and this has caused a lot of mistrust. Incorporating such a module would definitely promote trust."(Interviewee 15) "I think it would be a very good idea to incorporate a module on the different cultures on our campus in our studies. By doing so, we will all have a better understanding of other people's cultures."(Interviewee 17) "There are students from so many different cultures on our campus and I live in a multi-cultural neighbourhood and I agree that a module about different cultures would promote a better understanding."(Interviewee 18) "I believe

that knowledge is powerful and that knowledge of other people's cultures would create an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance.”(Interviewee 20)

Participants were also of the opinion that knowledge of the different cultures would create a feeling of trust. It would also prevent conflict as students and lecturers would understand the behaviour and actions of others better. Participants confirmed that perceptions they had about others from other cultures often led to mistrust and conflict. It seems that without understanding other people's culture, one cannot understand the lives and motivations of others and connect with their concerns and interests. Literature confirms this by stating that culture is inherent in one's being and a powerful human tool to develop the society, add to people's knowledge, and establish the relationships between people (Kuo, 2004:5) (*cf.* 2.1).

Question 8: What can higher institutions do to improve learning and teaching in English as a second language?

When asked what they thought higher institutions could do to improve learning and teaching in English as a L2, they responded as follows:

- Teaching and learning in L2 can be improved by employment of lecturers who speak English fluently (11 students).
- Appointment of tutors who can speak African languages (5 students) and
- Promotion of cultural understanding by compulsory attendance of workshops by students and lecturers (4 students).

5.3.1.15: Teaching and learning in L2 can be improved by employment of lecturers who speak English fluently

11 students verbalized this theme.

“The university should be very selective in their choice of educators.” (Interviewee 1) “I think it is the university’s duty to appoint lecturers who is competent in English.” (Interviewee 4) “The university should make sure that the lecturers they appoint can speak English properly.” (Interviewee 5) “A lot of lecturers at the VUT cannot speak English properly. The VUT should make sure that the lecturers they appoint can speak English well enough to explain their subjects.” (Interviewee 7) “The university has a responsibility to make sure that lecturers can explain their subjects properly in English.” (Interviewee 8) “The university should appoint lecturers who is competent enough in English to explain the content of subjects to us.” (Interviewee 9) “It is important that the lecturers that the university employs are fluent in English.” (Interviewee 11) “It is so important that lecturers speak

English fluently. They have to explain the subjects in such a way that the students will understand.” (Interviewee 13) “It is already difficult to receive instruction in English as a second-language. When a lecturer cannot speak English properly, it is even more difficult. It is therefore the responsibility of the university to employ lecturers who speak English fluently.”(Interviewee 16) “There are many lecturers who do not speak English properly and are therefore unable to explain their subjects properly. The university has a responsibility to employ lecturers who speak English fluently.”(Interviewee 18) “Some of the lecturers speak such a bad English, that some of the students sometimes have to do the explaining in class.”(Interviewee 20)

What came out strongly in the responses was the insistence of the participants that one of the things they felt could improve the learning and teaching in a L2 at their institution, would be the employment of competent lecturers who are proficient in English. It appears that students wanted the university to employ lecturers who were linguistically competent in English. They were of the opinion that there were lecturers at the university who, themselves, were not linguistically competent and that it negatively influenced the teaching and learning process. This could still be a result of the fact that in post-apartheid South African classrooms, access to urban schools by educators and scholars of all cultures and language groups was permitted virtually overnight, thereby transforming the previously racially/culturally segregated classrooms into multicultural classrooms (Bonanni, 2000:1)

(cf.2.2). Students pointed out that the university had a responsibility towards them in establishing an environment that was conducive to teaching and learning. It seems that the fact that some of the lecturers were not competent in English, did not contribute to such an environment. Literature states that education relies on effective interaction between the educator and the students (Gitimu, 2004:3) (cf. 2.7.1).

5.3.1.16: Appointment of lecturers who can speak African languages

5 students verbalized this theme

“The university should appoint tutors who could speak two or three languages.”(Interviewee 3) “They should appoint tutors who can help students who do not speak and understand English that well.”(Interviewee 10)

“Appointing tutors who speaks English and one or two Black languages fluently, would be a great help to students.”(Interviewee 12) “It would help a lot if the university could appoint tutors who can speak English as well as

maybe two Black languages.”(Interviewee 14) “Tutors should be appointed

who can help students who do not understand a subject. These tutors should speak English and maybe two Black languages fluently.”(Interviewee 19)

Participants agreed that another way in which higher institutions could contribute to improving learning and teaching in English as a L2, was the

appointment of lecturers who can speak African languages. It seems that students were convinced that the appointment of lecturers who could speak one or two of the African languages could contribute to learning and teaching in English as a L2. the appointment of lecturers would promote understanding. According to literature students are valuable in the classroom and they can be used as educational resources in classroom discussions (Schoorman, 2000:10) (cf. 2.7.3).

5.3.1.17: Promotion of cultural understanding by compulsory attendance of workshops by students and lecturers

4 students verbalized this theme

“The university should make it compulsory for all learners to attend workshops about different cultures.”(Interviewee 2) “The university should make it compulsory for learners and lecturers to attend workshops on the different cultures at the VUT.”(Interviewee 6) “The university should come up with ideas to promote better cultural understanding, for example, cultural workshops.” (Interviewee 4) “Something like offering workshops on the different cultures on campus, would help.”(Interviewee 17)

Participants suggested that the university should present cultural workshops and come up with ideas such as cultural days to promote cultural understanding. It appears that students felt that the university could do more to promote

knowledge of the different cultures, but for this to work, lecturers, as well as students, should attend these workshops and culture days. This could lead to people of different cultures understanding one another better; grasping why people react in a certain way. Literature states that professional development includes in-service days, workshops, conferences and seminars, all of which provide useful venues for disseminating information (Lé & Lé, 2008:23) (cf. 2.6.1).

5.3.2 Section 2: Experience with learning

Question 1: Are there any stereotypical ideas that you have about people from other cultures? If any, what are they?

Students were asked about any stereotypical ideas they might have about people from other cultures and they reacted to this question as follows:

- Stereotypical ideas about Blacks (15 students); and
- Stereotypical ideas about Whites (5 students).

5.3.2.1: Stereotypical ideas about Blacks

16 students verbalized this theme.

“Sothos talk too much.”(Interviewee 1) “Xhosas like to fight.”(Interviewee 2)

“Zulus and Xhosas are selfish.”(Interviewee 7) “Shangaan people use muti.”
(Interviewee 5) “Shangaan men are stubborn.”(Interviewee 8) “Zulus think they
are superior.”(Interviewee 6) “Zulus and Xhosas are selfish.”(Interviewee 7)
“Zulu men are womanisers.”(Interviewee 9) “All Xhosa girls are gold-diggers.”
(Interviewee 11) “Pedi people are very loud.”(Interviewee 13) “Students from the
DRC and Senegal have a problem with odour.”(Interviewee 14) “Venda people
use muti.”(Interviewee 15) “Zulus think too much of themselves.”(Interviewee 16)
“Tsonga women know how to be a good wife to their husbands.”(Interviewee 17)
“There are witches amongst people from the Venda culture.”(Interviewee 18)
“Zulus think that they are superior to any other culture.”(Interviewee 20)

It was clear from the interviews that the participants had certain stereotypical ideas about other cultures. According to literature stereotyping and ethnocentrism are obstacles to effective intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication is thus complex and potentially problematic in education (Roux, 2002:37) (cf. 2.8).

