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**THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN ACQUISITION OF
PROFICIENCY IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH BY STUDENTS IN A
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY**

BY

LIFELILE MPHONGOBANE-MATSOSO

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STUDY**

BY

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(B.A +CCE, M.ED. TESL, M.ED.)

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES
(PH.D. HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES)**

IN THE

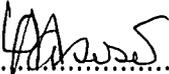
**SCHOOL OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

NOVEMBER 2012

**PROMOTER: PROF. DR. MABOKANG MONNAPULA-MAPESELA
CO-PROMOTER: DR. KOBUS MARAIS**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work resulting from my independent investigation. I declare also that all sources being referred to or quoted in this work have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. A further declaration is that this thesis it has not previously been submitted by me for acquisition of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at another university.

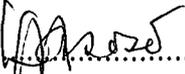

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Ph.D. to the following people who complete my BEING.

My late beloved Parents: Ntate Molefi-Jane Ntobane
'M'e 'Ma-Lifelile Molefi-Ntobane

My Children: Phano
Likopo &
Refiloehape

My Grandchildren: Lelethu Abokoe Kethekile Kumalo &
Lwandile Rekopile S'busiso Kumalo

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The visual aesthetic merit of this thesis would not be a reality that it is without the expertise and dedication of Lebohang 'Maamohelang 'Mabathoana. Thank you Lebo Girl!

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AE	:	Academic English
AEP	:	Academic English Proficiency
AHE	:	African Higher Education
AIK	:	African Indigenous Knowledge
ALP	:	Academic Language Proficiency
ASCC	:	Academic Senate for California Community Colleges
BICS	:	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	:	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
DUT	:	Durban University of Technology
EAP	:	English for Academic Purposes
EGAP	:	English for General Academic Purposes
ESAP	:	English for Specific Academic Purposes
HE	:	Higher Education
IK	:	Indigenous Knowledge
IKSs	:	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
LEP	:	Low English Proficiency
NESBS	:	Non-English-Speaking Background Students
NRF	:	National research Foundation
NUL	:	National University of Lesotho
OTK	:	Oral Traditional Knowledge
QDA	:	Qualitative Data Analysis
SSBSs	:	Sesotho-Speaking-Background Students
TK	:	Traditional Knowledge
TLD	:	Transformative Learning Development
TPD	:	Transformative Professional Development

CHAPTER



ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study focused on the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in the academic English of university students from a Sesotho-speaking background. To this end, the spotlight of the investigation was how knowledge from beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviours/practices and other conditions and scenarios of the livelihoods of the Basotho can benefit acquisition of academic English proficiency among Sesotho-speaking background students (SSBS) at the English-medium National University of Lesotho (NUL). Personal, social and academic reasons formed the background/rationale for the study.

1.1.1 Personal reasons

I am a Mosotho female born unto and nurtured by Basotho parents in a typically communal and remote village in rural Lesotho where every adult woman and man were ethno-culturally empowered to act as every child's parents. Growing up in my village meant living according to key values of the Basotho. I therefore possess a wealth of accumulated knowledge from the traditionally oral Sesotho culture. During my upbringing, this knowledge was acquired not only orally and informally, but experientially in the form of lessons from Sesotho rituals, games, folktales, riddles, song/dance, seasonal and ecological conditions, agricultural, and other practices, as well as sexuality norms to name but a few. For me, growing up in this setting and living these values meant awareness of their definitional role in the understanding of my identity as a fundamentally oralate Mosotho.

My parents, having barely completed secondary education themselves, had always been haunted by the burning desire to quench their thirst for modern formal education by investing in the education of their three daughters and three double orphans they inherited from my father's elder brother's family. I therefore had to go for formal education walking 10 kilometres daily for 8 years of primary school followed by residential years of secondary and higher education in Lesotho and abroad.

Formal schooling was a different cultural context for me. It was in the medium of English throughout, even for teaching and learning Sesotho as a subject. Achievement in this type of education depended on among others, linguistic and communicative competence in the English of different school-based learning contexts. Acquisition of literacy in the English of doing school meant downplaying almost all the wealth of knowledge from my Sesotho culture and nurturing. It implied pretending that my ethno-cultural knowledge was unexplorable for how it can benefit my acquisition of the English for construction of knowledge. Reflecting upon it today, I as a lecturer, can talk of such educational orientation as having been hegemonic, deculturising and therefore ethno-stressful to me. I had to find ways of surviving in the English of doing school.

As soon to be realised in the account of my personal experience with academic English, knowledge from my Sesotho traditional culture became one of my academic survival strategies. Whenever I encountered problems understanding concepts explained in English in many subjects, I wished that my teachers could first either explain in Sesotho language or draw analogies and/or contrasts from Sesotho and then rephrase in English. It was not to be. Even making such a request was out of question because rebukes such as: "*You have to think in English because you are not going to write your exams in Sesotho*" were the order of the day. Throughout the years of my educational career, including to-date when I am a lecturer in English Education, I tried to think in English but to no avail. I had to survive for my academic success.

At primary school, I secretly practiced a personal policy of constantly consulting my parents – both of whom were proficient enough in English to interpret some cultural aspects of Sesotho which I often wanted to draw from for tasks such as composition writing and interpretations of word problems in Arithmetic and other subjects. I adopt from scholarship on the inter-language of foreign language learners to refer to my practice as “appeal to authority” (Corder 1978:123). My traditional cultural background and my parents became this authority.

Throughout the secondary, HE, and professional levels of my academic career I have strategically maintained this interlingual approach which earned me recorded admiration as one of the best students in English. Ironically, my teachers, classmates and colleagues associated my academic success more with the literacy-related school-based competence than with knowledge from my Sesotho traditional knowledge. There was a belief that I read extensively outside my courses. Like Muncey (2005:2) whose auto-ethnographic narrative reveals her discomfort with people who work on preconceived causes of teenage pregnancy, instead of sourcing from the perspective of those who have been pregnant teenagers, I listened to, and often laughed at my teachers’, classmates’ and colleagues’ presumptuous attribution of my proficiency in school English to print-oriented-literacy. Personally, I attributed my commendable academic performance also to among others, recognition of my cultural background as fundamental and therefore having a role in my proficiency in English. This background has served as a dependable repository for solutions of many of the academic English-related problems which I encountered in the different academic subjects throughout my English-medium education and academic career.

I wished I could be asked for my perspective in this regard. Had I been, some of my teachers, particularly my Arithmetic and Maths teachers at primary and secondary levels would have known and pedagogically adjusted teaching in view of me as someone who has grown up in rural Lesotho and journeyed her educational route through English as a second language. With this experiential background, I have been perturbed by the

assimilationist lens through which the English-medium academic community conceive of academic English needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. I have wished to be received into formal education as a Mosotho enrolling with pre-existing ethno-Sesotho knowledge which can be tapped for how it can help me to understand the English for doing school. My voice to this end was never sought. It is this discomfort which culminated in the present auto-ethnographic investigation which in my view, will help bridge the void in the understanding of the relationship between ethno-cultural and formal education knowledges in [re]construction of knowledge about academic English proficiency needs of non-English-speaking-background students studying in English-medium university settings.

As evidenced in the empirical chapter of this thesis, conscious application of knowledge from some aspects of my Sesotho traditional culture enhanced my acquisition of competence in academic English. Therefore, considering the acclaimed role of, and advocated need for competence in academic English, HE researchers in Africa-based English-medium universities such as the NUL remain challenged to investigate for transformative learning and professional development, how traditional knowledges of students can support acquisition of academic English. As an education-practitioner in an English-medium African HE institution myself, through this research I responded to the advocated need. Personal reasons alone would not justify the investigation. Social reasons too provoked this inquiry.

1.1.2 Social reasons

The social reasons for undertaking this research are benchmarked on the predominantly colonial mentality and reasoning marginalising the use of African knowledges in African HE institutions. Over decades of my membership to the literate Westnocentric English-medium African higher education community, I have become aware of how this character of institutions such as the NUL can be associated with emotive disregard for the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of proficiency in academic

English by students from a Sesotho-speaking background. For instance, upon inquiring into problems which first year students at the NUL encounter in English as a medium of instruction, Matima (2006:67) associates the disdain with the negative attitude which some educators display towards students' application of Sesotho traditional knowledge to solve learning problems posed by academic English in different academic contexts. The author says

"Most lecturers vehemently object to students' request to seek clarification or make reference to equivalents from their traditional knowledge to meet challenges which are often posed by English for learning in different courses. They always tell students how dependence on knowledge from their traditional languages and cultures will not take them further in their studies if they always want to refer to it to understand English".

While I accept the position of the lecturers as captured in the foregoing quotation, I on the other hand hold that outright rejection of application of the learners' traditional knowledge denies teaching and learning an opportunity to explore such knowledge for the contribution it may have in acquisition of modern knowledge.

My inquiry is not necessarily benchmarked on theories of second language learning. I draw from the notion of second language learners' interlanguage hypothesis to argue that the position of lecturers at the NUL as depicted in Matima's finding overlooks the possibility of positive interlingual transfer which second language acquisition theorists recommend as one of the effective approaches to acquisition of the second language. In this inquiry I buy into an understanding that by virtue of being the language of the academic community, academic English becomes a third language for second language learners (Zwiers 2007). In this inquiry academic English is viewed as more problematic for students who enrol into university from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The question of how application of learners' traditional knowledge can benefit proficiency in it (academic English) became important in this study.

A further cause for concern is the tendency of educators in subjects other than English Language and Literature in English to blame students' communicative incompetence in academic English on those who teach English and English Education. This is seemingly because policy, teaching and learning in many HE institutions remain characterised by a belief that the task of ensuring acquisition of proficiency in English for effective management of academic tasks across the curriculum lies with the English language educators only. In my personal experience-informed view, this is a misconception resulting presumably from what Webb (2002:52) associates with unawareness of documented evidence that different academic disciplines/subjects in their own right as communication contexts, dictate subject-specific lexical and structural behaviour of language.

Lecturers in English Language are no exception. For instance, when addressing the learners' inter-language, they applaud errors resulting from overgeneralisation of rules of the English language (errors of intra-lingual transfer) in learning English, but frown at those resulting from misapplication of the rules of the learners' first language (inter-lingual transfer of knowledge) in learning a second language. This is because as lecturers in English, we are so colonially brainwashed and deculturised that our educational practices continually pursue and adopt Western belief systems, values, practices and behaviours at the expense of the contribution which our traditional knowledge can make in students' acquisition of formal education. I regarded the situation as disturbing and calling for review of scholarship for documented perspectives about the place of traditional knowledge in HE in general, and African HE in particular. I derived from such literature, the extent and coverage of research on the place of traditional knowledges in HE and the implications of such research for improvement of professional practice. I therefore had academic reasons for undertaking this investigation.

1.1.3 Academic reasons

Literature on traditional knowledge and its role in HE, as well as that on academic English proficiency underpin the academic rationale for this inquiry. The literature pinpoints African higher education (AHE) as having a role in African cultural development. It must therefore be socio-culturally relevant and responsive to educational, political, socio-economic and other developmental needs of African communities in which they are situated. Essentially, this spells the need for AHE research, policy and practice to espouse the culture and indigenous knowledge systems (IKs) of Africans (Wallner 2005:46; Kolawole 2005:1427) for these have a role to play in formal education and so need to be mainstreamed (Ndhlovu & Masuku 2005:281). This perception of AHE is in step with that long held by Nkrumah (1965, cited in Ntsoane 2005:92) who once said,

We must in the development of our university, bear in mind that once it has been planted in African soil, it must take root amidst African traditions and culture... It must foster consciousness, and be a nursery for African culture and nationalism.

The literature however, points to concerns about policy and pedagogical practices that contradict this perception of AHE. Conolly (2002) for instance, faults AHE institution policies, curriculum and implementation for their highly literacy-oriented nature which downplays the fact that the majority of AHE students enrol into university with a viable wealth of knowledge accumulated from their oralate cultural backgrounds. Joseph (2005:295) blames this on lack of awareness of the role of indigenous knowledge in formal education. This, Mapesela (2004:316) posits, could be due to the fact that even where national, ministerial and institutional IK policies are already in place, it is not yet clear how such should find their way into curriculum and pedagogical practice.

The deficiencies in academic achievement of African students in HE institutions are often blamed on historical developments which have provided neither intellectual space nor time for Africans to have self-determination and recognition of their cultural,

scientific and technologically-bound multicultural diversity (Ntsoane 2005:92). Most directly related to the title of the study is Ntsoane's concern with the mainly-English and therefore Westnocentric character of the English-medium African university which affords African IK lesser recognition – thus, disabling spontaneity, creativity and self-confidence all of which are embedded in one's cultural values, attitudes, belief systems, language and context-related behaviours of all people.

The scenario depicted by Ntsoane is consistent with that made by those writing about expected academic English proficiency among HE students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. For instance, Davidowitz (2004:127) and Webb, (2002:53) posit that despite the high level of proficiencies with which they are expected to enrol into university, non-English-speaking background students (NESBS) fail to meet the expectation. In my experience-informed observation (*vide* 1.1.1), this is because the presumed pre-university proficiency in English is too minimally research-appraised to inform an expectation from the lived perspective(s) of those entering HE institutions from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Ironically, some institutions of higher education such as the NUL document with concern the negative impact of low academic English proficiency on the academic performance and recommend that research should identify specific academic English proficiency needs of these students (The NUL – Vice Chancellor's Annual Report: 2007/2008:11). About the academic language proficiency needs of international students in particular, Zhu & Flaitz (2005:2-3) argue that in transformative language needs assessment research, personal perspectives of those directly affected by the *status quo* matter more than those predetermined by the researchers. These authors recommend adoption of research approaches leading to a context-specific understanding of academic language needs of such students. Essentially, these authors recommend research that has built into it the voice of those most directly disadvantaged by the research phenomenon. Zhu & Flaitz's (2005) recommendation makes sensible a conclusion that the extent of usefulness of students' traditional

knowledge systems in acquisition of academic English in English-medium HE institutions is a hardly explored area of research. The focus of the study therefore, was on how knowledge from traditional Sesotho can support acquisition of academic English proficiency among Sesotho-speaking background students at the English-medium NUL. Its subfield within HE is academic English. Conceptualisation of academic English is benchmarked on Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework for academic English (*vide* 4.4.1).

The inquiry adopted an ethno-culture-sensitive, personal experience-appraised and critical reflexive approach approach to an understanding of the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of Sesotho-speaking-background students (SSBSs) enrolling into an African English-medium HE institution such as the NUL. The following theories therefore became relevant prototypes for the methodology and values for interpretation of data:

- ✦ The Africanisation theory and *ubuntu* perspective (Viljoen & van der Walt 2003; Beets & le Grange 2005; Nel 2008),
- ✦ The critical hermeneutic/interpretive theory (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005; Mertens 2005),
- ✦ The living theory (Whitehead 1999; Whitehead & McNiff 2006),
- ✦ The critical self-study for transformative professional development (Taylor 2004; 2007).

The theories are elaborated on in 5.2.2 of this thesis.

1.2 THE RESEARCH CONCERN

Literature on teaching and learning in the predominantly Westnocentric HE features among others, the need for research, policy, curriculation and pedagogical practice to be synchronised with the indigenous cultural context of students. It should be

transformative. According to literature, implementation of this recommendation would enable students to not only realize the role and relevance of their local knowledge in modern education, but also as perceived by Fien (2001:19, cited by Taylor (2007:3), appreciate "diverse ways of knowing the world and make sense of their culturally-situated experiential realities". Such transformative rearticulation and pedagogy should be informed by conclusions from critical and personal reflections by educators and students regarding own stances about lived encounters with the modern education in relation to their local cultural ways of knowing (Taylor 2007:3). Based on extended personal experience as a HE researcher and educator, Taylor (2007:4) advances that this visionary transformative approach to teaching and learning in HE institutions can lead to professional improvement achievable by seeking answers to questions which include the following:

- ✚ Whose cultural interests are not being well served by traditional educational policy and practice?
- ✚ [Ethno-culturally] Who are these students whom I greet everyday? What are their world views, languages and life-long needs?
- ✚ Who is the cultural self who teaches? What key life-world experiences and values underpin my own professional practice and aspirations?
- ✚ What is my vision of a better world and how can my own professional practice help to realise it?

These questions formed part of the basis for my inquiry in that in all the years of my extended engagement with formal education I have yearned for my problems with academic English to be understood from an ethno-cultural perspective among others. An account of my journey through an English-medium educational route reveals this.

The works of some HE researchers in South African, Australian, Nepalese, Zimbabwean, and Mozambican university settings point to effectiveness of an ethno-culturally-sensitive research and pedagogical approach to understanding and addressing students'

and educators' needs in academic subjects such as environmental education (Maila & Loubser 2003), music (Joseph 2005), psychology (Bakker 2007), ICT education (Dalvit, Murray, Terzoli 2007), mathematics (Luitel & Taylor 2006; Nyaumwe 2006; Taylor 2007), and science (Cupane 2007) respectively. In these universities the culture-sensitive approach to teaching and learning has resulted in construction and enactment of contextualised policy, curricular and pedagogy of the mentioned subjects. Hence talk of courses such as ethno-mathematics, ethno-chemistry, ethno-botany and ethno-physics in some of these institutions.

It could reasonably be concluded from advances in the aforementioned university settings that TK/IK policies are probably not only in place, but also already specific on how these can be translated to individual academic subjects. Unfortunately, not much research seems evident in this regard. Thus the challenge facing educators and researchers includes research focusing on experiential perspectives regarding among others, how students' local cultural contexts and their knowledge can support teaching and learning through English.

English as both a subject and medium of instruction in many African HE institutions, is one of the academic areas that have been barely investigated for how they can benefit from ethno-culture-sensitive pedagogical and research approaches (*vide* 4.5). Research on academic English therefore still leaves unanswered at least two questions which are pertinent to the present inquiry. One is the question of the extent to which ethno-traditional knowledge of non-English-speaking students is a need for acquisition of academic English proficiency. Another question is how policy, curricula, and pedagogical practice can be improved to help students realise the relevance of their indigenous culture to their formal education. This research gap does not afford students what Taylor (2007:2) in his concept of transformative professional development terms an opportunity "to respect, celebrate and grow their own cultural capital".

The English-medium NUL is no exception to the foregoing observations. It has a population of around ten thousand (10,000) students over 95% of whom are from a Sesotho-speaking background (NUL Students Admissions and Records Office 2009/2010). According to the NUL's External Examiners' consolidated Reports (NUL Pro-Vice Chancellor's Report 2005-2007:18; 2009-2010), low-academic English proficiency is a continual barrier to the academic success of most Basotho students in the institution. The situation is a challenge to academics whose responsibility is to ensure competence of students in academic English as a vehicle for academic and professional achievement of NUL graduates.

Over the years external examiners of the NUL have recommended university-wide research on academic English proficiency needs of students. Consequently, a large-scale investigation of NUL students for academic English-related problems was undertaken by the Department of English in 2000. The results of the investigation led to the establishment of the Communication and Study Skills Unit (CSSU) which would develop courses geared towards students' mastery of English for acquisition of subject-based knowledge (NUL English Department Motivation Paper for Establishment of CSSU 2002:2).

However, the problem persists even after the initiative. In response to the situation, the Vice-Chancellor in his inaugural speech at the 2007 matriculation ceremony for new students, reiterated the NUL external examiners' concern and challenged educators across disciplines to embark on research to establish not only the root cause of the problem of low-academic English proficiency among most NUL students, but also measures that the institution should put in place in response to programme-wide problematicity of academic English (NUL Vice-Chancellor's Inaugural Speech 2007:14).

To-date hardly any such research has been undertaken. Therefore the NUL still remains faced by the need to understand the nature of academic English proficiency needs of its students. The question is how? Considering predominance of close-ended questions,

researcher-pre-determined responses and exclusion of knowledge from students' cultural background in the list of responses comprising the instrument of the 2000 study, it was fitting that a more qualitative and culture-sensitive investigation be adopted. The next section focuses on what the problem for investigation is.

1.2.1 The gist of my concern

Proficiency in academic English is imperative for effective management of tasks in different academic disciplines and professional contexts. Individual academic sciences, professions, the competitive world of work and needed self-actualisation therein are a binding force for English-medium HE research, teaching and learning to contend with (Webb 2002:55). Considering the personal, social and academic reasons in 1.1.1-1.1.3 above, it seemed reasonable for purposes of this inquiry to assume that an understanding of the nature of the academic English proficiency needs of students in HE could be pursued from among others, personalised, experience-based, naturalistic and local perspectives of those directly affected. With the current institutional concern about low-academic English proficiency coupled with dearth of research in this regard at the NUL, an investigation of the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency among Sesotho-speaking students in this institution seemed legitimate.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Accepting that the understanding of the nature of academic English proficiency needs of Sesotho-speaking background students of the NUL cannot be divorced from the Sesotho cultural context and the personal perspectives or standings about the role of this cultural background in acquisition of academic English, the following main and subsidiary questions crystallised for the study.

1.3.1 Main question

I asked the question "What is the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of SSBSs studying in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL?" I broke the question into the subsidiary questions in 1.3.2 below.

1.3.2 Subsidiary questions

I conceived these in theoretical and empirical terms as follows.

1.3.2.1 Theoretical subsidiary questions

- (a) What does traditional knowledge entail?
- (b) What is the role of traditional knowledge in higher education?
- (c) What does academic English entail?
- (d) To what extent does documented research on higher education address the role of traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency by students from non-English-medium backgrounds?

1.3.2.2 Empirical Subsidiary Questions

- (a) What personal experience-informed interpretive perspectives do SSBSs of the NUL hold about the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in their acquisition of academic English?
- (b) What recommendations can be advanced to raise awareness, encourage recognition and adoption of a Sesotho TK-sensitive approach to academic English proficiency of Sesotho-speaking background students at the NUL?

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

These are articulated in the form of the overarching aim and objectives.

1.4.1 Aim of the study

I wanted to gain an understanding of the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of SSBSs of the English-medium NUL.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

In pursuance of the foregoing aim and questions, the investigation set out to:

- ✚ Study literature to theoretically benchmark not only an understanding of traditional knowledge and its role in HE, academic English, areas covered by research on academic English proficiency needs of HE students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, but also the implications of all these for acquisition of academic English by students for whom English as a medium of teaching and learning in HE institutions is a non-mother-tongue language.
- ✚ Narratively reflect on my personal experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need and solicit the same from a snowballed voluntary participant group of NUL graduates who not only entered the institution from Sesotho-speaking-background, but also represent different academic subjects.
- ✚ Subsequently, advance recommendations for awareness, recognition, and adoption of a Sesotho TK-sensitive approach to acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs enrolling into the NUL.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As stated in 1.3 of this chapter, marginalisation of students' local knowledges in English-medium African HE institutions is blamed on their English-mainly character which disdains the role of these in formal education. It is therefore not surprising that

dearth of research on the need for culturally-contextualised understanding of academic English proficiency needs of non-English-speaking-background-students in HE persists despite the fact that English became the medium of instruction from inception of a university in many African countries inclusive of Lesotho. By identifying and interpreting meanings which the participants attached to the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency by NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking-ethno-cultural background, the study has provided essential information and knowledge for transformative professional practice in English Education in this institution.

In addition to revealing the culture-situated conceptualisation of academic English proficiency needs of students at the NUL from the diverse perspectives of myself as the insider-implicated researcher and the researched, the study's value lies in its methodological approach to the research phenomenon. Unlike most studies which have relied mainly on the positivist approaches to understanding the nature of students' academic English proficiency needs, the study contributes to scholarship a variation in the form of what Taylor (2007:5) terms the transformative approach. According to Taylor the approach "provides a methodology for inquiring critically, reflexively and artfully into the relationship between the researcher's own cultural identity[ies] and his/her lived experience as a consumer (i.e., student) and (re)producer (i.e., educator)...".

Qualitative researchers and HE educators such as Berry (2006), Taylor (2007), and Cupane (2007) call this the living theory or critical auto-ethnographic/self-study research as/for transformative professional development respectively. These authors recommend auto-ethnography as an emergent form of research enabling HE educators to examine their professional practice from the insider-implicated perspective. Thus the study provides HE scholarship with knowledge that links academic English proficiency needs of Sesotho-speaking-background students at the NUL and institutions with comparable circumstances.

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

While credibility and integrity must remain uncompromised in academic research, at the same time caution must be taken to ensure that the scope of the study is kept within manageable limits of a doctoral thesis (Maharasoa 2001: 6; Nkoale 2005: 7). For purposes of this research, these confines are the focus of the study, the field of study, the institution type, the geographical context, and the sample.

1.6.1 The study focus

I realised that traditional cultural knowledge is a broad and involved research phenomenon which cannot be compacted into one study. I depicted from literature that research on the phenomenon has focused on topics including its meaning and aspects, need for its protection, its role in HE focusing on educators' culture-sensitive understanding and transformative rearticulation and pedagogical practice in different academic subjects.

The focus of this study was the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of Sesotho-speaking-background students at the NUL. Four reasons justified the focus on academic English proficiency. Academic English is usually referred to as the third language (Zwiers 2007:2) for non-English speaking-background students (NESBS) entering English-medium institutions. Secondly, it is a necessary vehicle for the effective management of tasks in different academic subjects. In this capacity, academic-English imposes need for communicative and linguistic competencies in its various aspects. Thirdly, because of its role as a learning tool, academic English is in some of the English-medium HE contexts, accorded the status of an additional academic subject for all to take and pass. Fourthly, and signifying the present research, is the fact that the NUL is an English-medium academic setting which continues to experience low proficiency in academic English among its students despite offering the course "Communication and Study Skills" aimed at equipping first year students at the

institution with proficiency skills requisite for meeting the demands of their different academic tasks.

1.6.2 Academic English as a field of study in higher education

Many of the African countries which were British colonies and/or protectorates still retain English as a medium of instruction in their HE institutions. Proficiency in the English for constructing and communicating knowledge in different academic contexts remains one of the major conditions for academic success in such institutions. With university-based academic-English as its focus, the study is therefore viewed as an aspect of HE. Authors such as Kolawole (2005:1435) and Mapesela (2004:317) assert that students' cultural knowledge has a role to play in HE and so can be hybridized to coexist with the Western academy. In this light the authors observe that visions and mission statements of HE institutions reflect among others, responsiveness to national, cultural and international needs, commitment to quality research and teaching for enhancement of academic performance of all students, etc. The missions of HE normally embrace:

- ✚ Promotion of national advancement through innovative teaching, research, learning and professional practice; and
- ✚ Lately, recognition, respect and development of cultural competence – which the study becomes an aspect of by seeking an understanding of how knowledge from a particular traditional culture can benefit acquisition of academic English proficiency of students in a particular English-medium African university context.

In this study the foregoing assertion by the cited authors is understood to imply that most, if not all academic offerings in HE institutions should benefit from application of knowledge of and experiences from traditional knowledges of students enrolled therein. Academic English as a vehicle for access to and dissemination of knowledge in English-medium HE institutions is therefore no exception to those aspects of HE which stand to

gain from application of students' traditional knowledge. However, without research to substantiate it the position remains just an assumption.

1.6.3 Institutional delimitation

I understand from literature that knowledge from students' cultural backgrounds is a viable capital for academic success in other HE contexts. However, because I operate in a university setting where I lecture in English Education and have as one of the main aims of my study, improvement of personal professional practice, my research focused on students from an English-medium university – namely the NUL.

1.6.4 The geographical delimitation

The practical context for the study was understood from three angles which complement each other. A wider angle is the country - Lesotho which as a former Protectorate of Great Britain adopted the English-medium educational system. It situates the English-medium NUL – the only university in Lesotho since 1945. Formally called Pius XII College, the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (UBBS), and later the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), the NUL is located in the Roma valley some 35 kilometres from Maseru the capital town of Lesotho. It is therefore, a HE institution in Lesotho – a country of Basotho whose national language, beliefs, values, attitudes, norms and other behaviours and practices are traditionally not print-oriented but communicated from one generation to another verbally by word of mouth, and non-verbally through body-language, artifacts, etc.

Like many African universities in formerly colonised countries, the NUL maintains the English-medium legacy. In my view, such practice renders NUL educationally paradoxical. For instance, on the one hand the institution is in a country which is originally oral in construction and communication of knowledge. On the other hand, the NUL itself is a print-oriented Westnocentric educational setting which has been an

English-medium institution and continues to be so. The institution is therefore, immersed between two cultural contexts. Academic English proficiency needs of students enrolling into this institution should be understood from this background. By investigating the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of SSBSs, the study focused on how the two cultural contexts interface for promotion of acquisition of academic English by students from the Sesotho cultural background.

1.6.5 Participant delimitation

The research focused only on former NUL students from the Sesotho-speaking background as explained earlier in the chapter. Participants were drawn from this type of background because it offers the majority of the student population at the NUL. Moreover, as noted in the concern for the study (*vide* 1.2), these students come from a knowledge-rich ethno- traditional background which remains unexplored for the role it can have in providing solutions to some of the problems they encounter learning through English as a non-mother-tongue language.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

According to Mertens (2005:4), research is one of the different ways of knowing about and understanding how human beings and other things interact with their world. Mertens further asserts that research is "a process of *systematic inquiry*, that is designed to collect, analyse, interpret, and use data to understand, describe, predict, or control an educational or psychological phenomenon or to empower individuals in such contexts". Accomplishment of these therefore, imposes on researchers the need to provide what Mouton (2005:55); Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky (2001:73-77) call clear designs and methodologies. These authors define design as a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends to conduct the investigation. The design can be either qualitative or/and quantitative. Methodology, as understood by the same authors, refers to the research process which involves use of specific methods to address the

objectives/questions/hypotheses of the study. The qualitative design with auto-ethnography as its main method was adopted in this inquiry.

1.7.1 Study design

The study in question adopted a qualitative design which characteristically leads to a naturalistic, interpretive, and emancipatory understanding of meanings which subjects in their own voices give to their daily life experiences and perceived transformative solutions to their problems (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozesky 2001:53; Delpont & Fouche 2005:270; Mertens 2005:17). The design enabled me to source, describe and critically interpret experiential narratives about not only how aspects of Sesotho traditional knowledge can enhance acquisition of academic English HE, but also how findings can improve the learning of and professional practice in academic English at the English-medium NUL.

1.7.2 Methodology

The research process involved use of methodologies normally used in qualitative designs for reflecting on personal life experience and related problem-solutions (Whitehead 1999). Critical auto-ethnography also called reflexive/self-study research method for transformative professional development (Holt 2003; Pillow 2003; Duncan 2004; Taylor 2004, 2007; Muncey 2005; Wall 2006; Berry 2006; Cupane 2007; Trahar 2009) was adopted as one such methodology. Because of its emphasis on use of reflexivity as recognition of the self in relation to cultural context of the researcher and the researched, auto-ethnography engaged the participants in critical/interpretive reflections on events/instances wherein application of knowledge from various aspects of Sesotho traditional culture can benefit accomplishment of the academic English demands of different academic subjects studied at NUL.

1.7.2.1 Choice of participants

One of the main requirements of qualitative designs is selection of a relevant sample. Such a sample is normally small, thus allowing for collection of richest data and use of non-probability, criterion, purposive sampling rather than probability and random sampling approaches (Nieuwenhuis 2007; Creswell 2009; Leedy & Omrod 2010). The sample should also meet the criteria of:

- ✦ Volunteer sample for accelerated data-collection process (Strydom & Delpont 2004:336);
- ✦ Experience and knowledge/insights into the topic, problem and research question (Maree 2007:9; Nieuwenhuis 2007:79-80; Creswell 2009:178; Leedy & Omrod 2010:147);
- ✦ Experiencing a particular learning barrier (Nieuwenhuis 2007:79) – for example, problems with academic English in the case of my inquiry;
- ✦ Inclusion of the researcher as insider-implicated (Coia & Taylor 2009).

Accordingly, in this investigation, a small number of volunteer participants comprised of my self as the insider-implicated researcher and 12 others. All of us were former students of the NUL. We were a curriculum-wide group representing the subjects: Accounting, Counselling psychology, Development Studies, Economics, English Language, Geography, History, Literature in English, Religious Education, Physics, and Public Administration. We formed a critical-case and key informant-group sharing a cultural background and English-medium HE and so were better positioned to have perspectives about the role of our ethno-cultural background and its knowledge aspects in acquisition of academic English proficiency.

Choice of a volunteer participant group was adopted because unlike other forms of sampling, it engaged persons who were more likely "to facilitate the task of the researcher and thus accelerate the process..." (Strydom & Delpont 2004:336). The

participant group was cautiously selected to ensure exclusion of volunteers likely to bring hidden agendas into the study (Strydom & Delpont 2004:334). To this end, I held meetings with each one of the volunteers to check their motives; personal experiences and paid attention to these for their relevance to objectives of the study.

1.7.2.2 Data collection techniques and procedure

Data collection in this investigation was premised on understandings of the personal-experience narrative inquiry/ self-study method. Clandinin & Connelly (2004:575-576) conceive of the method as a multidimensional interpretive probing of personal experience in relation to time, location, as well as personal and social interaction. More clearly, Kitchen (2009:35) defines the approach as the study of personal experience in story form, or a study of how people utilize storytelling to understand personal and others' experience. I wanted to interpretively peer into my own and others' personal academic experiences for the extent to which application of knowledge from a Sesotho cultural background benefited acquisition of academic English at the English-medium NUL. In sum, I sought a personal-experience understanding of the role of ethno-Sesotho knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency in HE. In qualitative research designs such an approach to knowledge construction is referred to as auto-ethnographic (Muncey 2005; Trahar 2009). Use of documentary sources, face-to-face reflective/reflexive narrative interviews and visual material in the form of photographs approaches was adopted from other auto-ethnographic researchers such as Muncey (2005), Kitchen (2009) and Whitehead (2009; 2011).

(a) *Documentary material*

Ethnographic researchers differentiate between secondary and primary documentary material. The former is original source material; while the latter are previously published material (Nieuwenhis 2007:83). Secondary documentary sources were from the literature study; while primary ones were course descriptions and outlines together

with end-of course examination question papers of the subjects on which participants' experiential narratives were based.

(b) *Face-to-face personal experience narratives*

Conversational face-to-face audio-tape-recorded personal experience narrative of a critical/interpretive and reflexive/reflective nature characterise auto-ethnographic inquiries. They involve interrogating participants' personal experience stories "for interpretive perceptions of, and nuances" (Angrosino 2007:43). In my inquiry, the narratives focused on subtle and obvious positive effects of application of knowledge from Sesotho ethno-cultural background in solution of problems militating against acquisition of academic English by SSBSs studying at the NUL.

In probing for narration of personal experiences with the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English, participants were given freedom to use various forms of verbal and non-verbal modes of expression. I adopted Jousse's (2000) oral style theory in which a distinction is made between the laryngo-buccal (verbal/voice) and corporeal-manual (body language) forms of expression of knowledge. This theory enabled me to understand how the different forms of expression of knowledge by traditionally oral societies such as Basotho benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English from.

Use of personal-experience narrative as an inquiry tool in this study enabled participants to claim what Taylor (2007) calls authority status of the researcher. The status served as the primary basis for information on how knowledge from oral traditional Sesotho as a lived reality for students from such a background, can support acquisition of academic English proficiency.

Use of auto-ethnography as a narrative approach therefore, led to discovery and interpretation of the meanings that we as the participants based on our lived experiences, attached to the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of

academic English proficiency in HE. The study, as indicated earlier, is grounded in the critical hermeneutic theory (Mertens 2005) which advocates need for HE educators and researchers to interpret/understand own values and those of others forming their societies; as well as the extent to which the totality of the interpretations promotes one's freedom as a learner and practitioner.

(c) Visual material

Muncey (2005:2) argues that auto-ethnographic narratives by nature require use of writing [telling] tactics that collectively "form a tapestry of memory". In the case of her own auto-ethnography, the author's story is shared with the academic world through use of snapshots, artefacts, metaphor, and journey as chosen techniques. Sadly I could not convince my participants to buy into being either video recorded or photographed. Understandably, such a methodological need was met only by me. Thus some of the narratives making data in the inquiry have been augmented at strategic places with photographs.

1.8 ANALYSIS

Analysis aimed at unpacking aspects of personal-experience narratives for the manifold realities and new insights into how participants' lived ethno-Sesotho knowledge informed [re]construction of knowledge (Nieuwenhuis 2007; Coia & Taylor 2009) of and acquired through the English medium at the NUL. To this end, what I call a **meaning-making process** was embarked on. The process involved subjecting participants' interpretive perspectives to classification and reclassification for thematisation (Hoepfl 1997; Delport & Fouche 2005). It focused on how participants analysed their experience-informed [pre-existing and newly acquired] perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, feelings, understandings in an attempt to [re]construct knowledge (Nieuwenhuis 2007:99) about the extent to which Sesotho traditional knowledge can be perceived to be positively factorial in acquisition of academic English proficiency. Thematisation was

for purposes of reducing participants' interpretations to what Delport & Fouche (2005:270) call "the central meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences".

It was important for me to gain deeper meanings of the participants' interpretations of personal experiences with the interface between academic English and their Sesotho traditional knowledge. Nieuwenhuis (2007:117) says these are normally concealed in "nuances of a transcript" and so, impose on the researcher, the need to engage in manual analysis as this enables direct interaction with raw data. However, I noted as per documented advice from Nieuwenhuis (2007:115-116) that the processes of coding and recoding, recording of memos and ideas, production of report versions sorted out by code, category/cluster as well as management of direct codes from raw data, are a cumbersome and daunting task. In such cases, Nieuwenhuis recommends use of electronic software packages for managing qualitative data. I therefore, adopted the recommendation and used Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis (QDA) software because of its ability to address all the functions I needed to perform in my analysis.

1.9 QUALITY STANDARDS FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

Qualitative designs, particularly those using auto-ethnography, are often criticised for, among other limitations, subjectivity of findings (Muncey 2005; Cupane 2007; Trahar 2009). To convince the readership that the convergent (Lincoln & Guba 1985) and differing (Cupane 2007) findings from different sources are legitimate, the following quality standards were relevant to, and worthy of being met in the inquiry.

1.9.1 Crystallisation

With constructivism as its theoretical basis, crystallisation is about two assumptions regarding knowledge formation. One is to do with dynamism and therefore emergent nature of knowledge/reality. Another is about life as composed of different perspectives

– each unique to the holder, thus pointing to need for recognition of multiple truths in people's interpretations of their life (Richardson 2000:394; Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:963; Nieuwenhuis 2007:81). For this investigation this understanding meant recognition of not only convergent findings across stories, but also uniqueness of individual experiential accounts of personal truths regarding the role of Sesotho culture in academic English proficiency of SSBSs of the NUL.

1.9.2 Substantive-contribution and verisimilitude

This judgement standard refers to usefulness of the qualitative study. It addresses the question of how the researcher's writing convinces the readership to see value of the lived experiences of the researched in relation to the research phenomenon. Duncan (2004:4) conceives of it as instrumental validity. I conceived of the substantive contribution of my research to scholarship first in terms of its (the inquiry) source. The investigation was for instance, motivated by my pre-research personal philosophy. This personal philosophy was probed into research by study of documented scholarship which led to adoption of three perspectives characterising qualitative research designs which like this one of mine, are aimed at improvement of life-worlds. One was the perspective of a qualitative researcher as initially driven into research by certain experience-informed personal values/stances/philosophies about how human beings should live their lives with others (Creswell 1998, cited in Delport & Fouche 2005:264; Whitehead & McNiff 2006:85-92). Second was the auto-ethnographic perspective that the researcher and the researched are authorities granted freedom by personal experience to critically engage in interpretive reflection on phenomena and their implications for improvement of life-worlds (Bochner 2002:91; Ellis 2004:71; Wall 2006:10). Third was the perspective that a culture-sensitive research approach is necessary for understanding the nature of academic needs of African students enrolling in western-oriented HE institutions (Taylor 2007; Cupane 2007; Afonso & Taylor 2009). For this investigation therefore, the challenge was the extent to which I persuaded the readership to appreciate and understand the experiential socio-cultural and academic

reality in which NUL students and lecturers from a Sesotho-speaking cultural background must acquire and ensure acquisition of the English for academic achievement. To safeguard profitability of my inquiry I specifically reviewed documented scholarship on traditional/indigenous knowledge systems; the role of traditional/indigenous knowledge in HE; as well as on academic English proficiency needs of non-English-speaking-background students in English-medium HE institutions. My aim was to establish and document perspectives about academic English as a barrier to academic achievement of HE students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, but focusing on the extent to which ethno-cultural knowledge was an academic English proficiency need for such students. However, this aim had to be pursued in recognition of specific usefulness of the research in the ultimate. Eisner (1991:58) proposes three types of usefulness of qualitative studies. This author posits that such studies should help readers to:

- ✚ Understand an otherwise bewildering situation;
- ✚ Anticipate future possibilities and scenarios for improved practice;
- ✚ Realise aspects of a situation that might otherwise go unnoticed. I explain below how Eisner's three types of usefulness apply to my investigation.

(a) The NUL as a bewildering academic English proficiency situation

To me the NUL as an English-medium academic institution located in Lesotho, and therefore, enrolling in the main, students from a Sesotho -speaking background, is by virtue of this character, a bewildering or culture-shocking situation to many of its entrants. As such the institution, and others of its type, challenge HE research to help scholarship understand and appreciate teaching and learning needs of its lecturers and students from not only secondary-cultural but initially primary/ethno-socio-cultural perspectives of both the researchers and students directly affected by such a scenario.