5.3.2.2: Stereotypical ideas about Whites

5 students verbalized this theme.

“When White people sometimes smile, it does not seem sincere.”(Interviewee 3)

“White ladies are untidy. That’s why they need Black women to clean their homes.”(Interviewee 4) “White people do not mix easily with people from other cultures.”(Interviewee 10) “White people do not show a lot of emotion like the Black people.”(Interviewee 12) “White people think their culture is superior to other cultures.”(Interviewee 19)

Participants agreed that the different cultures have very definite preconceived ideas about one another. It is clear that preconceived ideas not only exist between Blacks and Whites, but also within Black ethnic groups. It seems that the preconceived ideas can only be clarified or eliminated if different cultures communicate effectively with one another and are open to engaging in the process of negotiating meaning. This is confirmed in literature where Neuliep and McCroskey (1997:389) claim that when a person interacts with people of other cultures and encounters cultural differences, he/she inclines to view people as strangers (*cf.* 2.9).

Question 2: Do you think that preconceived ideas you have about English, which is the medium of instruction at the University of Technology, have an influence on how you react to situations and relate to other people?

When students were asked if any preconceived ideas they had about English, which is the medium of instruction at the University of Technology, had an

influence on how they react to situations and relate to people, they answered as follows:

- Preconceived ideas about English have no influence on how they react to situations and others (8 students); and
- Preconceived ideas students have of English, lead to their lack of confidence, no participation in class and fears of not understanding lecturers (12 students).

5.3.2.3: Preconceived ideas about English have no influence on how they react to situations and others

8 students verbalized this theme

“Not really, my English is fine. I wasn’t worried about being taught in English.”

(Interviewee 1) “No. I was in a school where English was the medium of instruction.”(Interviewee 3) “No, I received instruction in English since nursery-

school.”(Interviewee 6) “No, I was in nursery school when I started receiving

instruction in English.”(Interviewee 8) “No, I have English friends and speak

English all the time.”(Interviewee 9) “No, I attended an English-medium school.”

(Interviewee 11) “No, I’ve been receiving instruction in English since primary

school.”(Interviewee 14) “No, not really. I wasn’t worried about receiving

instruction in English; rather about being away from home.”(Interviewee 16)

Participants claimed that preconceived ideas they had about English did not have any influence on how they react to situations and others. It seems as if students felt that their educational background where they were receiving instruction in English was sufficient to prepare them for life at university. Some of them were more worried about being away from home, for instance, than receiving instruction in English.

5.3.2.4: Preconceived ideas students have of English, lead to their lack of confidence, no participation in class and fears of not understanding lecturers

12 students verbalized this theme

“I was afraid that my English would not be good enough. I never speak in class.” (Interviewee 2) “ I believed that my English is not good enough and I am too shy to speak in class.”(Interviewee 4) “I was afraid that other students would laugh at me if I speak in class. I didn’t speak in class for a very long time.”(Interviewee 5) “Yes, I was stressed at first. I realized that I would be far away from home and my English is not very good.”(Interviewee 7) “Yes, I come from a small rural town and I was afraid I would not understand the lecturers and would struggle with the work.”(Interviewee 10) “I was afraid that I would be the only one in class who would struggle with understanding the lecturer.”(Interviewee 12) “I didn’t speak much English where I grew up and stressed about the fact that instruction

at university was going to be only in English.”(Interviewee 13) “I was nervous about being going to university and having to be taught in English and having to use English textbooks.”(Interviewee 15) “I attended a small rural school and stressed a lot coming to university and having to receive instruction in English.” (Interviewee 17) “My English wasn’t very good before I came to the university and I was very nervous about the idea that I would have to speak in front of other students in class.”(Interviewee 18) “I was very nervous about coming to university, because my mother-tongue is not English and I could not speak English very well.”(Interviewee 19) “I was worried about receiving instruction in English, because I realized that I would have to sit and look up the meaning of a lot of terminology”(Interviewee 20).

Some of the interviewees felt that they were not competent in English and that it would affect their participation in class, as well as their performance in tests and their communication with educators. They worried about appearing incompetent and ignorant. It seems that it is likely that such students would find the culture of formal educational institutions somewhat inhibiting and alien. This is confirmed in literature where Monica (1998:160) states that many students take a long time to learn the L2 and because of a feeling of inadequacy, these students lose confidence and develop negative self-concepts and low senses of self-worth (*cf.* 3.9).

5.3.3 Section 3: Personal Life Stories

Question 1: How important is your culture to you?

Students were asked about the importance of culture in their lives and they responded as follows:

- They have developed a flexible attitude towards culture (4 students); and
- They regarded culture as important in their lives (16 students).

5.3.3.1: Students have developed a flexible attitude towards culture

4 students verbalized this theme

“People make too much about this culture thing.”(Interviewee 8) “Culture is important, but I think it should change with time.”(Interviewee 10) “Culture is important, but it should not be a barrier between people.”(Interviewee 16)

“Although I think that culture is important, I think making too much of culture can divide people.”(Interviewee 18)

Some of the students thought that there was too much of a fuss made about culture and that culture was something that should be much more flexible. This could mean that these students have adapted to an environment that is multicultural and multilingual. This might also be because many

parents/caregivers in South Africa believe that English is the best choice of MOI for their children (Nkabinde, 1997:45) and that these students have been exposed to English from a very young age.

5.3.3.2: Culture is regarded as important

16 students verbalized this theme.

“My culture is who I am.”(Interviewee 1) “I’m a Zulu and I am very proud of it; my culture is very important to me.”(Interviewee 2) “If you do not follow your culture, bad things will happen to you; the ancestors will allow bad things to happen to you.”(Interviewee 3) “Without culture you would be drifting.”

(Interviewee 4) “Culture gives you a feeling of belonging.”(Interviewee 5)

“It is important to me to be able to communicate in my own language and practice my culture.”(Interviewee 6) “I have often thought about what it would be like if I would marry someone from another culture and if I would be prepared to let go of my culture. I don’t think I’ll be able to do so, because my culture is

too important to me.”(Interviewee 7) “I am very serious about my culture, but I would be prepared to adjust to other cultures.”(Interviewee 9) “My culture is very important to me. I only realized this when we had an exchange student from Germany in our house and he would ask me questions about my culture. That made me realize how important my culture really is to me.”(Interviewee 11)

“I think it is very important; it gives one a sense of belonging.”(Interviewee 12)

“It is very important. Some of my family members married people from other cultures and when we get together for family occasions, we love to exchange stories about our cultures.”(Interviewee 13) “My culture is very important to me. I only realised it when I came to this university. I feel very isolated and alone here. It feels as if nobody understands me. I think it would be better if I go to the Tswane University of Technology next year.”(Interviewee 14) “It is very important to me, because it helps me understand where I come from.”(Interviewee 15) “My culture is very important to me; it is who I am.”(Interviewee 17) “I love being in touch with my culture. It helps me understand who I am and where I come from.”(Interviewee 19) “It’s only now being away from home that I realize how important my culture is to me and how it is part of who I am” (Interviewee 20).