(b) Anticipation of scenarios for improved practice

By soliciting and documenting personal-experience perspectives of SSBSs of the NUL and interpreting them for their pedagogical implications, I enabled the readership to envision possibility of improved pedagogical practice. This way, the study addressed the second type of usefulness as understood from Eisner in the preceding paragraph.

(c) The interface between Sesotho traditional knowledge and academic English for Basotho students at NUL as a situation that might go unnoticed

Documented literature on the role of traditional knowledges in research, teaching, and learning in HE, points to general marginalisation of African indigenous knowledge systems. The situation is regrettable considering research-evidenced observations which point to how application of ethno-cultural knowledge in teaching academic subjects such as mathematics (Nyaumwe 2006; Luitel & Taylor 2006), music (Joseph 2005), computer education (Dalvit, Murray & Terzoli 2007) and psychology (Bakker 2007), to name but a few, positively impacts on the academic success of students.

I however, note from literature that academic English is one of those offerings that have not yet been explored for the extent to which they can benefit from application of students' ethno-cultural knowledge in teaching and learning in HE. It was on this basis that I regarded the interface between Sesotho traditional knowledge and academic English in the English-medium NUL as a situation that might go unnoticed if not researched into from the perspectives of those most directly affected by the scenario. To ensure the extent of formality and reality (verisimilitude) of the study findings, I not only member-checked the findings, but also chose and used the English language that convincingly depicted experience-grounded interpretations of how various aspects of Sesotho traditional knowledge supported/can support academic English proficiency of SSBSs.

1.9.3 Ironic-validity

Cupane (2007:30) posits that this judgement standard is ensured through inclusion of even disconfirming evidence in the stories about the research phenomenon. According to Cupane, such inclusion is premised on the reasoning that the totality of confirming and disconfirming findings contributes a multi-perspective, strengthens the research and dynamically transforms pedagogical practice. To satisfy this trustworthy standard, I probed and interpreted participants' personal-experience stories for perspectives about the positive and negative impacts of application of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English. I based this procedure on my experience-informed beliefs. One is that application of ethno-cultural knowledge in solving problems related to academic English of students from a Sesotho-speaking-background is relative; while the other is that misappropriated application of ethno-knowledge leads to discovery of instances/events in which academic English proficiency may not benefit from ethno-cultural background. To me the totality of all this is [re]construction of knowledge in the form of provision of evidence confirming and contradicting the positive relationship between Sesotho traditional knowledge and English-medium knowledge at the NUL.

1.9.4 Aesthetic-merit

The standard necessitates need for answers to the following questions as articulated by Richardson & St. Pierre (2005:965), and Cupane (2007:58-62).

- ✚ Does the study succeed aesthetically?
- ✚ Do its creative analytical practices challenge readership to respond interpretively?
- ✚ Does it recognise factors of multiple interpretations?
- ✚ Does it show how cultural values, beliefs, etc. help the readership to understand and deal with the anxieties and implications of living in perceived to be conflicting even when they may not necessarily be?
- ✚ Is the thesis artistically shaped and intellectually appealing?

For answers to these questions, I engaged in the process of

- ✚ Probing participants' personal-experience narratives for among others, anxieties caused by contradiction of Sesotho cultural beliefs, values, and other sources and forms of ethno-cultural knowledge for their contribution to acquisition of academic English at the English-medium NUL.
- ✚ Deducing from the stories, themes and theories pointed to/implied by interpretive perspectives about the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English of SSBSs.
- ✚ Probing for and documented multiple interpretations of the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English of SSBSs at the NUL.
- ✚ Following the UFS procedure for producing an intellectually and visually appealing, and acceptable thesis.
- ✚ Observing ethical sensitivity by assuring participants' consent and anonymity.

1.9.5 Critical-reflexivity

The standard is also referred to as critical thinking (Cupane 2007:62). It addresses the question of the extent to which the researcher provides self-awareness and exposure/disclosure adequately enough for the readership to "make judgements about his/her point of view" (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:394; Cupane 2007:62). Maintenance of the standard is substantiated not only through demonstration of how the researcher and the researched confessionally reflect to recognise the self (Pillow 2003:175), but also through interrogation of narratives for a culture-sensitive construction of the meaning and responsive action-related implications of the research phenomenon (Cupane 2007:62). To satisfy the standard I

- ✚ Probed, vividly described, and interpreted stories of lived experiences for factors and processes which led to participants' construction of personal philosophies

about the extent to which Sesotho traditional knowledge is an academic proficiency need for NUL SSBSs.

- ✦ Contextualised participants' narratives by probing and interpreting them for types of instances/events in which application of knowledge from specific aspects of Sesotho culture benefited their academic English.
- ✦ Pursued transformed professional development (Taylor 2004; 2007) by probing participants' interpretations of lived personal-experience stories for [re]construction of meanings on which improved pedagogical practice for acquisition of academic English proficiency at NUL can be benchmarked.
- ✦ Pursued the issue of emotional (Afonso 2010) personal disclosure/exposure further by probing, and interpreting participants' narratives for anxieties, and related personal feelings resulting from having to meet the academic demands of their educational and professional careers through English as a non-mother-tongue medium.

1.9.6 Pedagogical-thoughtfulness

While Cupane (2007:63) terms this quality standard pedagogical-thoughtfulness; Richardson & St. Pierre (2005:964) call it impact. According to these authors, the standard is action-oriented - forcing the researcher to ask him/herself how his/her research is provoking the readers to take action that will improve professional practice in their own educational contexts (*vide* 5.7.6 for specific action-oriented questions). I regard myself the insider-implicated researcher in this inquiry, as having been provoked by amassed literature on auto-ethnographic research and action-research practice to take action in my own educational context—namely, NUL. Specifically, six of the many realisations from the literature have been most provocative on my part. These are that critical auto-ethnographic/self-study research is characteristically culture-sensitive, intellectually and emotionally challenging, transcendent or transformative of professional/pedagogical practice, grounded on vividness and accuracy of language

depicting need for improved pedagogical practice, accommodative of the researcher as participant, and focused on the perspectives of the researched- particularly to those rendered vulnerable by various barrier- factors to their learning (Nieuwenhuis 2007:80).

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, I in turn satisfied pedagogical thoughtfulness by making and subjecting to appropriate use, linguistic choices that will be so emotionally, and intellectually compelling to the readership that they in turn will hopefully feel the need to act accordingly in their own educational situations (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:964; Taylor & Settlemaier 2003, cited by Cupane 2007:63). Specifically, I used the English language in a manner that will provoke readers to subsequently take responsive action in their own educational contexts.

1.9.7 Vulnerability

This judgement standard is satisfied through genuine self-exposure/disclosure by the insider-implicated researcher and the researched. It calls for interrogation of participants' personal experience narratives for reflections on how personal/cultural values, beliefs, emotions, etc. were either contradicted or satisfied. The vulnerability quality standard also requires self-exposure in terms of anxieties, uncertainties, embarrassing, and self-esteem-building and threatening encounters with the research phenomenon (Cupane 2007:63-64). In this inquiry, the standard was ensured through documentation of probes for, interpretation, and documentation of incidences where Sesotho beliefs, values which might have benefited academic English were either counteracted and/or fulfilled. Feelings resulting from such encounters were similarly probed for.

The research is emancipative; seeking an understanding of perspectives about academic English proficiency needs more from the ethno-cultural social reality of the Sesotho-speaking-background NUL students and lecturers than from standards determined by westnocentric hegemonic forces which downplay the role of local

indigenous cultures. The study, its design and methodology were grounded on five theories/perspectives. These were the Africanisation, *ubuntu*, the critical hermeneutic, the living, and critical self-study as/or transformative professional development theories.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The key terms which may carry different meanings to different people in different contexts are provided below with their specific meanings in the context of this study.

1.10.1 Oral traditional knowledge

It is locally indigenous, tacit, experiential, repetitive knowledge that is embodied in values, beliefs, assumptions, behaviours and practices of a cultural group or society, but retrieved from memory and transmitted from one generation to another orally (not through print), and demonstratively through culinary and performing arts (Higgs, Higgs, & Venter 2003:41; Dondolo 2005:112, 116). Thus, though some authors advocate the need to distinguish between traditional and indigenous knowledge, in this investigation both terms were used interchangeably.

1.10.2 Orate knowledge

This refers to knowledge that develops naturally as a result of normal and natural maturation and is conceptualised and recorded in memory and expressed in performance without scribal alphabetic writing (Conolly 2002:156; Sienaert 1990:92).

1.10.3 Sesotho-speaking background students

Also referred to as SSBSs in this thesis, such are students whose identity in the form of their mother-tongue or first language, cultural beliefs, values, assumptions, attitudes, behaviours and practices originates and is nurtured from the Sesotho cultural background.

1.10.4 Academic language

The term refers to language forming the discourse of professional and academic disciplines in formal education which HE is.

1.10.5 Academic language proficiency (ALP)

ALP is competence in the linguistic, cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of the language of academia.

1.10.6 Academic English (AE)

It is context-specific English for general and subject specific purposes in professional and formal education contexts such as HE. It has linguistic, cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions, all of which call for application of higher-order-thinking skills. Chapter 4 of this thesis is devoted to this concept.

1.10.7 Academic English proficiency (AEP)

It is context-bounded, multi-skill and functional knowledge of all dimensions of academic English for fulfilling purposes of internalisation, construction, and communication of knowledge.

1.10.8 Insider-implicated researcher

This refers to researchers who assume the role of a participant in their own research in pursuance of an understanding of their perceptions of themselves in relation to how those whom they are studying perceive themselves and their lived experiences in the same setting. In this query I assumed this status to understand my personal experiential perception of the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency in relation to those held by my fellow former NUL students who enrolled into the English-medium institution from a Sesotho-speaking background.

1.10.9 Pedagogical thoughtfulness

Also referred to as impact (Richardson & St. Pierre (2005:964), pedagogical thoughtfulness is about how findings from an inquiry must be emotionally and intellectually involving so that they can provoke those who read the inquiry to take action that is meant to improve personal practice in their own professional contexts (*vide* 5.8.5).

1.10.10 Ubuntu

Ubuntu is a Zulu and Xhosa word for humaneness. Its equivalent in Sesotho is *botho*. As a philosophy, an ethic or an ordinary term, it refers to an African understanding for caring and maintaining harmonious allegiance and creation with each other or all creation. It is about promotion of humaneness (*vide* 5.2.2.2). In this study I adopted the concept to argue that it is *ubuntu /botho* (humaneness) for education-practitioners in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL to be so concerned about academic English proficiency needs of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds that they should find it professionally proper to base their research and teaching on this ethic/philosophy.

1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study was organised into seven (7) chapters. Below is the outline of the chapters.

Chapter 1 introduced the investigation by providing the rationale, the research concern, the research questions and objectives. The chapter also spotlights the research design and methodology, significance and scope of the study.

Chapter 2 grounded Sesotho traditional knowledge in general understandings of traditional knowledge. The oral nature of Sesotho traditional knowledge necessitated adoption of the oral-style theory (Jousse 2000). Because the oral aspect of traditional knowledge is part of traditional knowledge (TK) which is claimed to have a role in HE, The chapter amassed the literature on different aspects of traditional knowledge and derived their implications for acquisition of academic English. The reviewed literature formed a framework for understanding Sesotho traditional knowledge and its role in acquisition of academic English by NUL Sesotho-speaking background students (SSBSs).

Chapter 3 addressed the question on the role of traditional knowledge in HE. To this end, the chapter amassed literature for not only the general and theory-grounded perspectives about the place of TK in teaching and learning in HE, but also the implications of such for Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English by SSBSs in English-medium university settings such as the NUL.

Chapter 4 situated academic English in theoretical context through a review of scholarship on academic language. It involved a critique of definitions and notions of academic English, the conceptual framework for understanding academic English, as well as HE research for the extent to which all address the role of ethno-cultural knowledges in academic English.

Chapter 5 identified and justified adoption of the qualitative research design with its justification for choice of participants, data collection procedures and data analysis

techniques adopted in the study. It also featured a study of the literature for theoretical perspectives on auto-ethnographic studies. In this chapter I developed what I call a multi-theory web-like approach to understanding the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of SSBSs enrolling into the NUL (*vide* Figure 5.1). The chapter therefore includes a review of scholarship on the five theories underpinning the study methodological choices. The theories are the Africanisation, the hermeneutic, the living, the critical self-study/ research for transformative professional development, and the *ubuntu* perspective. The chapter explains how the quality standards for trustworthiness of the findings were satisfied.

Chapter 6 presents the results of an autographic investigation in which reflexive personal-experience narratives, documented literature and other documentary sources formed the data. Analysis of narratives revealed multiple truths about the place of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English by SSBSs of the NUL. The discussion of the findings was augmented with reference to existing scholarship, and where possible, substantiated with responses from participants. Chapter 6 winds to closure with a metaphorical synthesis Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs of the English-medium NUL.

In Chapter 7 main findings from the literature (*vide* chapters 2-4) and the empirical investigation (*vide* Chapter 6) form the basis for conclusions from the study. The chapter culminates in recommendations on need for awareness, and pedagogical recognition of Sesotho TK as a curriculum wide need in academic English proficiency of SSBSs.

1.12 CONCLUSION

Through the rationale, research concern, research questions and significance as some of the aspects of Chapter 1, the researcher argued for the need to investigate the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English for acquisition of academic

knowledge by SSBSs at the NUL. The research design and methodology for the investigation have been outlined and rationalised. Chapter 1 includes operationalisation of key terms in the study and explains how the entire thesis was organised. The next chapter is the first of the literature review chapters of this inquiry. It focuses on, definitions, notions and theoretical underpinnings of traditional knowledge.

CHAPTER



NOTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

How does man, in oral society, in the absence of writing [and] placed at the heart of all the immeasurable actions of the universe manage to conserve the memory of these actions within him and to transmit this memory faithfully to his descendents, from generation to generation? (Jousse 2000:30).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the orientation of the study was provided. The chapter therefore featured the rationale, the problem statement, research questions, significance of the study, demarcation of the study, the study design and methodology, analysis, and how selected quality standards were to be followed to ensure trustworthiness of the findings of the inquiry.

This chapter addresses the first theoretical subsidiary question of the study (*vide* 1.3). It is mainly conceptual in that it amasses the literature for notions and definitions of traditional knowledge. Developing the chapter involved situating the aspects of the study-title in theoretical context. To this end, documented scholarship was studied for theoretical underpinnings of oral traditional knowledge; what Sesotho traditional knowledge entails and the implications of such knowledge for acquisition of academic English by HE students from non-English-teaching backgrounds such as the Sesotho traditional knowledge context in Lesotho.

The chapter features three main sections besides the introduction. One is the section on traditional knowledge. In this section traditional knowledge is unpacked for what it entails and its implications for the inquiry. Another main section of the chapter reviews literature on Sesotho traditional knowledge and relates notions thereof to understandings about traditional knowledge. In the third section notions about knowledge internalisation and expression as depicted in Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory are adopted as a theoretical basis for understanding and investigating Sesotho traditional knowledge as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs students studying at the NUL.

2.2 TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE (TK)

Conceptualisation of TK implies the need to first understand what is entailed in its components – namely, "tradition" and "knowledge". The terms are addressed in sub-sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 below; while sub-section 2.2.3 addresses TK as a construct. Summative perspectives derived from the review of literature on the terms are the subject of sub-section 2.2.4.

2.2.1 Tradition

"Tradition" is a term used to refer to long-term practices and beliefs of groups of people. Drout (2006:271) conceives of tradition as "an unbroken train of identical non-instinctual behaviours that have been repeated after the same recurring antecedent conditions". Drout also conceptualises the construct in memetic terms in which a meme is "the simplest unit of cultural replication" (Drout 2006:269). Drout bases this on Feller's (1957:338-96, cited by Drout 2006:269) argument that the extent to which traditions can be sustained is dependent upon a series of successful enactments of behaviours in question. According to Drout, traditions are defined retrospectively in that while subsequent enactments of the first behaviour make a tradition of a cultural group,

the execution of the first behaviour serves as the origin of this tradition not the tradition itself. In this study Drout's position is understood to imply that issues and practices which social groups in particular cultural contexts adopt and conform to as their traditions, are essentially combinations of repetitively occurring behaviours or memes. If we go by Drout, tradition can be said to be cumulative and past-oriented and somewhat non-static in nature.

If tradition is so dependent on the past for its formation, then the question would be how it interfaces with the present order and its implications for making meaning of challenges therein. Is it for instance, resistant or responsive to knowledge construction demands of the present? In this inquiry academic English proficiency is perceived to be a tradition of the present order which is an African English-medium university setting - namely, the NUL. If as asserted by Drout tradition is dependent on the past for its concreteness should it be an understanding that Sesotho traditions would not therefore, be flexible enough to be of benefit to and/or gain from its interface with academic English as a new tradition? This was the focus of the present inquiry which adopts a dynamic perception of tradition as highlighted in sub-section 2.2.1.1 below.

2.2.1.1 Tradition as dynamic

Cancel (2004:316) is opposed to perception of tradition in retrospective repetitive behaviours. The author criticises the perception for implying that practices which are "located in the past have persisted over time, are somehow fixed in the social memory, and at times outlasting their practical relevance into the present". Cancel's contradiction of this notion seems to be an argument that traditions in societies are the result of ongoing creation/recreation and transformation. The essence of Cancel's postulation is that cultural traditions are cumulative, dynamic and so cannot be confined to the past without exploring them for how they synchronise with new challenges for construction of knowledge in new situations.

Cancel's notion of tradition as flexible is in line with that held by Peek & Yankah (2004: xi) who warn that the notion of tradition should not be confined to "an uncritical adherence to ancient cultural ways". The authors refer to current scholarship which appreciates that all cultural groups are in reality, guided by traditions that may have ancient and recent origins. About contemporary Africa in particular, the authors posit that the term tradition "need no longer depend exclusively on oral transmission but may be carried out through all media" because of its dynamism (Peek & Yankah 2004: x).

It also emerged from the literature that "tradition" in its non-print and print forms comprises a complex body of knowledge. Note was taken from the literature that initially, all cultural knowledges are non-scribal. This necessitated interrogation of scholarship for not only what non-print tradition entails, but also for its implications for knowledge construction in the literate modern education cultural context. The next subsection addresses this aspect.

2.2.1.2 Tradition and the orality-literacy debate

I am aware of the debate on the terms "*oral*" and "*orality*" in the literature on African traditions and traditional knowledge. The essence of the debate is a discussion of the terms in contrast with the term *literacy*. Cancel (2004:316) for instance, perceives the term "*oral*" in non-literacy terms. The term is associated with spoken or sung word. It is "the verbalisation of sound in general," as well as reception of the sounds without use of a writing system. "*Oral*" according to Cancel, involves among others, singing, telling stories and engaging in play/drama. Holding the same view, but using the term "*orality*" instead, is Dondolo (2005:111) who perceives it as inclusive of "oral traditions, storytelling, language, literature, mythology, and oral history."

Other authors inject a slight expansion to the meaning of orality. Ong (1996:11) for instance, differentiates between primary and secondary orality. According to this author, primary orality applies to those cultures that are totally "untouched by

knowledge of writing or print"; while secondary orality styles are those cultures that are already familiar with writing and print as well as electronic devices such as telephones, radio, television, and others in knowledge acquisition and transmission. Orality therefore, is thought of as verbal expression in cultural groups where the technologies of literacy are unfamiliar to most of the membership of the cultural group.

The distinction drawn by Ong between primary and secondary orality seems to have relevance to the study. I noted that primary *orality* is synonymous with *oral* in meaning. It was on the basis of this similarity in meaning that I perceived pre-university knowledge with which SSBSs enrol into the NUL as knowledge acquired fundamentally from primary orality. By this I do not condone the knowledge which they have acquired from exposure to secondary/literacy-oriented literacy during their twelve years of primary and secondary education. The focus of the study was not on print or non-print-orientedness of knowledge, but on how knowledge in its ethno-cultural nature can benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English of students from non-English-speaking ethno-backgrounds. Focus on the debate around issues of orality and literacy would be another study and for that matter a conceptual one which my inquiry is not.

Secondary orality too was deemed relevant to the inquiry. It points to need for the researcher to be cognisant of the fact that as graduates from an English-medium high school system, NUL SSBSs enter university already touched by functional knowledge of writing/print and to some extent, electronic devices. These devices, I assumed, have potential to facilitate such students' internalisation and transmission of not only university-based knowledge, but even utilisation of knowledge acquired via primary orality to understand that knowledge which might be accessed via secondary orality. Thus, the terms primary orality and secondary orality could point to a complementary relationship between orally acquired and literacy-oriented knowledge. However, I felt that confining perception of tradition to primary orality might give wrong impressions – namely that

- ↓ Knowledge can only be acquired and transmitted via mouth and face only.
- ↓ Oral and print-oriented modes of knowledge acquisition and transmission are perceived as polarised, yet this may not be the case if I go by proponents of *oralateness of tradition* (Sienaert 2006; Conolly *et al* 2009), the concept which I adopted as more comprehensive about non-print traditions as aspects of tradition.

This inquiry, it must be emphasised, focused on the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English. If the focus was solely on the role of **oral** traditional knowledge in academic English, I would pursue the oral/orality debate further. The one highlight I have taken from this debate on notions of primary and secondary orality is that while traditions have for a long time been predominantly non-scribal, modern technological developments have rendered them print-oriented as well. It became necessary in this inquiry to reflect on primary and secondary orality as part of the oral/orality debate. I had a hunch as do many qualitative researchers using auto-ethnographic methods, that these aspects of the debate might possibly form a documented scholarship/ theoretical benchmark for some findings on the manner in which Sesotho traditional knowledge can benefit academic English proficiency of SSBSs of the NUL. Therefore, oralateness of tradition adopted in the inquiry as a more comprehensive perception of non-scribal tradition is discussed below.

2.2.1.3 Oralateness of tradition

(a) *Oral vs orate*

Some authors such as Sienaert (1990; 2006) and Conolly, *et al* (2009) question the capacity of the term *oral* in tradition. Sienaert (1990:96; 2006:6) for instance, regards the term as a misnomer in that it confines expression of knowledge to use of only the face or mouth, yet expression in its completeness involves the full-body. In the same vein, Conolly *et al* (2009:100) observe the pristineness in the capacity of human beings

to express themselves through the whole body. Jousse (2000:61-62, cited in Conolly *et al.* 2009:100) identifies it as the human capacity to express themselves primarily and primordially through their whole body and hands.

The scope of the term *oral*, extends beyond the whole-body and voice modes (Conolly *et al.* 2009:100). Conolly *et al.* (2009) argue that human expression extends far beyond merely what is 'oral'. They adopt Jousse's (2000) notion of knowledge expression as also inclusive of human beings' capacity to spontaneously and creatively use skills and tools to give expression of knowledge a visible character. The multiple forms include "carvings, sculpting, weavings constructions, beadwork, clothing, paintings, etc." Although not necessarily using the term *orale*, Dondolo (2005:111) in the discussion of production of indigenous knowledge in various aspects of social life classifies these as "specific skills related to the material aspects of culture".

Taken in sum, the perspective cited above spells the need for adoption of a term that is embrative of all the noted aspects of human expression. The term is "oralateness" (Conolly 2001, cited by Conolly *et al.* 2009; Sienaert 2006). Sienaert (2006:6) says oralateness comes about as a result of primordial spontaneous people's close interaction with, and adjustment to the real cosmos that confronts them. Sienaert views orale people as orales. Conolly *et al.* (2009:99) conceive of oralateness in terms that distinguish it from print-oriented human capacity for expression of knowledge. The authors identify the term as

"...a bio-psychological human capacity which enables the record and expression of human knowledge *without* scribal alphabetic writing, namely, *that which records in memory and expresses out of memory*...a bio-psychological anthropological capacity that develops naturally as a consequence of normal and natural maturation".

These authors thus, distinguish between expression without and with scribal alphabetic writing to differentiate between 'oralateness and literateness'. They argue that oralateness should, and can be positively identified independently and on its own terms.

They recommend need for recognition of the interdependence between orality and literacy in facilitation of acquisition of formal education. But there is a concern regarding attitudes towards orality. Conolly *et al* (2009) are concerned that orality is perceived with derogatory attitudes which are embedded in terms such as illiteracy or non-literacy in the print-oriented cultural context, instead of being conceived of in its own terms. The concern is best captured in the following:

Given that we are told that complex and sophisticated thought is impossible without scribal alphabetic writing, how do we account for evidence of the contrary? How do we bring the oral tradition of indigenous knowledge into formal education on its own terms?" (Conolly *et al.* 2009:97-98).

The cited authors' discomfort results from among others, a generally demeaning attitude towards non-print-oriented knowledge and its expression. The authors note with apprehension the fact that "literacy which is the human capacity to record knowledge and expression with scribal alphabetic writing" is often associated with knowledge and the conclusion that "because people cannot read and write, they are ignorant and know nothing and therefore do not exist... If it is not written down it does not exist and therefore does not count as knowledge" (Conolly *et al.* 2009:100). A study of the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of students at the NUL has generated knowledge pointing to the contrary (*vide chapter 6*).

(b) Rationale for adoption of the term "orality"

Conolly *et al.* (2009:98-100) as some of the movers for adoption of the term orality justify its use on among others, the following grounds:

- ✚ Orality predates literate capacity by an unknown and uncountable period of time while literate scribal capacity is taught and trained for by a small percentage of human beings. Therefore,

- ↓ "All human beings are initially oralate and capable of being literate, though to varying degrees depending on a variety of genetic and environmental factors". This means,
- ↓ Need for awareness of the fact that oralate and literate knowledges interface.
- ↓ Awareness of this interface enhances insightful sensibility "to the kind of knowledge that people engaged in the act of learning deal with, whether it is their own or that of others.

It is on the basis of these perceptions of oralateness that the authors recommend need for recognition of its educational value as follows:

- ↓ Self-study research which mine is, should be based on, and lead to awareness of the interface interconnection between oralate and literate knowledges, for the awareness allows us to "level the playing fields" (Sienaert 2006:8) "so that we give equal dignity and recognition to both, and deal with each on its own terms in the interest of integrity" (Conolly *et al.* 2009:101).
- ↓ Members of literate cultures should embrace oralateness in the form of knowledge expression devices and styles of oral societies, for by sidelining them, they run the risk of self-inflicted educational inadequacy which is a consequence of self-alienation from exposure to a wealth of pre-existent knowledge embedded in the oralateness of oralate societies]. In Sienaert's (1990:98) articulation:

"By ignoring the mnemonic faculties and mnemotechnical devices of oral society and oral style, cultures of the written word are depriving themselves, indeed to the point of mutilation of what is one of their constituent parts and which therefore holds extremely powerful educational potential"

- ↓ Oralates too have to learn that they are knowledgeable and so have to dignify their pre-existent knowledge. Sienaert (1990:98) attributes oralates' failure to see their own tradition "as knowledge and as culture" to their self-colonising attitudes and aspiration to "become what others expect of them".

2.2.2 Knowledge

In this inquiry "knowledge" is conceptualised in general and ethno-culture-oriented terms.

2.2.2.1 Knowledge in general terms

According to the *Macmillan Dictionary* (2006:791) knowledge is "what someone or people know about a particular subject; or what is known about different things or about life generally". Landau and Bogus (1977:377) perceive knowledge as inclusive of words such as *scholarship, experience, learning, familiarity, facts, information, data, ability, capacity, judgement, wisdom, understanding, insight, awareness, consciousness, cognisance, intelligence, perceptions, etc.*

Khamaganova (2005:1) asserts that *knowledge* is [the ability to understand -] a high degree of processing information, rather than simply stacks and stacks of data and facts". The conception implicit in Landau and Bogus (1977) and Khamaganova (2005) suggests that knowledge is not disjunctive, but about ability to understand, and transfer for relevant and effective application. It is a synthesis of one's understanding of issues to not only relate to new situations, but most importantly, to solve problems encountered therein – thus [re] constructing knowledge. It seems reasonable to understand from this perception that *knowledge* is a totality of nearly all aspects of critical thinking. It could therefore, be understood as critical thinking itself. As such, it is dependent on critical ability of those seeking to be labelled as knowers.

I perceive my inquiry as about how **knowledge** leads to **knowledge**. This lies in that it investigated how **knowledge** of Sesotho traditional **knowledge** can enhance acquisition of **knowledge** of English as a tool for exposure to, and acquisition of academic **knowledge**. In this nature, the inquiry necessitated a review of scholarship for notions pointing to how language and culture relate to knowledge and its acquisition. Implications of knowledge from such a review for the inquiry are documented in the next sub-section.

2.2.2.2 The relationship between knowledge, culture and language

Guiding my operationalisation of the term *knowledge* was also my interpretation of opposing views regarding the relationship between knowledge, language, and culture. For instance, the question of whether language reflects a cultural world-view, or whether language shapes the world-view has been controversial for a while. For instance, there are hypotheses such as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, the Whorfian Hypothesis, linguistic relativity or linguistic determination through which it is claimed that language shapes the world view (Whorf 1956:212-214). On the other end are linguists who are less concerned about the debate over whether one, between language and knowledge shapes the other (Brown 1980:143). Such linguists, according to Brown are instead, more concerned with the fact that:

- ✦ Language and culture interact.
- ✦ World views differ among cultures.
- ✦ Language used for expression of a world view may be relative to and specific to the world view.

Brown (1980:141) sums up the nature of the intertwined relationship between cultural knowledge and language in the words:

Culture is really an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. Cultural patterns, and customs, and ways of life are expressed in language; culture-specific world views are reflected in language.

In view of the foregoing debate, what is my position about knowledge? As it reads, the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity/determinism hypothesis implies that without language there are no thoughts - therefore, no knowledge to share and reconstruct. I have a reservation about the position. Personally I subscribe to the cognitivist school of thought that human beings are not born as *tabula rasa* - i.e. in its opposition to empty-mindedness of human beings. It is on the basis of this cognitivist conception of the relationship between knowledge development and language that I view knowledge as pre-existent to language, but intrinsically dependent on it (language) for it (knowledge) to be manipulated for reconstruction and manner of communication. I note also, as does Brown (1980:142) that knowledge reflects the cultural context in which it is being constructed and disseminated. I opine that knowledge, language and culture are not only independent of and dependent on each other, but also so intertwined that the dividing line between them is so thin that it might be invisible in construction of knowledge.

The relationship between knowledge construction, language and culture is also noted by Taylor (2007:4) through what his notion of the intercultural, interconnectedness and transferability of knowledge. Taylor's notion, as does that of Guiora (1976: 15, cited in Brown 1980:143), points to universality of knowledge. In this study the notion was understood to imply among others, the need for research in HE to explore intercultural transferability, therefore interconnectedness of knowledge for the benefit of a culture-bias free acquisition of knowledge by students from different ethno-cultural backgrounds. This perspective was adopted to inquire into how positively interconnecting knowledge from Sesotho ethno-knowledge can benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English by university students from a Sesotho-speaking background. It is in view of Taylor's position that I regard some of the Sesotho traditions and the language for their acquisition and expression as knowledge from

which Sesotho-speaking-background students studying in the NUL can, given a chance, draw to meet the demands of academic English. I based this on the assumption that because the NUL medium of instruction is not their mother tongue, SSBSs are likely to experience some challenges with the English of forming and communicating concepts in different academic contexts.

Proponents of intercultural educational practice in HE – e.g. Taylor (2007:4), recommend that challenges which face students who enrol into HE from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds must be explored for among others, how and whether they can benefit from intercultural transferability of knowledge in construction of knowledge. In view of the dearth of research on the role of traditional knowledges in acquisition of academic English proficiency by non-English-speaking background students (NESBS) enrolling into English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL, the study inquired into how Sesotho traditional knowledge can interconnect with that which is experienced in the English-medium university setting. It was for this reason that the narratives forming the data for this inquiry were interrogated for context-specific aspects of academic English which benefit from application of knowledge of some aspects of Sesotho TK.

The culture-oriented perception of knowledge surfaces also in assertions advanced by authors such as Dondolo (2005) and Conolly, Desmond, Dullay, Gumede, Mnguni, Ngalose, Nxumalo, Nyawose, Padayachee, Pretorius, Timm, and Yeni (2009:97, 104). According to these authors, one's ethno-culture is a basis which affords him/her the authority to make certain claims and assertions which in turn advance knowledge. Specifically, Dondolo (2005:114) asserts that knowledge is fundamentally indigenous and possessed by everybody.

In discussing production of indigenous knowledge in various aspects of social life, Dondolo (2005:114) points to countenances that justify addition of an IKS-sensitive interpretation of the concept *knowledge*. According to Dondolo, knowledge is a universal heritage and resource which "should not be treated as a rigid organ or

something African". Related, and also held by other authors holding an indigenous perspective about knowledge – namely, Khamganova (2005:1) is Dondolo's view that knowledge does not form in isolation from other forms of knowledge. This character in my view makes knowledge relationally dynamic and suggests that it cannot be assumed to have a better status in some socio-cultural groups than it has in others. Thus, the Eurocentric attitudes condemned for relegating African traditional knowledges as barbaric and mere myths (Conolly 2008:29-30) have no place in my understanding of knowledge in this study.

Context-boundedness features in Dondolo's IKSs-oriented interpretation of knowledge. Dondolo perceives knowledge as "accumulation of information comprising world views, philosophy, beliefs, values, socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-economic, ecological, and historical aspects of life of a particular group of people within a particular [geographical or other] location" (Dondolo 2005:114). The author further posits that knowledge "is socially constructed and resides in living memories, practices and expressions of the practicing communities" (Dondolo 2005:116). This accumulated and compacted information in the form of knowledge, results from "a complex process involving social, situational, cultural and institutional factors" which include as part of context, ways in which people categorise, code, process and attribute meaning to their daily experiences (Dondolo 2005:114). It is this virtue which gives knowledge a local, indigenous or traditional status (Dondolo 2005:116).

Dondolo (2005:115) also perceives of knowledge in terms which are critical of condescending Eurocentric perspectives via which the African ways of forming, acquiring and transmitting knowledge are deemed unscientific, pagan and barbaric. The author argues on a number of grounds that knowledge in its local, traditional and indigenous form is also a science. According to the author, local knowledge is rendered a science by the following virtues:

- It is generated by communities over time, thus allowing them to understand and cope with communities' particular agro-ecological and socio-economic environment.
- It is generated and transformed through a systematic process of observation, experimentation and adaptation

Another character of knowledge, particularly in its local, traditional and indigenous form is that it is usually unwritten, transmitted, and preserved through oral tradition (Dondolo 2005:116); while in its secondary form it depends on print and modern technological devices for its transmission. Dondolo's position is consistent with that held by other authors – namely, Sienaert (1990; 2006), Conolly 2008), Conolly *et al* (2009) in their explication of oral knowledge.

Furthermore, Dondolo (2005:117-118) asserts that indigenous knowledge “plays an important role in forging a sense of togetherness, interdependence, and unity among community members”. In recognition of this attribute, Dondolo adopts a recommendation that traditional knowledge should be protected, promoted, developed and where appropriate, conserved (Hopper 2002, cited in Dondolo 2005:114).

2.2.3 Operationalisation of traditional knowledge

Amassed literature suggests reasonableness of perception of traditional knowledge as an aspect of indigenous knowledge (IK). In the literature on IKS traditional knowledge is oral, cultural, and local in nature. For instance, Higgs & Higgs (2002), Mapesela (2004), Ndhlovu & Masuku (2004), Roodt (2004) include **oral traditions** of inhabitants of a particular geographical locality in their notion of indigenous knowledge.

Also justifying operationalisation of it as synonymous with IK in this study is Dondolo's (2005) concept of TK. According to this author, IK is an aggregation of information

encompassing among others, world views, philosophy, beliefs, values, governance, socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-economic, ecological, historical aspects of life and **oral traditions** of a particular group of people within a specific geographical area/location". Dondolo (2005:116) views IK as systematic information that remains in diverse social structures, is usually unwritten, preserved and transmitted orally "by word of mouth, by practices and observations from one generation to the next". This notion depicts IKs as non-scribal, therefore oral in nature. Traditional knowledge is perceived in the same terms as well. The notion of IK as local traditional knowledge rendered communal by virtue of being shared by members of common locality is best captured in Dondolo's (2005:116) reference to it as "the ways of knowing within a local knowledge framework - a complex system of knowledge that is local and unique to a particular population within a specific geographical area". Mapesela (2004:317) perceives IK as "a unique traditional and local knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of people who are indigenous to a particular locality or geographic area".

In a similar vein, Loubser (2005:76) in unpacking the concept IK says the kind of knowledge being referred to is that which is assimilated into oral traditions and rituals of an oral society. Further to this, Loubser (2005:82) argues that IK systems "originate from oral societies", and so have imbedded in them, oral culture and belief systems. Loubser's recommendation that researchers on IK in general and African IK in particular, must be conversant with the features of cultures of the indigenous people they study, legitimises operationalisation of the terms TK and IK as synonymous in this study.

Both IKs and TK are perceived as resulting from the close relationship between communities and their environment. Du Toit (2005:55) for instance views IKs as the symbiotic active contact between a community and its environment. As in the case of Jousse's (*vide* 2.4) concept of the relationship between human beings and their cosmos, du Toit (2005:57) asserts as follows about IKs:

The environment changes; and it is changed by organisms that inhabit it. Human beings intervene in and change nature in order to create an environment in which they can live... [Since] no organism can live in isolation from its environment, human beings are no exception, as to them the environment is more than physical, and includes the cultural, religious and ethnical aspects of their world.

Authors also adopt a contrastive approach to conceptualising IKs and TK. They for instance, distinguish between African/ indigenous/oral traditional and knowledge from that of the Western-world. Loubser (2005:75) cites the National Research Foundation (NRF) to conceptualise IK as the opposite of European knowledge. The author notes also that IK is viewed as African, black, vernacular, aboriginal, Native American knowledge existing and developing in populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area, and inhabiting it at the time of conquest or colonisation. This is a derogatory and colonising concept of IKs and one to which this inquiry and its theoretical underpinnings is opposed as explicated in the last two chapters of the thesis.

Ilutik (2002:2) conceives of TK as sacred knowledge within the traditions of oral societies. According to Ilutik, this knowledge embraces "all aspects of life from birth to death", including how members of a cultural group relate with their natural world and environment. This hallowed oral traditional knowledge was [is] transmitted freely and passed down as need arose [arises] "with all special circumstances in life that was [is] lived and continues to be lived". It was [is] transmitted in the form of song, dance, prayer, rituals, stories, medicinal plants, proverbs, riddles, different behaviours "and virtually everything that affects all aspects of the living" (Ilutik 2002:2-3).

However, authors such as Ilutik (2002) observe with concern that in the print-oriented Western-world, knowledge is characterised by too much documentation and assimilationist attitude to give room to forms of knowledge from non-scribal cultures, particularly those regarded as inferior. Without necessarily being anti-Western, in this study I aligned myself with authors who are opposed to demeaning attitudes towards non-print-orient forms of knowledge on the one ground that it insinuates sub-

standardness. These authors view and advocate recognition of all cultures and knowledge embedded in them as equal (Conolly 2002; Ntsoane 2005; Taylor 2007; and Cupane 2007).

2.2.4 Summative perspectives on traditional knowledge

The perspectives are on components of traditional knowledge.

2.2.4.1 Summative perspectives on tradition

Regarding the component "tradition", Cancels' perception implies at least two insights. One is that tradition is not rigid, but is in this dynamic capacity capable of influencing construction of knowledge in new learning situations such as the English-medium African university settings in which the majority of the student population are from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Another is a shift from a conservative perception of "tradition" as only about non-scribal transmission to a modernist view of it as accommodative of all forms of media including the print-oriented ones. For the inquiry, these insights spelt the need to seek a research-appraised understanding of Sesotho TK for how it is/can be an academic English proficiency need in either or both of its non-scribal and scribal forms.

About orality as an aspect of tradition in its non-scribal form, I adopted the concept as understood by Conolly *et al.* (2009) (*vide* 2.2.1.3) to note that orality predates literacy by uncountable period. Sesotho TK like other TKs is characteristically oral. In view of this nature of orality and my personal-experience with the nature of expression of knowledge in Sesotho, I argue that even though they have already been exposed to print-oriented knowledge by the time they enter NUL, SSBSs are, by virtue of their pristinely non-print oriented ethno-cultural backgrounds therefore oral. In this capacity they enter the culturally literate university setting with

varieties of oralate knowledge which research should explore for how they can benefit/benefit acquisition of academic English.

2.2.4.2 Summative perspectives about knowledge

In view of the assertions in the foregoing sub-sections, and for purposes of the inquiry, I adopted a number of arguments. I contended from personal experience as a former student and now lecturer at the English-medium NUL that students, particularly SSBSs, enter university with a wealth of pre-existing knowledge which is acquired informally from their ethno-cultural backgrounds. This knowledge is in the form of linguistic and communicative competencies, wisdom and intelligence informed by experience and extensive engagement with the Sesotho culture and its environment.

I translated the understanding to teaching and learning in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL and derived what the translation implies for the inquiry. In the first incidence I adopted Guiora's (1976:15, cited in Brown 1985:143) concept of *universality of knowledge* to argue also on the basis of lived personal-experience that the ethno-knowledge with which SSBSs enter the English-medium NUL has equivalents in some aspects of what constitutes knowledge of academic English. The challenge is only that this pre-university store of knowledge has barely been explored for how it can benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English by students entering HE from non-English-speaking backgrounds. This is the gap that the inquiry sought to address.