Participants indicated that culture is important to them. It seems that even if they are given instruction in a L2 their own culture will always be part of their being. It seems that these participants are in integration, according to literature integration occurs when an individual maintains his/her original culture and at the same time interacts daily with the host culture (Berry, 2002: 620) (cf. 2.10).

Participants viewed culture as an important part of their lives. It appears that students were passionate about their cultures and claimed that it defined who they were. It also seems that students could not live without practicing their culture.

Question 2: Have you come into contact with people from other cultures at this institution, and if yes, what cultures?

5.3.3.3: Students came into contact with other cultures

All 20 students verbalized this theme.

“I went to school with White learners and interacted with them easily.”

(Interviewee 1) “I am Venda and came into contact with Zulus at school.”

(Interviewee 2) “I am Sotho and interacted with Shangaan learners.”

(Interviewee 3) “I am Venda and came into contact with Xhosas at

school.”(Interviewee 4) “There were people from all different cultures in my

school.”(Interviewee 5) “I went to a multi-racial school.”(Interviewee 6)

“I am Sotho and went to a multi-racial school where I had White friends.”(Interviewee 7) “Yes, I have. I went to a school where there were

White Afrikaans, Muslim and Black learners.”(Interviewee 8) “I went to a school

where there were Black and White learners.”(Interviewee 9) “Yes, I was in a

school where there were pupils from different cultures; Afrikaans, English, Sotho, Zulu and Tswana.”(Interviewee 10) “Yes, I went to a multi-racial school.”

(Interviewee 11) “Yes, I came into contact with different cultures at my school.”

(Interviewee 12) “There were pupils from many different cultures in my school

and I found it interesting to mix with them.”(Interviewee 13) “Yes, attend with

people from all cultures; even students from the DRC.”(Interviewee 14) “I attended school with pupils from many different cultures.”(Interviewee 15) “I was in a school where there were people from all different cultures and I enjoyed interacting with them.”(Interviewee 16) “Yes, I attended with people from different cultures. I think most schools in South Africa nowadays have pupils from different cultures.”(Interviewee 17) “Yes, from the time that I started nursery school, I mixed with people from different cultures.”(Interviewee 18) “Yes, there were students from all different cultures in my school.”(Interviewee 19) “There were pupils from all different cultures in the school that I attended.”(Interviewee 20).

Participants indicated that they came into contact with people of other cultures. It seems that because South Africa is a country of many nations, cultures and value systems, it is therefore not strange that students have, while studying at the university, come into contact with people from different cultures. Most of them had contact with students from the Western culture, as well as other ethnic groups. Interactions with people from other culture would make them understand other cultures. Literature indicates that more people than ever before are involved in interactions with people from cultures other than their own and communities are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural (Xiao & Petraki, 2007:1-16) (*cf.* 2.8).

Question 3: Do you think that language and culture are interrelated and consequently influence each other?

5.3.3.4: Students agree that culture and language are interrelated and has an influence on each other

20 students verbalized this theme.

“Yes, culture and language go hand in hand and definitely has influence on each other.”(Interviewee 1) “I agree, I cannot think about culture without thinking about my language.”(Interviewee 2) “Yes, practicing my culture without involving my language would be difficult.”(Interviewee 3) “Definitely, to me language is a part of culture and it would therefore have an influence on each other.”(Interviewee 4) “Yes, if I think about culture, language is automatically part of it.”(Interviewee 5) “I agree. Language is part of culture and definitely influences each other. (Interviewee 6) “Culture and language are linked and influence each other.” (Interviewee 7) “Yes, language is part of culture. I cannot think about my culture without thinking about my language.”(Interviewee 8) “Yes, I don’t think I’ll be able to practice my culture if I cannot do it in my language.”(Interviewee 9) “I agree, the one cannot go without the other and definitely influence each other.” (Interviewee 10) “To me culture and language is one thing. I cannot think of one without thinking of the other.”(Interviewee 11) “I cannot imagine culture without language. They go hand in hand.”(Interviewee 12) “To me culture and language

is one thing; you can't have the one without the other.”(Interviewee 13) “I am a Zulu and am very proud of it. To me you cannot practice your culture if you cannot do it in your mother-tongue.”(Interviewee 14) “Culture and language cannot be separated.”(Interviewee 15) “You start learning about your culture in your language. You cannot separate the two and I believe they influence one another” (Interviewee 16).

Participants agreed that culture and language go hand in hand and that the two are inseparable. It appears that students realized that culture and language are interrelated. This is in line with literature where it indicates that language and culture are intertwined and shape each other (Thanasoulas, 2001:1) (*cf.* 2.7.1). When people communicate with others, they do not only select words and form sentences, but also make cultural choices. Culture is constructed by people in their everyday lives, and language is the chief instrument for doing so (Roberts *et al.*, 2001:63) (*cf.* 2.3).

Question 4: Have you been involved in a situation where misunderstanding occurred because of cultural differences?

5.3.3.5: Misunderstandings occur because of cultural differences

All 20 students verbalized this theme.

"I'm a Tswana and had no prior knowledge of the Venda and Shangaan cultures and was excluded from conversations every time I tried to engage in conversations."(Interviewee 1) "I was told at school by a White Afrikaans teacher that she would give me a "Kaffir clap."(Interviewee 4) "I was told at school not to talk loudly as "this isn't the location."(Interviewee 6) "A Venda lecturer once asked me: 'What's wrong with you? Can't you speak English?'"(Interviewee 7) "A teacher once wanted to know why Black people are always so noisy." (Interviewee 8) "One of my teachers always complained that the Black students always stand "on top of her."(Interviewee 9) "One of my teachers wanted to know why we shout and are so loud when we are outside, but inside the classroom we don't open our mouths."(Interviewee 10) "I am a Tswana and sometimes when Sothos ask for something, it sounds impolite to me." (Interviewee 2) "I am a Sotho and I feel that the Tsonga/Shangaan way of addressing somebody is confusing."(Interviewee 3) "I am a Xhosa and I have always been suspicious of Vendas, because I grew up thinking that all Vendas were witches."(Interviewee 5) "I used to play rugby at school and because of that I was accepted and not some of my friends who preferred to play soccer." (Interviewee 11) "The drummy coach at school was Afrikaans and the whole team was Black. She resigned after a while because she didn't understand our behaviour; we were very loud, sometimes we wanted to work and sometimes not."(Interviewee 12) "When I pointed out to a lecturer, who is Venda, that he made a mistake with a calculation, he scolded me for being disrespectful."

(Interviewee 13) "I used to play rugby at school and when we had trials and made the team, the white players would call us the quota players."(Interviewee

14) "An Indian lecturer asked me why I don't speak English properly."

(Interviewee 15) "I had a lecturer who told us that the Black students are always noisy and loud and that we should keep quiet."(Interviewee 16) "I was the only

Black girl who was a prefect. One day when were in the prefect room, I was cracking jokes when a White teacher walked in. He asked me why I was acting

like a baboon."(Interviewee 17) "One of my lecturers asked why we Blacks are always so noisy."*(Interviewee 18) "I attended an English-medium school and*

have a lot of English friends. My Black friends here at university now mock me and accuse me of being a 'coconut'."(Interviewee 19) "At one time I shaved all

my hair as a fashion statement. One of my classmates, who is from the DRC wanted to know if it is true that Black girls who shave their hair are wild. I later found that girls from the DRC are not allowed to shave off all their hair."

(Interviewee 20)

The interviewees could all recall incidents where misunderstanding, based on culture, occurred. It seems that intercultural communication and cultural competency are important as tertiary institutions are becoming more diverse culturally. It is perhaps important for educators to be sensitive to the potentially problematic outcomes of intercultural communication in the culturally diverse classes. It is also important for lecturers and students should exhibit mutual understanding and appreciation based on cultural understanding. This is

underlined in literature by Gay (2000:85) and Wang (2008:49) who stresses the importance of recognizing and valuing students' language and culture (cf. 2.7.2).

5.4 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH LECTURERS

5.4.1: Culture and teaching approaches

Question 1: Do you agree that a lecturer has to adopt different teaching approaches when lecturing to students of different cultures?

5.4.1.1: Lecturers have to adopt different approaches to teaching students of different cultures

All 5 lecturers verbalized this theme.

“Yes, I do think so. Different cultures have different ways of receiving information; some cultures are more responsive than others. You might have learners in front of you who do not respond at all, because they were taught not to talk/respond in class.”(Interviewee 1) “I think one should try to accommodate different learning styles, but most of the time, the time allocated to teaching doesn't allow one to achieve that aim, but I try to accommodate all learners.” (Interviewee 2) “Yes, I think we, as lecturers, should take students’

cultural background into account. We have students from so many different cultural backgrounds; we teach students from the DRC, Cameroun and other countries in Northern Africa. I have realised that it must be very different from that of the South African students.”(Interviewee 3) “Yes, I do think that lecturers should take students’ cultures into consideration when teaching them, because teaching at this university, with its very diverse student composition, has made me aware that students from different cultures have different approaches to learning.”(Interviewee 4) “It would be quite difficult to know everything about the cultures of the students in front of you, but the reality is that different students have different learning styles and we as lecturers need to accommodate our learners.”(Interviewee 5)

Lecturers were positive about the fact that they should know more about the cultures of the students they teach, as not all students have the same learning styles. As institutions of higher learning have a very diverse nature and accommodate students from a variety of different cultures, knowledge of these cultures would perhaps enhance the teaching and learning process. Not understanding students’ cultures could result in a lack of understanding of their behaviour. This is supported by literature where it indicates that lecturers must become more culturally responsive by working to expand their knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity in education (Gay, 2000:86) (cf. 2.7.2).

Question 2: Do you think that the lecturers at the university are equipped to lecture to students of different cultures?

5.4.1.2: Lecturers at the university are not culturally equipped to lecture learners from different cultural backgrounds

All 5 lecturers verbalized these themes.

“I think that quite a number of lecturers at the university are not equipped to lecture learners of different cultures. And I think all lecturers can benefit to attend workshops on Intercultural Communication.”(Interviewee 1)

“I don’t think they are always equipped, abut then one should ascertain what it means to be equipped.”(Interviewee 2) “I cannot say with certainty. We have a very diverse corpse and I do not think they are equipped to lecturer to learners from different cultures.”(Interviewee 3) “I don’t think so. I have often heard lecturers speak about their students, which lead me to the assumption that they do not have sufficient knowledge about the cultures of their students.”

(Interviewee 4) “I think there is a gap in equipping teachers with the knowledge of different cultures. I therefore do not think that lecturers have sufficient cultural knowledge to lecture learners from diverse cultural backgrounds.”(Interviewee 5)

Interviewed lecturers agreed that the majority of lecturers at the university lack cultural knowledge of the students they taught. Participants were very much

aware of the fact that, if not managed sensitively, communication between different cultures in the lecture room could lead to frustration, apprehension and intercultural conflict. It seems that a gap at university exists where lecturers lack sufficient cultural knowledge to deal effectively with the diversity in lecture rooms. Recognizing and valuing students' language and culture is of the utmost importance (Gay, 2000:86) (*cf.* 2.7.2). The lecturer's role as an agent of empowerment is that of encouraging the development of self-image, self-esteem, self-affirmation and resurgence of pride in roots. This is seems to be crucial – not only for the students' academic success – but also for the creation of a positive and co-operative environment in the multicultural classroom (Bonanni, 2000:3) (*cf.* 2.2).

Question 3: Do you think that lecturers at the university are linguistically competent to lecture in English as medium of instruction?

When lecturers were asked if they thought that lecturers at the university are linguistically competent to lecture in English as a medium of instruction, they responded as follows:

- Lecturers are not linguistically competent to lecture in English (4 lecturers); and
- Lecturers lack the language ability to explain subject content (1 lecturer).

5.4.4.3: Lecturers are not linguistically competent to lecture in English

4 lecturers verbalized this theme.

“Not all lecturers at this university are linguistically competent to lecture in English as medium of instruction. They have wonderful academic knowledge, but they struggle to put it into the correct words and to make it understandable to learners. Learners do not necessarily have a deep knowledge and lecturers need to explain it in such a way, that they (learners) will understand it.”(Interviewee 1) “No, I certainly do not. I think that all lecturers should attend courses in lecturing in English as a second language.”(Interviewee 2) “I cannot say with certainty. What I do know is that we have lecturers who come from other countries in Africa and who are not that fluent in English. I don’t know whether it is because of their accent and intonation or because of a lack of sufficient vocabulary.”(Interviewee 3) “I have to say that there are quite a number of lecturers who are not competent in English. I base this statement only on the fact that I often speak to lecturers from other departments and that I have often hear students complain about the fact that some of their lecturers cannot speak understandable English.”(Interviewee 4)

5.4.1.4: Lecturers lack the language ability to explain subject content

1 lecturer verbalized this theme.

“Not all lecturers at the university are linguistically competent to lecture in English as MOI. They have wonderful academic knowledge, but they struggle to put it into the correct words and to make it understandable to learners. Learners do not necessarily have a deep knowledge and lecturers need to explain it in such a way, that they (learners) will understand it.”(Interviewee 5)

The lecturers who were interviewed felt that the majority of lecturers at the university were not competent in English and subsequently lack the ability to explain their subject content. They expressed their concern about this matter, especially as it affects the quality of teaching and learning at the university. This concern is an indication that lecturers have been thinking about how best to reach their students and that they were aware of the positive effect that cultural knowledge may have on addressing diversity in lecture rooms. Education relies on effective interaction between the lecturer and the students. Literature confirms this by stating that positive interaction experiences have been found to assist L2 students with developing communicative and cultural competence (Culhane, 2001:13-24) (cf. 3.5.1).