Secondly, I contended that language in its appropriate forms best captures and conveys interpretations of culture-embedded world-views. I personally perceive world-views as knowledge that may be culture-oriented. I based my position on my personal experience (as an English Education practitioner) and motivations from documented literature. From this position I am aware that acquisition of academic English is intertwined with the cultural and linguistic context in which it is constructed. In the case of the inquiry the cultural context is multi-faceted. One face is Lesotho as an African

country in which the NUL is located. The other face is the NUL as an English-medium African university which is predominantly attended by SSBSs. Another is the linguistic context in the form of Sesotho as the main mode of communication among students and staff from a Sesotho-speaking background.

I am also aware from literature pointing to the university setting as a socio-cultural context or world wherein members of the academic community determine the language of construction and communication of knowledge. Because in such academic contexts communicative competence in the language of the academic community is often a condition for academic achievement, one must therefore acquire and demonstrate proficiency in the prescribed language to gain acceptance into this community (Scarcella 2003). The interest of the inquiry was how the ethno-Sesotho cultural context can benefit academic English as the main linguistic component of the academic scenario at the NUL.

From the cited authors' perception of knowledge as a universal heritage and resource, my confidence and authority to regard, refer to and investigate Sesotho traditional knowledge as a source for [re]construction of functional knowledge about academic English got enhanced. Dondolo for instance, perceives knowledge as culture and context-embedded. I agree based on my lived personal encounters with traditional Sesotho beliefs, values, worldviews, philosophies, etc. that context and its culture produce and localise knowledge. I therefore contended in the context of my inquiry that different context-specific experiences making Basotho's traditional life form a complex body of traditional knowledge. In the same breath, I viewed teaching and learning situations and activities in Eurocentric formal education institutions such as the English-medium NUL as forming a composite from which the print-oriented knowledge emerges.

By dispelling the demeaning attitudes which depict African indigenous knowledges as pagan and unscientific myths the literature created the platform for me to be proud of

my Sesotho traditional knowledge. I came to realise that like all the so-called scientific knowledges of the Eurocentric origin Sesotho TK as the product of traditional Basotho's extended interpretive interaction with, and understanding of peculiarities of the different aspects of their particular environment, could be perceived as a science too, and so might be investigated from this perspective. I made this assertion fully aware of the debate on whether local knowledge is a science or not. However, the focus of my inquiry was on how local knowledge, regardless of scientificness or otherwise of its status can benefit acquisition of academic English proficiency of students who enrol into English-medium African universities from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

In sum, the ethno-culture-sensitive perception of knowledge spelt the need to interpret the narratives for not only the meanings and values which participants attached to their Sesotho traditional knowledge, but also for how interpretations revealed the following among others:

- ✦ Recognition of the English-medium NUL setting as a secondary cultural context/cosmos in which proficiency in academic English is a cultural condition for knowledge construction and expression.
- ✦ Awareness and interpretations of cultural values, norms, beliefs, expectations of the English-medium NUL, and the extent to which acquisition of linguistic, cognition and socio-cultural communicative competence/knowledge in these protocols can benefit from application of knowledge of the same in Sesotho.
- ✦ Awareness of interconnections between the English-medium university-based knowledge and the pre-university Sesotho one, and how these benefit academic English of SSBSs.

The ethno-culture-sensitive perception of knowledge is also consistent with Khamaganova's (2005:1) perception of indigenous knowledge as "a high degree of holism - ability to see and understand things in their interconnectedness and interdependence". For my inquiry this implied that Sesotho TK should be investigated

for how it interfaces with other knowledges such as knowledge of academic English in [re]construction of academic knowledge in HE institutions. I adopt an indigenised perception of knowledge. Because of the originally non-scribal characteristic of Sesotho TK, an operational definition of the term oral became imperative. This is the subject of the next sub-section.

2.2.4.3 Summative perspectives about traditional knowledge

Traditional knowledge is perceived as local and heuristic knowledge that has occurred over time as a result of close interaction between members of a cultural group and their environment. It is preserved in the memories, social, religious and other systems and practices of oralate indigenous communities; and is formally passed orally from one generation to another through various oral modes for purposes of ensuring traditional education and identity of an oralate society.

Also considering the dynamic nature of TK it is concluded that it is capable of being captured, conserved and expressed via modern technological devices and thus assumes print-related, electronic and other characters. In this capacity TK is perceived as also capable of interfacing meaningfully with the typically scribal western knowledge. The aim of the investigation was to interpret the lived personal-experiences for how application of Sesotho TK relates positively with acquisition of proficiency in academic English by SSBSs of the English-medium NUL. But when Sesotho TK is what?

2.3 SESOTHO TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

This section is an aspect of the practical context of the study. It features a review of literature on Sesotho traditional knowledge. The meanings of terms underpinning an understanding of aspects of Sesotho traditional knowledge are clarified.

2.3.1 Clarification of terms

Conceptualisation of Sesotho traditional knowledge in my view depends significantly on the extent to which the terms *Lesotho*, *Basotho*, *Sesotho* and *Bosotho* are understood.

2.3.1.1 Lesotho

Lesotho, also known as "the Kingdom in the sky" because of its altitude, is a country of the people called *Basotho*. It is landlocked by the Republic of South Africa. Prior to its independence from Britain in 1966 *Lesotho* was called Basutoland.

2.3.1.2 Basotho

The term *Basotho* in a specific sense refers to the native people of the country that is known as the Kingdom of Lesotho (Mokitimi 2004:396). In this study Basotho are understood to be the settlers who on the basis of their interactions with the ecological conditions in Lesotho as their cosmos, developed traditions to give meaning to their life and livelihoods. The name "*Basotho*" originates from a Swazi word "*Abashuntu*" which refers to people who wore their loin-cloth with a knot tied at the back (Mokitimi 2004:375). According to Mokitimi the nickname was later adopted by King Moshoeshe I as a political term for unifying diverse cultural groups out of which he formed the Basotho nation in the nineteenth century. In a more general sense, the term includes even those people who by intermarriage and naturalisation laws acquired the citizenship of the Kingdom of Lesotho. The study adopts the first understanding of the term.

2.3.1.3 Sesotho

The word *Sesotho* has a dual meaning. In a particular sense it refers to the indigenous language spoken by Basotho. After all "the journey towards knowledge is through its language" (Ntsoane 2005:103). In its embracing sense, *Sesotho* refers to the language

spoken by Basotho as well as to Basotho's cultural ways of doing things. Hence frequency of expressions such as "*ka Sesotho...* (in line with Basotho's way(s)..."). In this inquiry the term was used to refer to both the language and Basotho's ways.

2.3.1.4 Bosotho

Bosotho denotes relatedness of behaviour, practice, appearance, style etc. to *Sesotho* as a language and or manner of doing things in accordance with the culture of the Basotho. The study's focus was on how the Sesotho TK in the form of *Sesotho* and *Bosotho* of *Basotho* of *Lesotho* can enhance acquisition of academic English of students from a Sesotho-speaking background but acquiring formal education in the context of an English-medium higher education institution in Lesotho. The next section situates Sesotho TK in documented scholarship on African folklore.

2.3.2 Sesotho TK as African Folklore

Literature on African folklore is debated from different perspectives by different authors. In my study of the literature on African folklore my interest is not in the debate on how folklore and philosophy relate, but more in how notions of the concept address the issue of traditional knowledge. The literature on African folklore contributed to an understanding of Sesotho traditional knowledge in this inquiry. This type of literature was found relevant because of the culture-sensitive meaning it attaches to traditional knowledge. Folklore, according to Peek & Yankah (2004: xi) is "esoteric traditions, oral, customary, or material, expressed in the form of [among others] *artistic* communication used as operational culture by a group within the larger society primarily to provide group identity and homogeneity".

The definition depicts folklore as an oral tradition. The importance of the oral nature of African traditional knowledge is highlighted in Peeks & Yankah's (2004: xii) "in the beginning was the Word..." The authors are understood to indicate that according to

African folklore scholarship, human speech and exchange of life through voice make the African culture and as such, cannot be overemphasised. The authors indicate further that superstitions and beliefs, myths, attitudes, values and other practices of oral African societies are embedded in their riddles, proverbs, games and rituals all of which draw upon daily activities common within a society; are constructed/created round life, characteristic features and behaviours of animals and plants; are also created around the natural environment, material culture, some parts of the human body, and day-to-day activities typifying livelihoods of African societies (Derive 2004:395-396; Noah 2004:492).

Derive (2004:480) observes further that riddles and proverbs in African culture are artistic verbal behaviour. According to this author such behaviour characterises metaphorical speech and expresses timeless wisdom. Derive asserts also that such behaviour proposes an attitude or specific action in response to a recurring social situation. Derive (2004:489) further posits that African culture as artistic verbal behaviour has an educational role in that through it children get trained in speech ability and are intellectually challenged. Burns (2004:487) argues that all these cannot be understood out of context.

What is my summative perspective about Sesotho TK? Sesotho TK fits well into the above notions of African folklore as esoteric traditions of a cultural group. Sesotho TK is knowledge of, and about a nation whose foundations have been deeply embedded in its strong oral cultural heritage which has sustained the nation for centuries (Sekese 1953:45). The major features of this complex oral cultural fabric include a strong attachment to ecology, a strong background of marriage and an extended family, chieftainship, culture and religion, love for peace, respect, unity and to a significant extent, a common language. For purposes of this study, these features formed part of the framework for understanding Sesotho traditional knowledge which it was assumed, could be investigated for among others, its role in acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

Consistently with this framework, Basotho folklorists perceive Sesotho TK as profound and complex knowledge of, and about livelihoods of traditional Basotho. Mokitimi (2004:396-397) observes that for maintenance of their defining cultural heritage, Basotho have in place relevant norms, customs, beliefs and superstitions, all of which are not only an embodiment of *Basotho*, but are also laws depicting unity, educational, advisory and correctional value of this knowledge. Mokitimi observes further that like in other oral societies, knowledge about Sesotho cultural heritage was/is stored in memory and orally transmitted from one generation to the next through artistic verbal and performed communication behaviour in the form of storytelling, drama, poetry, dance proverbs, riddles, rituals, games and all cultural gestures and practices. Also, perception of Sesotho TK as characterised by verbal and performed communication behaviour is in step with the laryngo-buccal and corporeal manual modes of knowledge expression as explained in Jousse's oral-style theory (*vide* 2.4).

Literature on Sesotho TK includes proverbs and riddles as not only embodiments of Sesotho traditional knowledge but knowledge itself (Mokitimi 2004:375, 396-397). Proverbs provide knowledge which indicates how observant Basotho are of their surroundings/cosmos (*vide* 2.4 for a benchmarking discussion of Jousse's laws of communication to the effect of the relationship between humans and their cosmos in knowledge construction). Mokitimi further (2004:397) observes after an analysis of the nature and practice of Sesotho riddles that these promote values of togetherness, patience and positive competitiveness. In my inquiry the meanings which participants attached to personal experiences with the interface of Sesotho TK and academic English were interpreted for among others, the role played by knowledge of Sesotho proverbs, riddles and the value system. Mokitimi (2004:375) analysed Sesotho proverbs for their origin, purposes for their use by Basotho, levels at which they are used and their dynamic nature. The author notes the source of proverbs and their depiction of the integral relationship between Basotho and their environment in her observation that

Sesotho proverbs originate from observations of the community's daily activities. Proverbs deal with a wide spectrum of the people's experience with the physical environment, including animal and plant life, as well as the people's way of life, attitudes values, feelings and emotions... (Mokitimi 2004:375).

According to Mokitimi (2004) proverbs are indicative of the wisdom of a society in which they characterise communication. The author says Basotho use them skilfully in daily interaction to impart authority and truth to their utterances in specific communication contexts when circumstances effectuate their use. For instance, a situation where food is scarce may provoke use of a proverb such as "*Marabe o jeoa ke bana*" (Parents make sacrifices for the welfare of their children). Mokitimi observes that the meaning of proverbs is best understood when they are studied in the context of their actual use. For instance, where the intention is to extent or accept a helping hand, a speaker may appeal to the capital of his/her Sesotho knowledge of proverbs and say "*Tšoele le beta poho*" (A crowd lessens heavy work/ A crowd overpowers a bull). This is indicative of authenticity and authoritative communicative competence in Sesotho. The close relationship noted by Mokitimi (2004) between the environment, origin and use of proverbs is consistent with Jousse's (2000, cited by Sienaert 2006:6) notion of proverbs as "verbal tools" and "oral-style parallelisms."

Mokitimi's postulations as explained above had implications for the study. Participants' narratives of personal encounters with academic English at the NUL were interpreted for a variety of perspectives. Basotho values whether directly stated and/or implied in proverbs and other socio-behaviours and practices were identified and interrogated for their place in acquisition of academic English by NUL's SSBSs. Subjected to the same procedure were academic contexts/situations in which participants successfully either indigenised some of the English proverbs to proverbial Sesotho or applied their knowledge of proverbial Sesotho where non-proverbial academic English was used to manage tasks that would otherwise be difficult to understand in academic English alone.

To conclude this part of the chapter I submit that the ecology, attitudes, beliefs, superstitions and other forms of knowledge that are embodied in traditional practices (such a proverbs, riddles, praise-poetry, song, dance artefacts, etc.) make the identity which a student from a Sesotho-speaking background carries throughout his/her education career. This position therefore means that learning may not be divorced from one's identity as one's reality. In this study the understanding was employed to argue that for the NUL SSBSs the cultural heritage of *Basotho* remains their indelible identity even when they are immersed in the Western English-medium learning context such as the NUL.

A synthesis of the literature on components of the term **traditional knowledge** led to discovery of the oral-style theory (Jousse 2000). The intention of the inquiry was neither to critique Marcel Jousse's theory nor interrogate the wider debate about orality and/or orality of knowledge. My concern was with how traditional knowledge can benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English by SSBSs enrolling into the NUL. Marcel Jousse's oral style theory provided adequate information for me to benchmark my understanding of some aspects of traditional knowledge of Basotho on. The theory is therefore referred to only for contentions in it which render the "oralate" aspect of traditional/indigenous knowledge relevant to the inquiry. Section 2.4 discusses only those features of the theory which have implications for this study.

2.4 JOUSSE'S ORAL STYLE THEORY

The submissions made in the preceding sections and sub-sections of this chapter depict TK as characteristically memory dependent. This is best captured in the question about how man, "placed amid the innumerable actions of the universe, conserve the memory of these actions and transmit it faithfully from generation to generation (Sienaert 1990: 94). The answer is that human beings have at their disposal a capital of knowledge that is stored in memory for retrieval as and when circumstances so require (Sienaert 2006;

Conolly 2008; Conolly *et al* 2009). The authors base this understanding on the oral-style theory as advanced by Jousse (2000).

Marcel Jousse's works depict vehement rejection of the perspective that "writing is a dividing invention in the history of humanity". Jousse's is the conviction that the oral tradition preceded the writing civilisation in all nations (Jousse 2000; Sienaert 1990). Jousse's position implies therefore that in all nations, inclusive of the presently highly literate, knowledge has at some point been traditionally oral. Hence his introduction of what he called "the oral-style" theory which premises operationalisation of TK in this chapter.

To focus and direct the oral-style theory Jousse drew from memories of his youth and growing up in a peasant milieu where expression of knowledge was predominantly oralate (Sienaert 1990) and reliant on memory. The aim of Jousse's theory is to "unearth" the oral-stylistic laws from underneath the written texts..." (Sienaert, 1990:93). The main message of Jousse's theory is that oral traditions and related knowledges of oral societies are important and deserve recognition, and conservation for their educational value. In Sienaert's (1990:98) words "the mnemonic faculties and mnemotechnical devices of oral society and oral style... hold extremely powerful educational potential".

Jousse (2000:166) sources from what he terms ethnic laboratory of awareness to explain that the oral-style theory emphasises need for humans as occupants of the world to be aware of the mutual and influential relationship between themselves and their environment. The author recommends use of what he terms the anthropology of geste to understand behaviours and practices engaged in by human beings in construction and expression of knowledge resulting from interaction with their cosmos. He views the anthropology of geste as relational in that human beings throughout their lives are interactively engaged with the environment they occupy. Jousse observes that

for oral societies the interactive relationship between the environment and man is guided by laws of mimism/impression and expression as discussed below.

2.4.1 The law of mimism

This law is about how the environment in more ways than one imposes behaviour on human beings/anthropos, thus forcing them to adapt to and/or adopt from it. The law also depicts how human beings, because of the intrinsic relationship between them and their environment influence changes on the latter. Furthermore, the law is about how the universe helps its occupants construct knowledge from it (Jousse 2000:160). Jousse (2000, cited in Sienaert 1990:94; 2006:2) perceives the cosmos as a playfield on which man and the universe make contact and influence each other in creation of context-situated knowledge. According to this author the environment plays a major role in providing humans with knowledge for expression in other contexts. Jousse's (cited in Sienaert 1990:94) notion of this interactive knowledge-creating relationship between humans and their universe is best put in Sienaerts' assertion that "What man is miming, ex-pressing, is what the environing universe im-presses upon him...[for] T[t]his universe Jousse conceives of as a dynamic hole in which all parts interact constantly..."

Jousse's law of mimism points to a reciprocal relationship between man and the universe. Sienaert (1990: 94) clarifies this by observing that man makes the universe; while the universe makes man. The law stipulates that as people come into contact with the environment they live in, they engage in the process of interaction characterised by internalisation of the contact in the form of impressions we form about our cosmos. The relationship between people and their cosmos is reciprocal in that they (people) and the cosmos adapt to each other's ways; and because of their dynamic nature as humans they come out as better adapters/ imitators than their cosmos.

In sum, Jousse's notion of cosmos and its relationship with man via the law of mimism brought a number of realisations which propelled the study in question. It brought to

surface awareness of the traditionally oral Sesotho culture as the primary cosmos from which Basotho acquire different behaviours/gestures of knowledge internalisation. This type of environment forms an educationally rich ethnic context in which knowledge is orally acquired. In this inquiry Jousse's law of mimism made reasonable an assumption that prior to enrolment into university, SSBSs already have at their disposal, a variety of non-scribal modes of acquisition and expression of knowledge as mimicked from their primary environment.

I also deduced from Jousse's law of impression/mimism that human beings/anthropoi are capable of storing knowledge from their interactions with the universe and replaying it when circumstances so dictate. This means that as humans make contact with their universe they internalise, form impressions and/or knowledge and store it. Humans retrieve this from memory which Sienaert (1990) says is an item bank of mimemes that can voluntarily or involuntarily be retrieved and utilised when as need arises to address problems encountered in various aspects of life. For my study, the law of mimism spelt not only the need to analyse and interpret the participants' narratives for forms of traditional knowledge which SSBSs bring to university, but also how such knowledge enables them to meet the English proficiency challenges in their different academic contexts.

I understood Jousse's anthropology of gesture to also imply that the literate English-medium university setting – the NUL in the case of my research, is another cosmos, but a secondary one in which SSBSs are expected to interact and internalise literacy-oriented knowledge. On this basis, I contended that knowledge and related behaviours from the students' primary cosmos cannot and should not be expected to automatically fade away upon students' entry into university. The study's position was in fact that learning gestures from students' original environment have a place in the secondary cosmos. The position thus became a challenge for research to explore how gestures or knowledge orally constructed from the primary cosmos of students can benefit construction of literacy-related knowledge in literate English-medium HE cultural

settings. Specifically, Sesotho traditional knowledge was investigated for its role in acquisition of academic English by SSBSs at the NUL. Hence the main question of the study (*vide* 1.3).

A further revelation from Jousse's contention is that by virtue of being circumstantially memory-oriented, the oral-style theory through its law of impression/mimism is about development of critical thinking. In this study I contented on the basis of Jousse's theory that the English-medium university setting as a secondary cosmos for non-English-speaking-background students poses communication challenges which may sometimes require need to appeal to stored cultural background knowledge as a problem-solving strategy for coping with demands of the literate academic context.

Also surfacing from Jousse's theory and of immediate relevance to a study focusing on how proficiency in academic English can benefit from students' Sesotho cultural background, is its implicit consistence with some of the postulations of the language-and-content theory (Mohan 1986). Research on content-area-language learning and teaching shows that use of knowledge from students' cultural knowledge leads not only to better conceptualisation, but improved communicative competence in the English of the context. If as understood in this research, Jousse's theory involves storage in memory and later retrieval of knowledge resulting from the contact between the cosmos and humans, it would make academic sense to argue on the basis of research evidence that given a chance, the wealth of Sesotho traditional knowledge which Basotho students bring to the English-medium NUL can serve as a problem-solving strategy and thus enhance acquisition of academic English proficiency.