5.4.2 Section 2: Class Management

Question 1: Do you think that lecturing in a L2, or a language other than your mother tongue, has an influence on your lectures? If so, in what way?

5.4.2.1: Lecturing in English as L2 is not problematic

All 5 lecturers verbalized this theme

“Well, for me, I’m trained as an English teacher. I’m therefore supposed to be equipped to teach through the medium of instruction, but I do think that any second language speaker of English sometimes struggle to express themselves as well as they would have in their own language.”(Interviewee 1)

“No, not really. All second language speakers at one time or another struggle to express themselves properly. I am however a trained English lecturer.”(Interviewee 2)

“Yes, definitely. I find that on a regular basis, I would refer back to my mother-tongue, just to make sure that I have explained something correctly.”(Interviewee 3)

“Not really. I am very comfortable communicating in English. I majored in English and have always had English friends and had to speak English in every job that I had.”(Interviewee 4)

“I am a qualified English lecturer and have been teaching for a very long time. Lecturing in a second-language does not have an influence on my lectures.”(Interviewee 5)

Even though the interviewees were all L2 speakers, they did not experience teaching in English, as a L2, to be problematic as they were trained to lecture in English. It is realistic, however, that instances occurred where a L2 lecturer would refer back to his/her mother tongue. The interviewed lecturers did not

experience lecturing in English as a barrier, as three of the lecturers majored in English, while two of the lecturers have been teaching in English at school level for a lengthy period of time. However, it is stated in literature that linguistic competence alone is not enough to be competent in a language (Krasner, 1999: 79) (*cf.* 2.7.2). It seems that the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests and agree or disagree with someone (Krasner, 1999:80) (*cf.* 2.7.2) could also have a positive impact on interaction between lecturers and students.

Question 2: Does the fact that you lecture students of different cultures affect your class management? If so, in what way?

5.4.2.2: Lecturing students of different cultures has no effect on class management of lecturers.

All 5 lecturers verbalized this theme.

“No, not at all. I don’t even know what the different cultures of the students in front of me are. It is only when we have a discussion about different cultures, that some of them will tell me that they are, for example, a Zulu, or a Sotho. otherwise, no, I don’t even realize that they come from different cultures.”
(Interviewee 1) “No, I’m not affected by that.”(Interviewee 2) “No, not at all. Misbehaviour doesn’t have anything to do with coming from a specific culture.”

(Interviewee 3) “No, it does not make a difference at all that I have to manage students from diverse backgrounds.”(Interviewee 4) “No, the fact that I lecture learners of different cultures does not affect my class management.”(Interviewee 5)

Lecturers agreed that teaching students from different cultures has no influence on their class management. These lecturers were of the opinion that misbehaviour of students does not have anything to do with their (the students') cultural background. It seems that lecturers were all in agreement that there was no link between misbehaviour and culture. They seemed not to be experiencing any difficulty in managing students. Lecturers do, however, need to undergo professional development on a regular basis to stay in touch with trends on the educational platform. It is indicated in literature that professional development is an ongoing learning process in which lecturers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003: 1) (*cf.* 3.6.1).

5.4.3 Section 3: Personal life stories

Question 1: How important is culture to you?

5.4.3.1: Culture is important to lecturers

All 5 lecturers verbalized this theme.

“Culture is important to me; it gives me a sense of pride of who I am. But we are very aware that we live in a multi-cultural society and we are very focused on our moral values. As lecturers, we are trained to be unbiased and to treat everybody equally.”(Interviewee 1) “My culture is an innate characteristic of who I am. I do not always project my culture in all aspects or to enhance my teaching style or win ground for myself. I think it comes naturally. But I think it is important as far as it can hinder successful communication.”(Interviewee 2) “I am very proud of my South Sotho background. It is very important to me to speak my language as purely as possible. I have brought my children up to know their Sotho culture and to embrace it.”(Interviewee 3) “I am very proud of my Afrikaans culture. I am, however, very sensitive to the fact that I teach in a multi-cultural environment and that I should be sensitive to the feelings and needs of people of other cultures.” (Interviewee 4) “I cannot imagine myself without my culture as culture is part of who you are; your norms and values.”(Interviewee 5)

Interviewees indicated that their cultures were very important to them and that they could not imagine themselves without their cultures. It seems as if lecturers were proud of their culture and embraced it. They also indicated that they were sensitive to the diversity of their lecture rooms. Literature suggests that a useful starting point for applying cultural awareness to language learning is to recognize

that people carry their own cultural values to any learning (Hall, 2003:252) (cf. 3.6).

Question 2: Have you encountered situations where misunderstanding in the classroom occurred because of cultural differences? If so, what were they?

5.4.3.2: Misunderstanding that occurs because of cultural differences

All 5 students verbalized these themes.

“In a class situation I have not really encountered such problems. What I have encountered is that students have a completely different concept of time than the Western concept of time. It seems as if punctuality is an almost non-existent concept. They struggle to keep to deadlines whereas students from the Western culture are very much aware of meeting deadlines. And then also the responsiveness of students; in class they are very quiet, but when they are outside class, with people they can relate to, they very responsive and even noisy.”(Interviewee 1) *“I haven’t encountered such situations quite often. I have encountered situations where learners do not establish eye-contact. I realize that eye contact differs in different cultures, but I make the learners aware of this. Students have a problem with punctuality, but I address the problem in a, as diplomatic way as possible.”(Interviewee 2)* *“I cannot think of any situations. There were, however, situations, where students from the DRC*

did not want to be in groups where there were students from other cultures.”

(Interviewee 3) “No, not really. I have always been interested in how people from different cultures operate. When I started working at the VUT, I was not that clued up about the different cultures and there were times when certain situations occurred, for example, in the Western culture, it is regarded as polite for men to stand aside and let women walk first, while I noticed that Black men would walk first. I asked the students about this and they explained that in the Black culture, men would walk first to defend the women in case of danger. I also noticed that there is a distinct difference in how Western and Black culture interpret personal space.”(Interviewee 4) “The misunderstanding was not between myself and learners, but between the learners themselves. Two learners from the DRC spoke to me after class to inform me that they had a problem with a group member, who was a Sotho. They found the way in which she addressed them disrespectful. When I spoke to the Sotho learner, she was surprised and said that the way she addresses people is the way in which Sothos address other people.”(Interviewee 5)

According to the lecturers who were interviewed, there were instances where a misunderstanding in lecture rooms occurred because of cultural differences. It appears that lecturers were positive about finding out more about the different cultures of the students that they lecture, because they were all aware of misunderstandings that occurred because of differences in cultures. It is confirmed in literature that misunderstandings also occur in the interpretation of

non-verbal behaviours because different display rules create very different meanings about the appropriateness and effectiveness of particular interaction sequences (Lustig & Koester, 2006:214) (cf. 2.11). Students' cultures in a multicultural classroom usually have a few aspects that clash and which can cause misunderstandings (Demeter, 2005:1) (cf. 2.7).