Jousse's law of mimism was used in this inquiry to argue for a position that as they enter the English-medium NUL, SSBSs possess a wealth of knowledge that has been impressed upon them by their Sesotho ethno-cultural universe. In this capacity, these students can be assumed to have a pre-university knowledge which gives them the ability to interactively adapt to the literate environment by strategically using their

Sesotho TK as a basis for mimicking, [re] constructing and expressing knowledge as impressed upon them by the new setting – namely, the NUL.

In sum, the interest of this research was how Basotho students' application of pre-university Sesotho TK acquired from their traditional and educationally informal cosmos can help them master academic English required for interacting with and expressing knowledge in the literacy-oriented English-medium NUL. If the law of mimism governs impressions/internalisation of knowledge, which law oversees transmission of knowledge according to the oral-style theory? Jousse (2000) terms such the law of expression which is discussed below for its relevance to the inquiry.

2.4.2 The law of expression

Jousse's law of expression stipulates that knowledge stored in memory in the form of what are called mimemes. In this study mimemes are understood as chunks of knowledge. Knowledge-expression according to Jousse's anthropology of geste within is circumstantial. This expression, as per law (Jousse (2000:20, 61, 151) can be corporeal-manual (through the entire body), laryngo-buccal (verbal) as well as mimographic (through writing). Important in Jousse's law of expression is also the fact that knowledge must first of all be synthesised into meaningful information that can easily be conserved for later retrieval and expression.

As best summed up by Jousse (2000:61-62), knowledge is a consequence of human beings' interaction with their immediate cultural environment. It may be expressed verbally (laryngo-buccally), through the whole body (corporeal-manually), through scribal alphabetic writing (mimographycally), as well as through use of tools to fix expression in different forms.

What is a fundamental insight for me from interaction with Jousse's oral-style theory? Jousse's three styles of knowledge expression have relevance in this

study. For instance, the corporeal manual and laryngo-buccal are understood to be knowledge expression styles that are typical in oral societies. According to Mokitimi (2004:378) gracefulness of body movement and powerfulness of voice are some of the key conditions for spontaneity, and creativity in the delivery of knowledge via poetry, dance and song among ethno-Basotho. In this inquiry I contended on this basis that the Basotho of Lesotho, like all Africans are renowned performers in verbal and body-movement terms. If rhythmic body-movement as well as verbal exposition are traditional channels for expression of knowledge by this socio-cultural group, it therefore stands to reason that given a chance in modern formal education settings, Basotho students can, depending on learning issues at hand strategically resort to corporeal-manual and laryngo-buccal strategies for effective interaction with and expression of mimographic expression of knowledge in the print-oriented formal education context. While it is true that SSBSs enter university after 12 years of exposure to the literate culture, it would be short sighted to assume that they therefore have the requisite proficiency in the English for learning and forming concepts in the different academic contexts of an English-medium university setting. It is for this reason that the study aimed at an understanding of how Sesotho TK whether expressed and acquired corporeally, laryngo-buccally and/or mimographically can support not only acquisition of the scribal, but more importantly, the English of doing academia in an English-medium HE institution.

The mimographic on the other end is understood to be characteristic of knowledge-expression in literate cultures and sub-cultures such as HE. It involves interaction with and expression of knowledge through writing. In this inquiry the English-medium NUL with its Western foundations is viewed as a literate sub-culture in which expression of knowledge is scribal. Academic English, often referred to as a an academic barrier for students entering English-medium HE from non-English-speaking backgrounds is the vehicle for expression of knowledge in the context of the English-medium NUL with its student population of over 90% students entering from a Sesotho-speaking background (*Vide 1.2*).

Students from a Sesotho-speaking-background can be assumed to be finding it difficult to function effectively at the NUL as an academic setting where interaction with knowledge is predominantly print-oriented, and on a foreign language. In this study cognition is taken of the fact that by the time they enrol into the NUL, SSBSs have had at least twelve years of exposure to English as a medium of learning. This is if one assumes that the stipulation of the Lesotho education language policy that English should become the medium of teaching and learning from Grade 5 upwards is complied with. On this basis it may seem reasonable for those who are external to the situation to assume that academic English at university level may therefore not be much of a barrier to learning. However, evidence from literature on academic literacy competencies of HE students from non-English-speaking backgrounds suggests need for the assumption to be cautiously made for literacy and study skills of many of such students leave a lot to be desired (Davidowitz 2004:127; Webb 2002:49). About NUL in particular, inadequacy of proficiency in academic English of students, most of whom are from a Sesotho-speaking-background is cause for concern as per the Pro-Vice Chancellor's consolidated report of external examiners' reports and the Vice Chancellor's recommendation for research to research into study skills and academic English proficiency needs of NUL students (*vide* 1.2). The scenario raises the question of whether research, teaching and learning in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL have turned all stones regarding identification of threats to acquisition of academic English proficiency by students from non-English-speaking-backgrounds.

At least three postulations seem reasonable from the foregoing observations. One is that the twelve years of exposure to English as a medium of learning prior to entry into university may not guarantee proficiency in academic English. Another position is that pre-university exposure to English as a medium of learning may not necessarily mean that academic English has received the pedagogical attention that it deserves as a subject. Thirdly, such exposure may not mean that pre-university exposure to English as a medium of learning automates exploration and inclusion of students' ethno-

knowledge as an academic English proficiency need. The study was legitimised among others, by these postulations.

Adoption of Jousse's theory in this research enabled me to interrogate personal experience narratives for two important purposes. Firstly, it was for incidences during which participants wished they were given an opportunity to draw from Sesotho traditional styles such as song, dance and games for clarification of issues and concepts expressed in academic English in their different areas of academic specialisation at university. Secondly, it was to determine the extent to which and how either on their own or through formal institutional pedagogic practice participants effectively used these oral-style expression strategies to meet the academic English proficiency needs in different academic disciplines and contexts.

Jousse's oral-style theory enabled me to determine whether teaching and learning at the NUL affords SSBSs an opportunity to appeal to some of the Sesotho oral-style knowledge expression strategies as a problem-solving authority for interpretation of some aspects of academic English. In a nutshell, Jousse's theory provided a theoretical basis for the investigation to address the question of the extent of influence of Sesotho TK in acquisition of print-oriented academic English by SSBSs of the NUL. Furthermore, the theory served as a bed-rock for determining the extent to which the NUL may/can be exonerated from criticisms such as that by Loubser (2001:1) who censures HE research for its negligence of the role of *oralateness* in development and production of print-oriented knowledge.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the theoretical context of the study by situating Sesotho traditional knowledge on TK literature and specifically on laws of knowledge expression as spelt out in Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory. Jousse's oral-style theory stipulates that knowledge expression is a multifaceted dynamic process. To this end, three ways

of knowledge expression – namely, the laryngo-buccal (through speech), the corporeal manual (through physical movement) and the mimographic (through writing) have been discussed.

The implications of Jousse's theory and literature on oral traditional knowledge for the study are highlighted in the chapter. These include the need to determine from the narratives those forms Sesotho TK which Basotho students enter university with, the knowledge they must acquire and display at the English-medium NUL and how the different forms of Sesotho TK can become a resource for improving acquisition of requisite academic English proficiency by SSBs at the institution.

Essentially, the importance of Jousse's theory in my study was in the confidence and authority it gave me to engage myself and my participants in interpretive reflections on our lived childhood and adulthood experiences in an ethnical Sesotho milieu for their role in our acquisition of academic English for exposure to and construction of knowledge in the English-medium NUL. The theory therefore, had a methodological influence on my inquiry.

The question of whether or not traditional knowledge has a role in HE had to be addressed. Literature towards an answer to the question is the subject of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER



PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on TK in general and Sesotho TK in particular. The implications of the literature for the inquiry were identified in the chapter. Chapter 3 responds to the second theoretical subsidiary question of the study (*vide* 1.3). It reviews literature on perspectives on the role of TK in HE to determine whether or not and how TK has a place in HE. The chapter interrogates the literature for theoretical perspectives which explicitly and implicitly can benefit from the inquiry. It closes with a synthesis of issues discussed.

3.2 DOES TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE HAVE A PLACE IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Perspectives in documented scholarship point to perception of TKs/IKS as having a place in HE. HE must be relevant to society. This relevance is assessed in terms of "the fit" between societal expectations of HE institutions and what they do (Kolawole, 2005:1435). The extent to which HE maintains "the fit" is perceived among others, in terms of whether or not it espouses the ethno-cultural being, knowledge, and identity of the societies which make its setting. It is for this reason that Nkrumah (1965:45) asserted "once it has been planted in African soil, an institution of HE must take root amidst African traditions and culture". The literature however, points to concern with

institutional, therefore pedagogical and andragogical marginalisation of traditional knowledges of students in HE. Tisani (2004:174, 176) for instance, views the exclusion as a challenge confronting African academics. The author posits that it is about time the colonial and neo-colonial tradition dominating African university education was revisited and the relevance of African indigenous knowledge systems (AIKs) explored. According to Odora-Hoppers (2001, cited by Bitzer & Menkveld 2004:230), there is need for a critical scrutiny of the paradigms of existing academic practice with the aim of identifying limitations imposed by such practice on creativity. In the next sub-section concerns about marginalisation of AIKs are presented and critiqued for their relevance to the inquiry.

3.2.1 Concerns about exclusion of traditional knowledge in HE

The post-colonial era in many countries inclusive of African ones, has fomented debate about the place of TK in HE. Central to this debate is concern with Eurocentric attitudes and practices still characterising African HE institutions. Overall, African knowledges are labelled as so subverting, and sub-standard, they could tarnish the western knowledge emporium (Nel 2008). African HE is faulted for relegating African value systems (Roodt 2004). Eurocentric orientation of pedagogical and research practice seems from the literature as the main criticism levelled against exclusion of traditional knowledges in HE. About African HE (AHE) in particular, this Eurocentrism is observed in the form of three concerns which are relegation of African values, inappropriateness of research methodologies for studying educational needs of indigenous Africans, as well as execution of research by culturally detached researchers. Each one of these is elaborated on in the subsequent sub-sections.

3.2.1.1 Relegation of African values

HE authors condemn African HE for being too Western-oriented to acknowledge the importance of African traditional knowledges in acquisition of knowledge in formal

education. Roodt (2004:161) for instance, notes that in African HE, African ideas, technologies, aspirations and languages are generally dominated by Western systems of knowledge. This view is in line with Ntsoane's (2005:93) criticism that the English-mainly character of African HE affords indigenous values lesser recognition - thus disabling spontaneity, originality, creativity and self-confidence all of which are embedded in the cultural values, attitudes, beliefs, languages and related behaviours of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Tisani (2004:180) faults Western-oriented HE for monopolising access to knowledge by not co-existing with other knowledge systems. This way, Tisani disdained the so called world indigenous knowledge systems (WIKSs) for denying people access to alternate knowledge systems. In fact while he regards Western-oriented knowledge as an invaluable resource, Tisani (2004) criticises it for incapability to respond adequately to diverse conditions of its consumers.

Concen with predominance of the Western cultural approach to teaching and learning in HE should not be misrepresented to imply an anti-Western stance on my part. Mine is a stance that an absolutely African-oriented approach to teaching and learning in HE would be worse than exclusion and marginalisation from world knowledges in this day and age. Through this study I sought an understanding of how ethno-African knowledge can be a problem-solving strategy in the challenges posed by English as a medium of learning in different academic contexts at university level. I did not pursue the hybridity perspective as some scholars might understand. Neither did I embark on this study in terms of either West or Africa. Instead I needed to bring to the surface a culturally depolarising, non-extremist and an integrative approach which recognises and respects all ethno-cultural knowledges for the potential they have in enhancing proficiency in academic English of non-English-speaking-background students enrolling into English-medium universities.

3.2.1.2 Inadequacy of research methodologies

Nzewi (2005:289) laments methodological insensitivity and inadequacies in researching educational needs of indigenous Africans. He notes that because of their European and American character, the research methodologies used in Human and Social Sciences in Africa are "inadequate for factual investigation of African human-mental dynamics". Nzewi further notes with concern that AHE research does not adequately focus on Africa-sensitive issues such as exploration of African values for their contribution to acquisition of formal education. Nzewi's concern is echoed by Cupane (2007:34) in his condemnation of Western research methodologies for being too Western and positivist. Contrary to the positivist methodological conventions, Cupane (2007) adopted a culture-sensitive methodological approach to understanding andragogical needs of indigenous Mozambicans teaching and learning Physics education in Mozambican HE.

3.2.1.3 Culturally detached researchers

A further concern with research in AHE has to do with the cultural background of researchers investigating Africa-sensitive issues. Nzewi (2005:290) for instance, is concerned that even when minimal effort is made to study African issues, the researchers do not only become detached, but are also often not cognitively grounded enough to conceptualise the wisdom underlying the surface impressions encoded in the "seemingly obvious manifestation". According to the author, HE should ensure that African issues are investigated by cognitively and empathetically involved researchers. The foregoing assertions point to existence of room for TK/IK in higher education. Be that as it may, it still was deemed necessary to establish from literature what the justification for considering TK/IK in higher education is.

With regard to the concern about detached researchers, I the insider-implicated researcher in this study, view myself as different on a number of counts. First, like the participants I am an initially oralate Mosotho who is a product of the oralate Sesotho

cultural background. Secondly, as a Sesotho-speaking background Mosotho born and nurtured in the Sesotho traditional cultural context myself, I claim enough cognitive grounding to enable me to unpack not only the wisdom that characteristically underlies the Sesotho discourse in different situations, but particularly how these can help/have facilitated acquisition of requisite competence in the English for managing tasks in my subjects of specialisation. Thirdly, I, like fellow participants, am a product of Lesotho's English-medium education system. For this reason, I qualified to undertake this inquiry as what Nzewi (2005:292) terms an "empathetically involved" researcher.

Regarding concern with inadequacy of methodologies for investigating what Nzewi (2005:282) regards as Africa-sensitive issues and African human-mental dynamics, I deciphered from the literature that research methods which exclude ethno-knowledge of the researched are regarded as inadequate. In this inquiry I regarded academic English proficiency needs of SSBSs in African HE institutions as an Africa-sensitive issue. The needs are rendered sensitive by among others, by the fact that SSBSs have to study in English in an African country – namely, Lesotho. I contended that an investigation of how ethno-knowledge of such students can be an academic English proficiency need would therefore contribute knowledge needed for understanding phenomena from an ethno-culture-sensitive perspective. Furthering this perspective are two assertions by Mokitimi (2004:396). One affirmation is that people's cultural traditions form their identity; while another is that anything that undermines this identity is culturally insensitive. It would be a misrepresentation to interpret me to be implying that identity is fixed. Identity is dynamic. What matters is the extent to which one's identity is recognised for its place in construction of knowledge regardless of whether or not it (identity) is fixed or flexible.

Further supporting the debate on concerns about inadequacy of research methods for understanding the place of TK/IKS in HE is displeasure with methodological approaches to understanding academic language learning needs of international students. The tendency has been to investigate these needs from researcher-predetermined

responses which Zhu & Flaitz (2005:1, 7) fault for downplaying the mentally internalised experiential personal perspectives of those being investigated. In this inquiry I adopted Zhu & Flaitz's position that it is relevant and therefore, meaningful research that seeks to understand academic language learning needs from the voices of the international students themselves because they are the ones most directly affected by the challenges of having to meet the daunting academic language demands of HE settings. Logically, the reflective/reflexive auto-ethnographic narrative became the approach to understanding how Sesotho TK can be a need for proficiency in academic English.

To conclude, the literature on the place of TK/IK in HE documents concerns about its exclusion and recommend need for mainstreaming with justification. Section 3.3 reviewed scholarship on the rationale for this mainstreaming.

3.3 THE RATIONALE FOR TK IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The challenge still facing education systems in many African countries is that of how best to relate African orality with literacy in formal education. The viewpoint is held by African folklore authors and researchers such as Yankah (2004: xii) and others such as Ntsoane (2005) and Khamaganova (2005) who write on the place of indigenous knowledge (IK) in HE. According to these authors, the problem is exacerbated by maintenance of the colonial legacy in which African knowledge has been deemed too sub-standard to have a meaningful role in formal education. The good news however, is that the first decade of the 21st century is witnessing not only scholastic objection to the *status quo*, but also research-evidenced recommendations for education in general and HE research in particular to establish the place of what Khamaganova (2005:18) refers to as traditional indigenous knowledge in formal education. Tisani (2004:177) welcomes this change of perspective by naming it "the rising sun".

A number of perspectives are documented in the literature regarding whether or not and how traditional/indigenous knowledge should have a place in HE. Bitzer and

Menkvelde (2004:226) pose three questions answers to which could indicate the extent to which IK has a place in formal education. The questions are: "What can IK offer? How might it influence education in different levels of learning? What innovations could IK bring to existing bodies of knowledge? Converted into statements, the questions point to Bitzer and Menkvelde's awareness of the fact that IK, therefore traditional knowledge always existed before formal education. Traditional/indigenous knowledge can therefore be reasonably assumed to be forming a basis for formal education. It can influence learning and teaching in different levels of formal education. Traditional knowledge therefore has potential to bring new inventions in post-modern formal education.

Ndhlovu and Masuku (2004:282-283) base their argument for mainstreaming of indigenous knowledge in HE on at least two conceptual imperatives. One imperative is that all human beings possess an existing knowledge centre through which all societies develop their knowledge systems that define them. Another is about how knowledge and technology are shaped by and serve the environment from which they originate. In sub-sections 3.3.1 -3.3.2 I review these imperatives for their implications in the inquiry.

3.3.1 Notion of existing knowledge centre in cultural groups

"African communities can interact with the rest of the world from a position of strength if their education systems are rooted in locally established ways of doing things" (Ndhlovu & Masuku 2004:281). Ndhlovu & Masuku use this imperative to recommend need for re-examination of African customs, traditions, etc. with intention to unravel the philosophical understandings that made and kept traditional African education until the "moment" of colonial encounter.

I view Sesotho customs and other traditions as an embodiment of long-existing philosophies, deep thinking and oral traditional knowledge of indigenous Basotho. I regard these as locally established ways of living among ethno-Basotho. Such a

perception of Basotho's traditional knowledge on my part is consistent with Mapesela's (2004) perspective that Basotho's IK is a wealth of existing knowledge. Mapesela unpacks this knowledge for its potential as a tool for teaching in HE. Mapesela's position is that Basotho indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) are existing knowledge that must have a place in HE. This is indicated in the author's reference to them as reserves that must not only be empirically revisited and rethought for their role in the academy, but also for how they can be utilised in formal education "for the benefit of specific cultural groups..." (Mapesela 2004:316). Mapesela contends that the value of IK in HE lies in the survival of those who hold it close to their hearts. The author recommends that HE research should examine what the possible consequences for students' failure to use their IK in HE are. Mapesela's postulations and recommendation influenced me to interrogate the narratives by my participants for instances in which problems related to their acquisition of academic English proficiency benefitted or could have benefited from appeal to Sesotho traditional knowledge. Aspects of Sesotho TK in general were investigated in the study for how they can facilitate acquisition of proficiency in the English for management of knowledge in different academic disciplines offered in the English-medium NUL.

Still on the notion of pre-university entry ethno-cultural knowledge as potentially influential on construction of university-based knowledge, Nzewi (2005:286) recommends need for modern education to espouse oral traditions of students. The author for instance, says IKSs in the modern school system can make sense and a positive difference in learning when it is regarded as an appreciation, recognition and confirmation of one's intellectual knowledge protocol preserved in memory, symbols and other oral practices long before the imposition of the "brain-swapping" western literary and research scholarship. Bitzer & Menkveld (2004:230) cite studies such as that by Entwistle, Marton, Gibbs, Saljo, Ramsden in Housell & Entwistle (1997) to emphasise the importance of recognising variables such as students' cultural background in approaches to teaching and learning in HE.

The Sesotho culture with its traditions and relevant practices as referred to in the preceding chapter form the cultural background and reservoir of knowledge with which Basotho students presumably enter HE. Participants' narratives were constantly also interrogated for the extent to which practice of teaching at the NUL espoused Sesotho TK for the contribution it made/might make in acquisition of academic English proficiency among SSBSs students therein enrolled.

Elaborating on the importance of existing knowledge in the form of IK, Lillejord and Mkabela (2004:258) note that irrespective of whether they are African, European, Asian, Australian or American, all learners enter the formal education systems with informal knowledge from their indigenous cultural backgrounds. Such knowledge, according to these authors, takes the form of cosmological and ontological beliefs. The authors view this as knowledge constructed from the students' life-world and call it "knowledge of first order". In this inquiry values of Basotho as explained in Chapter 2 are understood as forming the knowledge of the first order of SSBSs at the NUL. This is why interaction with narratives of personal experience involved identification and analysis of cosmological, ontological values and beliefs of participants and how these impacted on their acquisition of academic English proficiency when they enrolled at the NUL.