Question 2: Do you interact with people from cultures other than your own? If so, is it on a professional or social level?

5.4.3.3: Interaction with other cultures on a professional and/or social level

All 5 lecturers verbalized this theme.

"I don't really have the opportunity to socially interact with people from different cultures; only on a professional level with students and colleagues."(Interviewee 1) "I certainly interact with people of other cultures, on a social as well as a professional level."(Interviewee 2) "Yes, I interact with people of other cultures, on a social, as well as a professional level. Socially, I mix with Sothos, Xhosas and people from Nigeria, while on a professional level, I interact with people from the Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, English and Afrikaans cultures."(Interviewee 3) "I do interact with people of other cultures, both on a professional and a social level. At work I interact with Sothos, Xhosas Zulus, Shangaan, as well as people

from the DRC and on a social level with people from the Polish and Indian cultures.”(Interviewee 4) “I only interact with people from different cultures on a professional level as I have never had the opportunity to interact with different cultures socially.” (Interviewee 5)

Although all the lecturers interact professionally with people from other cultures, not all of them have the opportunity to interact socially with people from other cultures. It appears that lecturers are positive towards people from other cultures and even though they did not regularly interact with them on a social level, they expressed their willingness to learn more about other cultures. It is stated in literature that access to lecture rooms in post-apartheid South Africa was virtually permitted overnight, thereby transforming the previously racially/culturally segregated lecture rooms into multicultural lecture rooms (Bonanni, 2000: 1) (cf. 2.2). This could mean that lecturers were not prepared for this change.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with the analysis and interpretation of data which was collected by means of semi-structured interviews conducted with first-year L2 students, as well as lecturers at a University of Technology. The data was analysed and interpreted in order to determine the role of culture during teaching and learning through English L2.

In chapter 6 the summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the research are presented.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of culture during teaching and learning through English as L2. The previous chapter dealt with the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from personal interviews. In this final chapter of the research study, findings and conclusions, with reference to the objectives of the study, as well as the limitations, are discussed and recommendations for practice and further research are made.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

In this section, a brief overview of chapters 1 to 5 is given.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research study, that is, the statement of the problem, objectives and aims, research methods and the organization of the study. The aims of this study are indicated in 1.4.

In Chapter 2 I explored relevant literature as background to this study. The chapter dealt with the fundamental nature of culture in relation to language. Culture is defined and its models are explored and analysed (*cf.* 2.3).

It was necessary to give an overview of South Africa as a multicultural country (*cf.* 2.2); a situation which has also led to diversity in spoken languages in higher institutions.

Chapter 3 investigated teaching and learning in a L2. In this chapter, I looked into literature that deals with teaching and learning in a L2 and motivation of L2 students (*cf.* 3.5). South Africa is a country of many languages and cultures and the researcher therefore deemed it necessary to discuss the mother tongue debate in South Africa.

Chapter 4 focused on the research methodology used in this study. This chapter included the researcher's discussions and justification regarding the choices that were made with regard to designing and conducting the empirical part of the study.

In Chapter 5 the responses of the participants, which were obtained during interviews (*cf.* 5.3), as well as the analysis and interpretations (*cf.* 5.3) thereof, were presented. The interviews conducted for this research

revealed valuable information and insight into the influence of culture on teaching and learning through English L2 of first year students at a University of Technology.

6.3 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapters 2 and 3 provide valuable information on culture and its influence on teaching and learning through EL2. The findings below were drawn from the literature review:

- South Africa is a multicultural country, where diversity, after a history of separation, is celebrated (Du Plessis, 2006: 104) (*cf.* 2.1). Intercultural communication has become important because schools and tertiary institutions have become more diverse (Lustig & Koester, 2003:49) (*cf.* 2.72).
- The South African student population in higher education is linguistically diverse and, for the majority, English is not their mother tongue. This results in the majority of students entering higher education not fully proficient in English (Ministry of Education, 2002:4) (*cf.* 3.7). For many students in South African institutions of learning, English is learnt as a second or even third language even though it is the MOI in the majority of institutions of learning (Nel, 2005:151) (*cf.* 3.9).

- In order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behaviour (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003:2) (*cf.* 1.2).
- Cultural awareness involves skills in exploring, observing and understanding the differences and sameness (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004:7) (*cf.* 2.7.1). Without culture, people cannot understand the lives and motivations of others and connect with their concerns and interests (Lai, 2007:3) (*cf.* 2.3). Key features for gaining cultural awareness, is to include knowledge of roles of culture in communication, the nature of cultural norms and the kinds of relations that exist between people and cultures (Baker, 2008:131-146) (*cf.* 2.6). Cultural differences in communication patterns between educators and learners may predispose the educators towards misunderstanding and misjudgment of both the academic and communicative competence of the learners (Du Plessis, 2006:88) (*cf.* 2.11).
- Lecturers are becoming increasingly more aware of the importance of the role of culture during teaching and learning in English L2 (Hinkel, 1999:56) (*cf.* 2.7.2) and that cross-cultural differences can cause misunderstanding as well as interfere with the teaching/learning process (Demeter, 2005:1) (*cf.* 2.7.2). There still seems to be a difference of opinion between different schools of thought at Higher Education institutions about the way L2 teaching and the teaching of culture should take place (Quist, 2000:131) (*cf.* 3.6.1). Educators play a very important role in teaching and learning in

English L2 and the learners' interpretation of the interpersonal behaviour of the educator would undoubtedly influence the learning outcome (Hall, 2003:252) (*cf.* 3.6).

- Lecturers play a very important role in language learning and the learners' interpretation of the interpersonal behaviour of the educator would undoubtedly influences the learning outcome (Hall, 2003:252) (*cf.* 3.6).
- Acculturation implies a mutual influence in which elements of two cultures mingle and merge. Acculturation is an overarching process of adjusting to a new culture that involves changes in identification with one's cultural group and the larger society (Berry, 2003:17) (*cf.* 2.10). Communication has long been recognized as playing an incidental role in acculturation (Hill, 2007:323) (*cf.* 2.10). Acculturation includes changes not only at the individual psychological level, but also at the societal level.

6.4 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The literature review guided the compilation of the interview schedule (*cf.* 5.3) and the analysis of the collected data. The findings from the empirical research are presented below.

All participants were EL2 speakers.

6.4.1 General findings from the empirical research

Findings in this section are divided into types of culture as indicated in the 2.3.

6.4.1.1 Responses relating to surface culture (cf. 2.3)

The responses revealed the following:

- There is a relationship between language and culture. Culture and language go hand in hand and the two shape each other, they are inseparable. The participants agreed that language and culture influence each other (*cf.* 5.3.1.2; 5.4.3.1).
- Some students prefer to be instructed in English L2. They felt that being instructed in English would improve participants' chances of finding work and it would also help in becoming communicatively competent in a world where English is spoken by so many people. This view was supported by the majority of interviewees, despite the opinion that they would perform better if they were to receive instruction in their mother tongue (*cf.* 5.3.1.3; 5.3.1.6).
- From their experience, instruction in English L2 is restrictive as they did not always understand the subject content. This resulted in their performing badly. They believed that instruction in their mother-tongue would result in better performance (*cf.* 5.3.1.6).
- Understanding of students' cultures would have an effect on teaching and learning in a L2. They felt very positive about the

possibility of their lecturers becoming knowledgeable about students' cultures (*cf.* 5.3.1.10; 5.3.1.11).

6.4.1.2 Responses relating to the influence of subjective culture (*cf.* 2.3) on language

The responses revealed the following:

- There are often misunderstandings that occur because of not understanding other people's cultures. Students related incidents which were caused by misunderstanding of their cultures. They also admitted to having misconceptions about the actions of people from other cultures (*cf.* 5.3.1.12; 5.4.3.2).
- There are preconceived ideas and these ideas have an influence on how participants react to situations and relate to each other. These assumptions were not only between Blacks and Whites, but also between the different Black ethnic groups. The interviewees agreed that these assumptions and preconceived ideas could only be clarified or eliminated if different cultures communicate effectively with one another and were open to engaging in the process of negotiating meaning (*cf.* 5.3.2.1; 5.3.2.2).
- Lecturing students of different cultures has no influence in class management as the misbehaviour of students was perceived not to have anything to do with cultural background (*cf.* 5.4.2.2).

6.4.1.3 Responses relating to the solution to the problems that are created by the influence of culture on a L2

The responses revealed the following:

- Incorporating a module on the different cultures would promote better understanding of other cultures. Participants felt positive about incorporating a module on the different cultures into the curriculum and agreed that such a module would promote understanding and trust, as well as stimulate interest and prevent conflict. Students felt that such an effort should involve both students and lecturers (*cf.* 5.3.1.14).
- Students felt very strongly about the appointment of competent lecturers who are proficient in English. Another way of assisting in the teaching and learning in English as a L2 was the appointment of tutors. The students also stated that cultural workshops and other innovative ideas to promote cultural understanding should be presented by the institution (*cf.* 5.3.1.16; 5.4.1.2).
- Different approaches to teaching students of different cultures should be adopted. Lecturers agreed that not all students have the same learning styles and that it was important to know more about the cultures of the students they teach. The interviewees

also felt that knowledge of the different cultures would enhance the teaching and learning process (*cf.* 5.3.1.11; 5.4.1.1).

6.4.1.4 Responses relating to the importance of culture

The responses revealed the following:

- Culture is important to all participants, students and lecturers. The respondents admitted the importance of culture in their lives and claimed that it defined them. They expressed their connection to their cultures and stated that culture forms part of their identity. Culture was important even to lecturers. Participants were very much aware of the fact that they teach in a multi-cultural environment and that being unbiased and sensitive was essential. They also indicated that their cultures were very important to them (*cf.* 5.3.3.2; 5.4.3.1).
- South Africa is a country with a diversity of cultures, languages and different races, and it is therefore not strange that people come into contact with different cultures and languages. All participants had contact with people from the Western culture, as well as from other ethnic groups (*cf.* 5.3.3.3; 5.4.3.3).
- Although the students could all recall incidents where misunderstandings based on culture occurred, these

misunderstandings were not only between people from the Western culture and people from the Black culture, but also between people from the different Black cultures (*cf.* 5.3.3.5; 5.4.3.2).

6.4.1.5 Responses relating to problems encountered in multi-cultural lecture rooms

The responses revealed the following:

- Lecturers at this University of Technology were not culturally equipped to lecture students from different cultural backgrounds. Lecturers lacked cultural knowledge of the students they teach. Communication between different cultures in the lecture rooms could lead to frustration, apprehension and intercultural conflict, if not managed sensitively (*cf.* 5.4.1.2; 5.3.3.5).
- Lecturers lacked linguistic competency to lecture in English L2, as well as the ability to explain subject content. Participants felt that the majority of lecturers at this University of Technology were not competent in their English L2 (*cf.* 5.4.1.3; 5.3.1.16).

6.4.1.6 Responses relating to mother tongue instruction versus English L2

The responses revealed the following:

- Students expressed preference for instruction mother tongue for performance. There were instances where L2 lecturers would refer back to their mother tongue (*cf.* 5.4.2.1; 5.3.1.6).

6.4.1.7 Responses relating to interactions with other cultures at professional and social levels

The responses revealed the following:

- Lecturers all felt positive about interacting with people from other cultures. All of them interact professionally with people from other cultures, but not all of them have the opportunity to interact socially with people from cultures other than their own (*cf.* 5.4.3.3).

6.5 FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Interview questions were developed to empirical research purposes as to achieve research aims 1 and 2.

- **Findings with regard to research objective 1: The fundamental nature of culture**

Language and culture are inextricably interrelated and consequently influence each other (Pulverness, 2003:15) (*cf.* 2.7.1; 2.3 & 2.4).

Results of the empirical study revealed that lecturers as well as students indicated that culture and language go hand in hand and that the one could not exist without the other. They were of the opinion that language was the means through which they could practise their culture. Culture was part of their identity and that was the means through which they could relate what their morals and values were (*cf.* 5.3.1.2; 5.4.3.1).

- **Findings with regard to research objective 2: Cultural factors that influence L2 learning and teaching of the first-year students**

Students who are proficient in L1 will acquire English as a L2 more readily and be more proficient in English than students with poor language skills in L1 (Viljoen & Molefe, 2001:125) (*cf.* 3.1). Students admitted that they would perform better if they would receive instruction in their mother tongue, but still expressed the desire to be taught in English L2. They felt it would benefit them in finding employment as well as in functioning in the world (*cf.* 5.3.1.6; 5.3.1.3).

Lack of knowledge of how different cultures communicate and interact and of the values and norms may lead to misunderstanding (Du

Plessis, 2006:88) (*cf.* 2.9). Knowledge of each other's cultures would promote understanding and would benefit teaching and learning. Reaction was very positive about the possibility of educators becoming more knowledgeable about students' cultures (*cf.* 5.3.1.10; 5.4.1.2).

Cultural differences in communication patterns between lecturers and students may predispose the lecturers towards misunderstanding and misjudgement of both the academic and communicative competence of the students (Du Plessis, 2006:88) (*cf.* 2.9). Ignorance about other people's cultures could lead to conflicts and misunderstandings. Participants were able to recall situations they were involved in where misunderstandings were caused because of a lack of understanding of other people's cultures. Participants admitted to having misconceptions about the actions of people from other cultures and that these misconceptions often lead to misunderstandings (*cf.* 5.3.1.12; 5.3.3.5; 5.4. 3.2).