3.3.2 The ecological environment as a knowledge and technological factor

The ecological environment is the environment in which humans, animals, plants and other forms of creation relate with each other. Ndhlovu and Masuku's (2004:282) perspective is that knowledge and technology best serve the ecological cosmos out of which they originate. This perspective is consistent with Jousse's oral-style theory with its recognition of the intertwined relationship between humans, their cosmos and knowledge creation. Ndhlovu and Masuku use this imperative to flay and problematise the philosophical thinking that makes Western-grounded knowledge systems in African HE absolute. This displeasure with the state of the art of educational practice in HE

drove the inquiry forward by challenging me to ask the question "but is this true of African HE? And if it is should it be remain so at all cost?"

Coupled with Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory about the relationship between the cosmos and knowledge construction, this imperative about ecological environment implies that the Sesotho TK and related indigenous technologies are embedded in and originate from the physical features of Lesotho, vegetation and type of animals in the country, as well as from Basotho their Bosotho and Sesotho and how they live with all cosmological conditions in this country. I adopted the understanding to perceive acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs as dependent on among other needs, the extent to which not only such students, but also institutional provisions take cognisance of the ecological environment as an academic English proficiency need.

Culturally, the institution would be in line with Bitzer and Menkvel'd's (2004:229) concept of IK and student learning in HE institutions which according to them,

"...represent pinnacles of authority in knowledge production, accreditation, legitimisation, and dissemination... are also accountable to society in that what their students learn should be valuable to not only the students themselves, but also to society at large".

Teaching at the NUL would appreciate not only the agricultural and other practices of the Basotho, but also the climatic conditions and physical structure of Lesotho for the role they may have in students' indigenised and therefore, effective use of academic English in different academic contexts.

The imperative as advanced by the cited authors influenced my perception of the Western-oriented NUL as a sub-cosmos with its own campus-based ecological and cultural set-up. The NUL as a campus is therefore an English-medium and academically ecological environment in which academic English plays a communicative role in maintenance of the relationship between the institution and students. This means that the institution not only shapes, but expects to be best served by the knowledge and

technologies that originate from it. One of the interests of the study was the extent to which participants' narratives depicted among others, whether or not and how NUL shapes and is academically served by knowledge from students' indigenous and modern environment for the benefit of acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

However, if one considers as academic sense Bitzer and Menkveld's (2004:287) argument that "what works for the Western human and societal background does not automatically become appropriate to, or viable in the African environment", then there is need to realise that however Western-oriented teaching may be at the NUL, the fact remains that the institution is physically based in a Lesotho ecological and cultural context. As such it should as Nkrumah (1965:45) would assert, bear in mind that once established on an African soil, an African university "must foster consciousness and be a nursery for African culture and nationalism". By implication Nkrumah's stance sounds an advocacy for African universities to align their instructional technologies and knowledge acquisition to those already existing as traditional knowledge of societies in which they (universities) are established.

Essentially, advocacy for integration of TK into HE seems guided by perception of it (traditional knowledge) as a cosmologically – grounded capital forming a basis for meaningful interaction with and construction of new knowledge at HE. The study also sought to establish how academic English proficiency as a vehicle for academic success in the ecological environment of the English-medium NUL can benefit from knowledge and technologies arising from the indigenous Sesotho ecological environment. Because it was believed that the study would result in among others, recommendations on strategies for pedagogically addressing the role of Sesotho TK in academic English, it became imperative to study the literature for some strategies for integrating African traditional knowledges (ATK) in African higher education (AHE). Some of these strategies are discussed in the next section.

3.4 STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING TK/IK INTO AFRICAN HE

The general concern among HE scholars is that African HE with Western/world knowledge systems (WKSs) as its strong basis, has from its genesis subjugated AIKSs - thus failing to co-exist with it (Bitzer & Menkveld 2004; Tisani 2004; Mapesela 2004; Wallner 2005; Ntsoane 2005; Nzewi 2005). Taylor (2004:9) criticises such as an assimilationist type of HE. Tisani (2004:180) acknowledges that mastery of Western-oriented HE is invaluable, but in the same breath, reproves it for failure to respond adequately to the needs and conditions of its consumers from diverse cultural backgrounds. The cited authors assert that it is about time African indigenous knowledge systems were integrated with HE Western knowledge systems. They refer to this position as a post-modernist stance which should be the guiding principle in efforts to integrate the two knowledge systems.

The authors recommend need for adoption of strategies for integrating TK/IKS in African HE institutions. In my synthesis, co-existence emerges as the main principle recommended for adoption. In the next section co-existence as the principle underlying mainstreaming of TK/IKS into AHE is discussed.

3.4.1 The co-existence principle for mainstreaming TK/IK into HE

On the importance of co-existence, Sefa Dei (2001:111, cited by Mapesela 2004:317) stresses that IKs as repositories of a people's knowledge, can be used for their benefit in formal education if allowed to co-exist with the "Western academy". Tisani (2004:174, 181) justifies co-existence on grounds that it imposes on HE institutions, the responsibility to offer authentic learning for which students must, through their different academic contexts, be exposed to real life situations. According to Tisani AIKSs as an aspect of authentic learning, is gaining recognition as an educational national resource for adoption in intercepting problems that continually threaten learning and teaching in HE.

Through their recommendation for recognition of TKs for their role in construction of knowledge in HE, Bitzer & Menkveld (2004) as repeatedly cited in this chapter appropriate Odora-Hoppers' (2001, cited by Bitzer & Menkveld 2004:230) position that remaking of knowledge in HE must preface work on curricula, research, and teaching methods in HE. According to Odora-Hoppers as cited, the knowledge reconstruction process should involve among others, a critical scrutiny of existing paradigms; establishment of epistemological foundations of existing academic practice; and identification of the limitations imposed by all these on HE students' creativity.

Stressing the need for eventuation of knowledge remaking, are also Bitzer & Menkveld (2004:228) who adopt Higgs, Higgs & Venter (2003) to recommend incorporation of IKSs into the development of HE curricula and projects; and design, testing and implementation of materials and methods for synthesis and integration of local and foreign, new and old knowledge. Bitzer & Menkveld (2004) view Odora-Hoppers' strategy of integration as a process of enabling indigenous knowledge systems an opportunity to reveal new perspectives and solutions to problems that have incapacitated learning by students from diverse cultural backgrounds. In sum, Tisani (2004:181) too recommends development and implementation of AIKSs- sensitive reconstruction of knowledge and tallying re-education in HE.

Tisani (2004:181) however, cautions in the recommendation for re-education in HE that integration of African indigenous knowledge [traditional knowledge] should not be juxtaposed with Western knowledge systems in a binary/contrastive thesis. Instead, the author recommends adoption of phenomenography and constructivism as knowledge reconstruction strategies to be in place. These are the subject of 3.4.1.1 -3.4.1.2 below.

3.4.1.1 Phenomenography

According to Tisani (2004:182-183), phenomenography is an approach in which context and the knowledge it embeds are regarded as the fundamental point of departure for

teaching and learning in HE. The approach provides for consideration and appreciation of the situational needs of students entering HE from the AIKSs background and builds learning on such students' indigenous cultural experiences.

On the same notion, Bitzer & Menkveld (2004:230) accent that HE institutions should ensure relevance of their curriculum and teaching by offering learning that is connected to students' IKSs. Stressing the same view, Le Roux's (2004:92) contents that the starting point of education and training of various kinds in HE institutions should actually be people's [students'] "life-worlds". According to Lillejord & Mkabel (2004:257), all this is because "higher education and teacher training have a particular obligation to provide a platform for African knowledge, identity and cultural creativity".

This study should not by any means be construed to be advocating adoption of pedagogy of politics of identity. It is not in favour of extremist pedagogical approaches. On the contrary, my study upholds democratic and eclectic approaches to construction of knowledge. I mean pedagogical approaches in which learning needs are understood and addressed on the basis of concrete knowledge of who the students that the education-practitioner meets daily in his/her courses are in terms of among others, their experience, their interests, preferences, ethnicity, identity, cultural background and how such knowledge can benefit professional and learning practice of the practitioner and the learner regarding acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

As referred to above, Tisani's (2004) and Bitzer & Menkveld's (2004) notion of phenomenography as a strategy for integrating TK/IK into teaching and learning HE makes sense. However, read well, it leaves unanswered some questions which signified my inquiry. The authors do not specify how HE should provide the platform for African knowledge. Specifically, the authors are silent about not only specific academic contexts in which African knowledges should be afforded a platform, but also about how these African knowledges can be utilised to facilitate construction of knowledge the specific academic contexts. By inquiring into the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in

academic English of SSBSs, the study sought to address the gap. The constructivist is the second of the strategies for construction of knowledge by integrating African traditional knowledge/AIKSs and WIKSs in HE teaching and learning. It is the subject of 3.4.1.2.

3.4.1.2 The constructivist strategy

The approach recognises that active participation of learners in their learning process enables them to build on their existing knowledge with new information – thus, leading to construction and reconstruction of new knowledge (Tisani 2004:181). It entails “an intertwining and integration” of the knowledge from students’ AIKSs and new knowledge systems in western-oriented HE. Tisani (2004:182) asserts that the educational advantage of this approach to integration lies in the fact that it gives students a multi-cosmological outlook which enables them to make meaning from more than one knowledge base.

The constructivist approach is therefore about appreciation of multiple truths as an accolade of harmonisation of IKs and formal education (Tisani 2004:182). The notion of multiple truths behind the constructivist approach to integration of knowledges was earlier noted by Kincheloe *et al.* (2000:10) in their advocacy for resistance of universal truths and recommendation for HE researchers to “search for other truths emanating from AIKSs and other systems”. The same view is also embodied in Mapesela’s (2004:318, 325) contention that such integration “enhances cultural consciousness and broadens experience of diverse cultures”. Mapesela cautions that a better understanding of IK should be a precondition for attempts to harmonise it with formal education. She justifies integration on the grounds that if left to monopolise teaching and learning, formal education alone cannot be a panacea for solution of all problems encountered by students from other cultural backgrounds.

The constructivist approach, which Tisani (2004) also calls intertwining juxtaposition of the co-existence of AIKSs and Western knowledge systems, is branded "hybridity" by Ndhivu & Masuku (2004:282). According to these authors, hybridity is a post-colonial or post-modernist stance used to argue that when co-existing cultures make contact, they each donate to the other such that the result is a hybrid culture. On this basis Ndhlovu & Masuku (2004:283) moot that African TKs and modern knowledge should be synthesised for the educational benefit they have for students. The authors actually argue for mainstreaming of ATKs in HE, and to this end, use the imperative of hybridity to reject as misconception, the idea that there are superior cultures which should subsume weaker cultures. As Cupane (2007) puts it all cultures are so equal in status that they can contribute equally positively to students' acquisition of academic knowledge. But what form should implementation of the constructivist approach to harmonisation of AIKSs and Western Knowledge systems take?

Tisani (2004) recommends implementation of the constructivist strategic approach in the form of an intertwining spiral. Unfortunately, Tisani does not provide an explanation of the "intertwining spiral" in the submission. This in my view leaves it (intertwining spiral) open to personal interpretation. In this study an intertwining spiral is understood as a teaching and learning strategy wherein educators and students engage in a process of constantly sourcing from their TK/IK knowledge background in a spiralling fashion as and when need arises to solve learning problems encountered in the new western/world knowledge setting thus generating and augmenting knowledge from the African traditional knowledge and the Western knowledge world views.

The spiral nature of the implementation process is, in my understanding, dynamic and complex. The process implies for instance that as they go back to source from their AIKS, students also bring into it (AIKS), new knowledge from the new context. Upon integration with students' existing TK/IK such imported knowledge results in new knowledge which gets spiralled back to the formal education context as a problem-solving strategy. The process therefore, affords the two knowledge systems an

opportunity to benefit and develop from each other. The strategy, it seems, should not be haphazard, but cognitively engaging and concept-based. Could academic subject-based integration therefore, be an example of a concept-based cognitively engaging strategy for ensuring co-existence of African and Western knowledges for knowledge construction in HE? The review of literature on practical use of IK/TK in teaching and learning of different academic subjects provided an answer to the question. In the next sub-section this strategy is presented.

3.4.1.3 The academic subject-specific strategy for co-existence

In the preceding sections proposition of the strategies - juxtaposition, hybridity, co-existence and integration is indicative of HE educators' position that traditional knowledge has a rightful place in HE. However, the gap in the stance lies in the fact that no *modus operandi* is provided. Indicative of this gap is Mapesela's (2004) observation that research on teaching and learning in HE is yet to establish not only how Sesotho TK/IK, but also how IKs in general, can find their way into the teaching and learning of different academic subjects. A specific area of focus in the study was how application of Sesotho TK enhances acquisition of proficiency in the English for mastery of subject-specific knowledge.

There is encouraging observation from the literature in its documentation of evidence that application of students' TL/IK facilitates acquisition of subject-specific knowledge in teaching and learning in HE. Luitel & Taylor (2006) for instance, report on a study in which Luitel dispelled the myth of culture-free mathematics by inquiring into the role of Nepali culture in the teaching and learning of Nepali school mathematics. Luitel found that the teaching of mathematics in Nepali HE was too Westnocentric to make sense to Nepali learners. The author drew from cultural activism (Freire 1993; Giroux 1993, cited in Luitel & Taylor 2006), the cultural nature of mathematics (D' Ambrosio 2000, cited in Luitel & Taylor 2006), and the critical mathematics pedagogy (Skousmose 1994, cited in Luitel & Taylor 2006) for his arguments for adoption of a culture-sensitive mathematics

education. On this basis, Luitel & Taylor (2006:18-20) posit that andragogical selection of learning experiences for learning as a meaning-making process is guided by cultural values and interests of the learners. These researchers view mathematics as "a sub-culture that sources from a discourse community and contemporary society".

Through their metaphor of linking learning with "the soil" (the ethno-cultural background and knowledge of the learner) for sustainability, Luitel & Taylor (2006:18) recommend construction and pedagogical enacting of culturally contextualised mathematics curricula referred to as ethno-mathematics by Taylor (2004:7). These researchers benchmark their adoption of the metaphor on D' Ambrosio's (2001, cited in Luitel & Taylor 2006:19) recommendation that local knowledge traditions be part of the mathematics curriculum content. According to these authors, there is need for teaching and learning in HE to adopt what they refer to as pedagogical contextualisation which involves employing local modes. Such an approach, they argue, acclimatizes teaching and learning in the local cultural context taking cognisance "of the local languages, historiography, myths, customs and so forth". In sum, Luitel & Taylor (2006:19) recommend adoption of culture-laden mathematics in Nepal for the benefit of Nepali learners. In the present study Luitel & Taylor's (2006) metaphor of linking learning with the soil for sustainability by investigating how knowledge of Sesotho historiography, the language Sesotho, myths, customs, and so forth is adopted to test how it can facilitate acquisition of the culture-informed academic English proficiency for learning individual areas of specialisation at the NUL.

The Zimbabwean experience too points to relevance of cultural context in teaching and learning mathematics. After a critical examination of the Great Zimbabwe Monument which was built between the 12th and 14th century by the Rozvi people who did not receive any mathematics education, Nyaumwe (2006:50) points to evidence of the positive relationship between application of cultural knowledge and acquisition of mathematical knowledge. Nyaumwe's work led to his contention that "each culture has its unique applications of mathematical concepts." He too recommends inclusion of

ethno-mathematics in teacher education. He posits that to this end, the socio-cultural approach to teaching, learning and training teachers for mathematics teaching should be the underlying principle. According to Nyaumwe (2005:57-59), the ethno-mathematical pedagogy allows students to develop a personal role in adoption and application of active learning strategies since "proficiency in applying mathematical concepts emerges from each individual through interaction with their cultural and physical environment".

Nyaumwe's postulation as cited above should not be caricatured to be proposing that there is one universal set of mathematical principles that are applied culturally in different ways. Also, I should not be misunderstood to be suggesting that there are culturally unique principles of mathematics. In fact as a non-specialist in mathematics myself, I have no room to make such bold uninformed assumptions. Instead, I understand Nyaumwe to be pointing to the role of one's TK in effective understanding and application of universal mathematical concepts. As a practitioner in English education myself, I was influenced by mathematics spcaialists such as Luitel & Taylor's (2006) and Nyaumwe's (2005) ethno-mathematics-oriented research to inquire into whether or not and how Sesotho TK can enhance the academic English proficiency of SSBSs in their different academic contexts.

Music and music education in HE is another of the academic subjects in which teaching and learning have benefited from application of IKSs. Joseph (2005) looked at the nature and implications of IKS in the field of music and music education in an Australian university. Data from the study revealed that as a result of incorporation of African indigenous knowledge systems, students gained greater understanding and appreciation of an unfamiliar genre and culture, thus developing "attitudes and understanding of the wider role of music education in society". Essentially, Joseph's study showed that "some aspects of African indigenous knowledge system correlate with established Western knowledge systems – thereby legitimising relevance of African

ways of knowing and transmission in the Western literacy-oriented teaching and learning context.

Functional recognition of African indigenous knowledge systems in formal education helps connect the disconnected. Joseph's (2005:296) instructional application of aspects of South African music in teaching music education in an Australian HE setup enabled his students to contextualise and transfer what he calls "epistemological and pedagogical insights from one society to another" Joseph cites Gilbert (2003) to argue in the study that "experience and understanding of one culture can aid in understanding another". I position myself within this construct to view Sesotho TK as a reserve of a wealth of experiences and insights to be investigated for their contribution to effective use of academic English for acquisition of academic knowledge at the English-medium NUL.

Science teacher education is another of the few academic areas that have been investigated for the role of African culture in their teaching. Upon auto-ethnographically investigating how school science, particularly physics, serves better the cultural development of local school communities in Mozambique, Cupane (2007) found that a culture-sensitive approach to understanding learning needs in the context of physics is necessary. The investigation led to a conclusion and recommendation that pedagogy of physics teacher education in Mozambique needed disorientation from a colonial pedagogical legacy to a post-colonialist, constructivist and culture-contextualised orientation.

Still about the teaching of science and its teacher education in Mozambique, Afonso, in Afonso & Taylor (2009), report on a critical self study which she undertook in pursuance of a culturally-inclusive philosophy of science teacher education in Mozambique. After her inquiry Afonso concluded that one of the major problems of science teacher education in Mozambique was marginalisation of the wealth of knowledge from the cultural context of student teachers and educators. Afonso's study provoked the need to

pursue a culture-sensitive philosophy of academic English education at the NUL. In the section below, documented literature on research and authors' opinions on academic English for knowledge acquisition in HE is commented on for the extent to which it espouses as a factor, cultural traditions of non-English speaking students in acquisition of academic knowledge in English-medium institutions.

The different academic subjects in which students must access knowledge through the medium of academic English are viewed by the researcher as socio-cultural contexts in which Sesotho-speaking background students are exposed to truths about Western knowledge. These truths are deemed additional to those which students bring from their Sesotho cultural contexts. At the NUL effectiveness of teaching and learning depends on proficiency in academic English.

Academic English, like the individual academic subjects in which it is a learning tool, is in its own right, a socio-cultural context with certain specific linguistic and communicative competencies to be mastered in context. This situation, in my experience-informed opinion is a challenge to Sesotho-speaking-background students studying through the medium of English. However, as indicated earlier, without evidence from formalised research, the situation may remain unaddressed. This is why I perceive my inquiry as transformative of research practice.

Recognition of the subject-specific role of ethno-knowledge in HE has found its way into computer sciences as well. Evidence of this is in the success stories as reported in studies undertaken in some South African universities such as Rhodes University (Dalvit, Murray, Terzoli & Zhao 2006; Dalvit, Murray & Terzoli 2007).

3.4.2 Summative perspectives

Interrogation of the literature on strategies for ensuring co-existence between African traditional/indigenous and HE-based Western knowledges provoked the following personal perspectives.

⚡ Mainstreaming of TK/IK should be informed by gaps pointing to it (IK/TK) as a learning/teaching need in HE

It is apparent from the foregoing assertions (*vide* 3.4.1) that co-existence would be meaningful and hopefully effective if preceded by critical examination of among others, the current curricular, practice of curriculum implementation, instructional materials, as well as current research practice for how they stand to benefit from integration of TK/IK for re]construction of knowledge in HE. By engaging participants in reflective narratives about their pleasant and unpleasant personal experiences with academic English and how their acquisition of proficiency in it benefitted or did not benefit from their TK/IK, this investigation is a scrutiny of current research practice. It is so in the sense that it was grounded on among others, perspectives from ethno-culture sensitive Africanisation, *ubuntu*, and living theories.