Participants admitted to having stereotypical ideas about people from other cultures. These assumptions were not only held by Whites and Blacks, but also between people from different ethnic groups (*cf.* 5.3.2.1; 5.3.2.2).

- **Findings with regard to research aim 3: Possible solutions to diminish possible cultural barriers that certain cultural factors may cause in L2 teaching and learning**

Incorporating a module on the different cultures would promote better understanding of other cultures, build trust as well as stimulate interest in other cultures. It is assumed that the information would limit conflict and misunderstandings among students and between students and their lecturers (*cf.* 5.3.1.15).

Competent lecturers who are proficient in English L1 should be appointed. This can be done together with the appointment of tutors who will be culture-sensitive (*cf.* 5.3.1.16).

Cultural workshops and other innovative ideas to promote cultural understanding should be presented by the institutions of higher learning (*cf.* 5.3.1.17).

Different approaches to teaching students of different cultures should be adopted. Not all students have the same learning styles and it is important to know more about the cultures of students. Knowledge of the different cultures would enhance the teaching and learning process. These findings correspond with literature (*cf.* 5.4.1.1; 2.7.2,

3.6.1) where Gay (2000:86) states that lecturers must become culturally responsive by working to expand their knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity in education.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following could be considered as limitations of this study:

- In this research study, the researcher acknowledges the fact that the study of understanding the role of culture during teaching and learning through ESL of first-year students at one University of Technology was not intensive. The study investigated only one department, namely the Engineering Department. Involving all the departments at this university would have provided a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Research was conducted only in one institution of higher learning. A more comprehensive understanding of the influence of culture on L2 learning and teaching of first year students at higher institutions might have been obtained.

- Only qualitative methods were employed, which in this research made use of interviews only. The sample that was interviewed could be considered too small to be representative.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research, recommendations regarding the practical implementation of findings and further research are made.

6.7.1 Recommendations regarding the practical implementation of the findings

- **Recommendation with regard to objective 1: To determine the fundamental nature of culture**

Recommendation 1

Lecturers should incorporate cultural activities and objectives in their lecture plans and move away from lecturing content only.

Motivation: By doing this, students would experience English as the target culture first-hand which would lead to mutual understanding and

appreciation. It would also motivate them to learn more about other cultures.

- **Recommendation with regard to aim 2: Cultural factors that explain the role of culture during teaching and learning through English Second Language at a University of Technology**

Recommendation 1

Universities and other teacher training institutions should design and present English language teachers' training programmes which would include cultural training.

Motivation: Educational institutions in South Africa are currently integrated and very diverse. It is therefore necessary for lecturers to receive cultural training in their training programmes in order for them to be sensitive to the diversity and to be equipped with the required knowledge to accommodate students of different cultures.

Recommendation 2

Workshops should be designed and conducted in order to empower L2 lecturers in empowering them to successfully deal with multi-cultural classes.

Motivation: This would enable lecturers to help students develop target language proficiency and increase their understanding of the target culture. Workshops are part of lecturers' professional development and therefore should assist lecturers in learning how best they can adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students.

Recommendation 3

Modules about history and culture should be included in the curriculum. Knowledge of other cultures would make students who study through L2 realise that there are no such things as one culture being superior and another inferior. If students are taught about different cultures, the importance of their own culture, they would also develop a respect for their own cultures.

Motivation: If culture is viewed as a process of transaction, then students need opportunities to generate meaning in transaction.

Therefore classroom environments must allow and encourage students to recognise their own culture to transact with cultures outside their unique, individual cultures, and to reflect on these transactions.

Recommendation 4

The National Department of Education should embark upon a sustained campaign to get the South African people to understand that South Africa is a non-racial and equal society and it should create an awareness of the cultural diversity that exists.

Motivation: Such a campaign would create awareness among the different cultures in South Africa of other people's cultures, as well as of the importance of their own cultures. It would promote tolerance of and sensitivity towards cultures other than their own.

6.7.2 Recommendations for further research

The following are suggestions for further research:

- Further studies could use a broader sample population from different universities in South Africa. This would ensure a higher degree of representation.

- The potential of the use of learners' mother tongue in higher institutions also needs further exploration.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The research gives an overview to understanding the role of culture during teaching and learning English Second Language. The diversity that exists in South Africa lends itself to the problem of learners receiving instruction in a language other than their mother tongue. Various other factors, such as cultural differences, exert an influence on the learning and teaching in a second language.

It is against this background that the researcher decided to investigate the problem and compare the situation in South Africa with research literature conducted all over the world where similar situations exist.

The results in this research indicated, that perhaps the issue of culture as a barrier in the second language classroom should receive more serious attention.

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SECTION B: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH LEARNERS

1. Academic matters

- 1.1 In what language were you instructed in school/when did you start being taught in English?
- 1.2 Do you think that language and culture are interrelated and consequently influence each other?
- 1.3 Would you rather be taught in your mother tongue than in English, as a second language?
- 1.4 Does receiving instruction in a second language, or a

language other than your mother tongue, influence your performance at university? If so, how?

- 1.5 Do you feel that if learners' cultures were more clearly understood, teaching and learning in a second language would be more accessible and equitable for more learners?
- 1.6 Do you think that misunderstanding may occur in a classroom where the lecturer may misunderstand your behaviour because he/she hasn't enough or no knowledge of your culture?
- 1.7 Do you think that incorporating a module on the different cultures at the Vaal University of Technology would promote a better understanding and eliminate misunderstanding?
- 1.8 What can the Vaal University of Technology do to improve learning and teaching in English as a second language?

2. Experience with learning

- 2.1 Are there any stereotypical ideas that you have about people from other cultures? If any, what are they?
- 2.2 Do you think that preconceived ideas you have about English, which is the medium of instruction at the Vaal University of Technology, have an influence on how you react to situations and relate to other people?
- 2.3 If lecturers from other cultures knew more about your culture

would it lead to the establishment of better relationships?

2.4 Do you feel that if learners' cultures were more clearly understood, teaching and learning in a second language would be more accessible and equitable for more learners?

3. Personal life stories

3.1 How important is your culture to you?

3.2 Have you come into contact with people from other cultures at university, and if, what culture?

3.3 Do you think that language and culture are interrelated and consequently influence each other?

3.4 Have you been involved in a situation where misunderstanding occurred because of cultural differences?

SECTION A: LECTURERS

1. Teaching Approaches

Do you agree that a lecturer has to adopt different teaching approaches when lecturing to learners of different cultures?

Do you think that the lecturers at the Vaal University of Technology are equipped to lecture to learners of different cultures?

Do you think that lecturers at the Vaal University of Technology are linguistically competent to lecture in English as medium of instruction?

2. Class Management

Do you think that lecturing in a second language, or a language other than your mother tongue, has an influence on your lectures? If so, in what way?

Does the fact that you lecture learners of different cultures affect your class management? If so, in what way?

3. Personal Life Stories

How important is culture to you?

Have you encounter situations where misunderstanding in the classroom occurred because of cultural differences? If so, what were they?

Do you interact with people from cultures other than your own? If so, is it on a professional or social level?