⚡ Need for recognition of equality of cultures and how they contribute to construction of knowledge in HE

I discern from positions of the authors cited in 3.4.1.2 that because of their equality, all cultures are by the same principle, reserves of knowledge which can be applied as and when need arises in new learning situations such as HE. The reflective experiential narratives by participants provided research-appraised insights regarding how Sesotho TK/IK and the mainly Western-oriented knowledge making the university culture can positively interface to facilitate acquisition of linguistic and functional knowledge of academic English.

↓ **Need for awareness of the role of contextual background and knowledge construction can facilitate mainstreaming of IK/TK into HE**

It seems from assertions on phenomenography (*vide 3.4.1.1*) that an appreciation and understanding of the cultural background of students should underpin teaching and learning in HE. This awareness of context can be associated with relevance of teaching strategy. I translate phenomenography into my inquiry in my perception of Sesotho TK and the country – Lesotho as the primary context in which English assumes the role of a non-mother-tongue medium for access to, and generation of knowledge. The NUL for instance, is situated in Lesotho which traditionally is a country of Basotho with their Sesotho cultural ways. Therefore, the great majority of its student and teaching personnel population comprises students and educators from a Sesotho-speaking background. It stands therefore, to reason that accessing knowledge through the medium of English at such an institution is likely to be more susceptible to influence (both negative and positive) by the hosting cultural milieu than it would be if located in a native English-speaking western country. Specifically, the institution is too immersed in a Sesotho cultural environment to ignore existence and potential impact of Sesotho TK/IK in construction of knowledge through the medium of English as a foreign language. Hence, the relevance of the main research question on how Sesotho TK can benefit academic English proficiency of SSBSs enrolling into the NUL.

I also conceive of the NUL as the secondary context forming the English-medium academic community into which one cannot qualify for membership without requisite proficiency in academic English. By drawing voluntary participants from a Sesotho-speaking cultural background in the context of Lesotho, the inquiry pursued an understanding of academic English proficiency needs of SSBSs from an ethno-context perspective.

✚ **Silence of HE research on how mediums of instruction can be strategies for mainstreaming TK/IK into HE**

There is minimal ethno-culture-sensitive research evidence regarding how co-existence can be ensured in teaching and learning in HE. In the absence of research focusing on among others, academic contexts, and related non-culture-biased strategies for mainstreaming TK/IK into AHE, approaches to co-existence remain hypothetical.

Students from a Sesotho-speaking background enter university with a capital of knowledge lived from their Sesotho cultural background. The challenge for them is how teaching at their institution assists them to freely intertwine this pre-university knowledge with the Western university-based knowledge to become effective users of the English for fulfilling the knowledge-construction demands of their different academic contexts. By inquiring into personal experiences of participants for how application of Sesotho TK enhances proficiency in academic English, the study becomes a knowledge construction strategy itself. This investigation established through an interpretive engagement with participants' experiential narratives how application of knowledge from traditional/indigenous livelihoods of Basotho as a cultural group enhanced acquisition of academic-context-specific English (*vide* Chapter 6).

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter served as a response to the subsidiary question on the role of TK in HE. To this end, the chapter reviewed literature on the place of African traditional knowledge in HE, the rationale for integration of African traditional knowledges in HE and strategies for integration of African traditional knowledges in HE. Throughout the chapter, I derive implications of the literature for the inquiry into how Sesotho TK can be an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs enrolling into an Africa-based English-medium university such as the NUL.

Under the rationale students' culture is identified as the knowledge centre and context for existing knowledge systems in all cultural groups. The ecological environment from which students enter university is recognised in the literature as a knowledge and technological factor to be reckoned with in HE teaching and learning.

Regarding whether or not teaching and learning in African HE espouses African traditional knowledge, the literature features criticisms levelled against HE for its marginalisation of knowledge from students' cultural background. It emerges also from the literature that exclusion of African traditional knowledge from teaching and learning results from among other things, the fact that HE research tends to be undertaken by less empathetic researchers with less cognitive grounding on issues related to students' cultural background and their potential in learning. Need for African HE to mainstream students' traditional knowledge is emphasised.

In a general sense, the literature on strategies for mainstreaming of traditional knowledge is characterised by recommendation for co-existence, integration, juxtaposition and hybridisation of African and Western knowledge in teaching and learning in African HE. On a more specific front, the literature documents empirical evidence of successful implementation of culture-sensitive approaches to teaching and learning specific academic subjects in HE. Such subjects are mathematics, physics education, music and music education as well as computer studies.

The study subscribes to neither the assimilationist nor resistant and essentialist approaches to understanding the role of African traditional knowledges in HE. Instead, it adopts a dynamic and flexible academic-context-based strategy towards a culture-sensitive understanding of how Sesotho traditional knowledge can benefit acquisition of knowledge through English by SSBSs at the English-medium NUL. Underlying the strategy are two fundamental understandings from literature. One is that HE knowledge cannot be fully explored and acquired without relating it to and contrasting it with students' traditional knowledge and experiences. The other understanding is that

teaching and learning in HE cannot be realised without language as a knowledge-conveying tool. This spells existence of an intertwined relationship between knowledge acquisition and language.

I wind the chapter to closure with what should be understood as my stance regarding my discussion and understanding of traditional and indigenous knowledge and what their implications are for acquisition of academic English proficiency by Sesotho-speaking-background students. My thinking does not border on essentialism. I depicted from documented scholarship aspects of essentialism which justify its exclusion from the thinking in this inquiry.

First proposed and outlined by Bagley in 1938, essentialism claims that certain attributes possessed by people, things, ideas, etc. are universal, permanent and non-dependent on context. Applied to education, the theory attaches importance to need for pedagogical focus on "essential educational elements" or "common core knowledge" (Nora & Cohen 1999:1; Blanford 2010:12). In implementing essentialist education, someone else whose policies cannot be influenced decides what will be learned, how instruction will be organised and under what circumstances learning will be evaluated (Gross, Shaw, & Shapiro 2003:15).

Essentialism as I interpret it in the context of education includes some features that would have no room in my type of inquiry. My thinking in this study is experience and context-oriented in that it derived an understanding of the relationship between application of TK and acquisition of proficiency in academic English from a critical interpretation of interpretive experiential narratives by participants in a specific context – namely, the Sesotho TK context in Lesotho and the Lesotho-based English-medium NUL. The study adopted Freire's (1993:71) conception of teaching and learning as "a process of inquiry" in which learners must be free to draw from all sources including their cultural background to form knowledge. It is therefore not essentialist but borders more on the constructivist/critical theory (*Vide 3.4.1.2*) thinking in which the learner is

perceived and respected as a problem-solver and thinker who given a chance, is capable of making meaning through his/her individual experience in the physical and cultural context in which he/she has to interact with and construct new knowledge (LeoNora & Cohen 1999:2).

As a matter of fact in this investigation and particularly on the basis of the essence of this chapter, I considered current practices in many African higher education institutions as still too essentialist to realise the need for instructional dynamism and flexibility that includes among others, need for recognition of the ethno-cultural being and context of the student for its role in acquisition and construction of knowledge in the university culture. The scholarship reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 of this study should not be misrepresented to be anti-Western. Instead, I have through these chapters, attempted to document the constructivist, culture-sensitive and transformative perspectives which the authors hold and recommend for adoption in research, teaching and learning in HE. It is therefore my contention that the essentialist thinking is too traditionalist an approach to hold in the current post-positivist and transformative perspective of HE which as the literature amply shows in this chapter, must be characterised by democratic, ethno-culture-sensitive and eclectic visions, mission statements, values, policies and curriculum strategies. Essentialism promotes culture lag and so has little place in a culture-sensitive study such as mine. Contrary to postulations of essentialism my inquiry adopted a position that all cultures have potential to contribute to education. I adopted a culture-sensitive approach to understanding academic English proficiency needs of students from a Sesotho-speaking background. I therefore, acceded to criticism of essentialism as too conservative, rigid against change and consequently, unlikely to respond to turbulences such as students' frustrations with challenges posed by incompetence in academic English.

A study of the literature for definitions, notions and theoretical underpinnings of academic English was therefore imperative. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER



DEFINITIONS AND NOTIONS OF ACADEMIC ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The use of English as a world language continues to grow at a rapid pace. As part of this growth, English is increasingly being used as a medium of instruction at university level in countries where the first language is not English (Flowerdew & Miller, 1996:121).....They are entering learning contexts where their academic skills in English play a key role in their academic success (Elson-Green, 2007:7).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Vithal & Jansen (1997:19) aver that the study of scholarship can “sometimes review concepts within the field of study in such a way that the review constitutes the conceptual framework for the study” [or a significant part of it]. In line with this assertion the literature study in this chapter first underpins academic English with conceptual perspectives about academic language and proceeds to focus on elements of Scarcella’s (2003) academic English proficiency framework. The chapter interrogates the framework mainly for what its dimensions imply for the study. The literature review includes a critique of previous studies on academic English proficiency needs for the extent to which they address the role of TK in academic English proficiency of HE students from non-English-speaking-backgrounds (NESBS). The main sections of this chapter are therefore, notions underpinning academic English, the conceptual framework for academic English, implications of previous research on academic English for the study and concluding remarks.

4.2 CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Language educationists and researchers in language learning and teaching advance several and generally complementary substantiations about academic language and its requisite proficiencies. Cummins (1999:2), one of the leaders in second language learning and literacy development research asserts that a fundamental step in the direction of understanding language proficiency is the need to distinguish between conversational day-to-day language for social interaction or basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and the language for academic purposes. In several of his published research and other works Cummins (1991; 1992; 2000) clarifies the distinction by arguing that basic interpersonal communication skills and language for academic purposes are extreme ends of a context-embedded and context-reduced continuum. This author states that BICS is the context-embedded end in that it is communication that provides for negotiation of meaning through meaningful interpersonal and situational cues such as gestures and facial expressions to solicit or facilitate understanding during communication. As such, the everyday language for social interaction, in comparison to language for academic purposes, is less arduous in terms of following the communication act.

Conversely, language for academic purposes or academic language as the context-reduced end of the continuum is said to rely mainly on "linguistic cues" to meaning-making. As such, language for academic purposes is defined in functional terms that situate it in the academic setting. Zwiers (2007:1) for instance, defines academic language as "a set of words and phrases that:

- ✚ Describe the content-area knowledge and procedures,
- ✚ Express complex thinking processes and abstract concepts and create cohesion and clarity in written and oral discourse".

Matsoso (2007:168) terms such, the language for internalisation and effective communication of knowledge derived from different academic contexts. She nicknames it the language of schooling and academic success.

Cummins (1999:5) conceives of academic language as language that goes well beyond that used in most social conversations, for it is only through structured talk, reading and writing about academically relevant content that students will learn the words needed to engage in class discussions and to interact with what they read in different subjects. Academic language is therefore a formidable and complex task which requires high levels of cognitive involvement and demands of students the need to "stretch their linguistic resources and knowledge to the limit." Hence, the need to refer to competence in it as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) which Cummins in all of his works referred to in this section, recommends that university lecturers should acquire specialised competence, therefore, training in.

The literature points to several assertions about the relationship between cognition and academic language. In the first instance, is conception of acquisition of academic language proficiency (ALP) as a continuous process that develops throughout the period of schooling. Matsoso (2007:144, 167) holds the same opinion. The author views, academic language as intertwined with cognitive thinking which is important in creation of knowledge.

Second, is the different authors' conception of the relationship between academic language and cognition in ability-oriented terms which are seemingly grounded in critical-thinking. For instance, Webb (2002:52) discusses academic language as an important aspect of pedagogical practice in HE. In this capacity academic language involves students' ability to collect and analyse information, ability to interpret and manage information for problem-solving purposes, as well as ability to critically evaluate different points of view. Webb points to the intertwined relationship between cognition and academic language through his assertion that academic expertise in academic

study requires advanced cognitive skills "all of which are at least (co-) dependent on language". The same view is held by Matsoso (2007:166) who concluded after her study of critical-thinking of HE students' from non-English speaking-backgrounds that acquisition and demonstration of knowledge in higher education are benchmarked on students' critical thinking ability, proficiency and communicative competence in the use of the medium of instruction. Specifically about English as a medium of teaching and learning Matsoso asserts that academic language is also critical thinking-embedded in that it challenges students to display knowledge of the language for fulfilling the cognitive demands of interpretation, making judgments, explaining, analysing and others. Literature therefore points to the need to perceive academic English and cognitive development as closely related. Lockyear (2002:58) associates academic success with students' ability to critically analyse views of other academics, and organisation of thoughts to a high degree of coherence, confidence and competence in manipulation of the medium of instruction for understanding and assimilation of ideas and concepts.

Guerrero (1999) is another of the language educationists affirming the relationship between academic language and cognition. However, unlike others Guerrero offers a classified perception which depicts academic language as entailing organisational and pragmatic components, each with specific competence requirements. Each one of these is expounded on below.

4.2.1 The organisational component

According to Guerrero (1999), this component involves grammatical and textual competencies. Grammatical competence refers to mastery of all aspects of grammar that are requisite for expression of knowledge of academic content. Textual competence involves knowledge of cohesive markers, rhetorical organisation skills, interpretation of written material and lectures, all of which are necessary for management of academic tasks in higher education.

Although not necessarily discussing them under a specific topic, Webb (2002:53) is more explicit about aspects which make the organisational component of academic language. For instance, after investigating academic language needs of non-English-speaking-background students at the University of Pretoria, Webb concludes that these include functional knowledge of technical discourse genres; patterns of verbal behaviour; development of descriptive, argumentative texts in different subjects; strategies for making contact or critically interacting with written text. Webb deems it also important to understand organizational academic language component as inclusive of knowledge assessment terms such as *name, describe, discuss, explain, determine, compare, distinguish, define, clarify, criticise, draw etc.* Matsoso (2007:142) per her study of verb choices for knowledge assessment in HE calls these the 'most-commonly used task-focusing verbs'. Matsoso (2007:156) establishes from the same study that these terms are cross-curricular in that they are used for task formulation in nearly all academic subjects.

Webb specifies that also relevant as organisational components of academic language are discourse connectors normally used in to indicate the additive, adversarial, temporal or causal relationships in text development. These include markers such as *furthermore, namely, therefore, consequently, because of, since, if, and then*, to name but a few. One of the interests of the inquiry was how application of knowledge of Sesotho enhances mastery of organisational components in English.

4.2.2 The pragmatic component

Guerrero (1999:6) posits that the pragmatic component is about sociolinguistic competencies. The author refers to academic language as implicit of the ability to use language appropriately in different communication contexts. Appropriacy, according to Guerrero, is a category of communicative competence which refers to functional knowledge of what language is appropriate in a given situation. It is guided by

awareness of variables that include setting, participants, purpose, channel and topic as briefly explained below.

4.2.2.1 Setting awareness

Setting awareness implies the communicator's functional knowledge of the language appropriate for a specific setting. It is therefore, location-sensitive.

4.2.2.2 Participant awareness

This type of awareness suggests that one is informed about the calibre of the direct and indirect audience involved in the communication act. It is participant-sensitive.

4.2.2.3 Purpose awareness

This is about knowledge of the appropriate language for achievement of the aim of the communication act. It is about proficiency in the language of acquisition of knowledge.

4.2.2.4 Channel awareness

Channel awareness implies knowledge of appropriate mode (written and/or spoken) of language to use in a particular setting, to a specific audience for a specific purpose. It is about sensitivity to the communication genre.

4.2.2.5 Topic awareness

This refers to mastery of appropriate language to use around/about a particular subject of communication. Essentially, Guerrero's (1999) pragmatic component of academic language is about demonstration of communicative competence in the language of acquisition and communication of knowledge. Communicative competence in this study is deemed to be about functional knowledge of the following:

- ✚ With whom,
- ✚ Why,
- ✚ How and
- ✚ What language is used for.

The pragmatic component is therefore about the socio-cultural-orientedness of academic language proficiency.

4.2.3 Summative perspectives

At least four implications were immediately notable in the cited authors' assertions about the relationship between cognition and academic language. These are:

- ✚ The need to identify academic language proficiency needs of students, particularly those of students studying in languages other than their ethno-languages.
- ✚ Acquisition of academic language proficiency is not automatic but dependent on formal instruction.
- ✚ Academic language is a non-haphazardly acquired, but a dynamic, cognitively demanding and discipline-bound phenomenon that impels need for mastery of a variety of linguistic, and socio-cultural aspects of medium of teaching and learning.

- ↓ There is need for awareness of academic-context-specificity of academic language and therefore, need for relevant training of education-practitioners across disciplines.
- ↓ Academic language is the language for specific and general academic purposes.

What do the forgoing perceptions imply for the inquiry? The study as indicated in the research concern and main research question, sought to understand how Sesotho TK can be an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs enrolling into English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL in Lesotho. The understandings about academic language have implications for this inquiry. Firstly, if as discovered from the literature, academic language is cognitively more arduous for students for whom mediums of instruction are foreign, those entering the Lesotho-based English-medium NUL from ethno-backgrounds such as Sesotho are even more challenged by among others, the fact that they are studying in a HE institution situated in a county where English as a foreign language has a limited socio-function in day-to-day lives of Basotho. It therefore became imperative to pursue an understanding of academic English proficiency needs of such students from this perspective.

Secondly, if the cognitively demanding nature of academic language implies need for identification of relevant needs of students, in this inquiry I contended that such an understanding should be informed by research undertaken from the ethno-culture-sensitive "I" perspective. Such a contention stems from my personal experience with how application of my Sesotho TK benefitted my proficiency in English. The contention comes from awareness of the scarcity of research on the role of students' TK/IK in acquisition of mediums of instruction and how if it were done, such research would accordingly improve learning and teaching practices of students and education-practitioners. An understanding of what academic English involves and its implications for the study became necessary. In this chapter this is pursued through a review of the literature for notions, definitions and a conceptual framework of academic English.

4.3 NOTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF ACADEMIC ENGLISH

For their concept of academic English (AE), also termed English for academic purposes (EAP), some authors draw from understandings about language in general. As a basis for their notions of academic English/English for academic purposes, Hyland & Hamp-Lyons (2002) recapitulate fundamental characteristics of language. First, the authors observe that language is language for explaining what students need and use to learn for purposes of creating, interpreting and communicating knowledge from academic texts. Secondly, Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002: 2) note that language is a context-bound phenomenon varying in use according to situational and socio-cultural contexts. These authors distinguish between situational and socio-cultural language. Situational language is language for a particular purpose about a particular subject-matter, to a particular audience. Socio-cultural language is language as shaping and shaped by attitudes, beliefs and assumptions held by the initiator and recipient of text.

Translated into the study, the foregoing notions about language portray a paradoxical scenario for students studying through English as a non-mother-tongue medium. These students must master the discourse of English for successful negotiation of meaning and construction of knowledge that is embodied in their different academic subjects. As they do this, they must, as Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002: 4) assert, appreciate that academic English is the language of the academic socio-cultural group and like their own ethno-language Sesotho, is closely linked with the beliefs, values and attitudes of its community. Academic English should, as further posited by Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, be learned for among others, purposes of understanding and interpreting the academic socio-culture of which it is a part. The study in question was also interested in how aspects of Sesotho TK such as values, belief systems, attitudes, etc. can interact with those of the literate English medium academic socio-cultural setting to benefit acquisition of the English for the purposes indicated by Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:4).

A further observation made by Hyland & Hamp-Lyons about characteristics of language as a basis for understanding academic English is that language is constructed, used and manipulated in powerful ways to influence other languages. Such influence as I observe, can be positive or negative depending on the nature of the encounter and preparedness of those involved to handle the situation. In the context of this study this is understood to imply that Sesotho as a language and culture has the potential to intervene in its native speakers' encounter with English as a medium of teaching and learning in higher education. The study aimed at establishing from participants' experiential reflections how Sesotho TK can be manipulated and used to positively influence students' proficiency in academic English for accessing academic knowledge at the English-medium NUL. Another of the interests of the study was whether or not the pedagogical practice at the NUL is cognizant of and espouses this potential. Such an institutional move would depend on among others. the extent to which academic English as a concept is understood.

4.3.1 Academic English

Authors differ in their perceptions of academic English. Some conceive of it in brief definitional terms; while others are elaborative on what it entails. The commonly held view is that there is a definite distinction between the English for everyday basic interactional social services and academic language. Against this background, academic English is therefore generally understood as the English for learning purposes. It is the English used in study settings which are particularly but not exclusively in higher education where the main purpose of language learning is for facilitation of students' ability to manage the demands of chosen academic specialisations. The same view is held by Elson-Green (2007: 7; Krashen & Brown 2007: 10) in their perception of academic English as the language that students come to university to learn for synthesis and communication of knowledge derived from different academic disciplines.

Scarcella (2003: 1) views academic English in learning and socio-economic terms. As such, academic English entails multiple and complex features. It also involves higher order-thinking in the form of conceptualising, inferring, inventing, testing, etc. It is viewed in terms broader than mastery of writing, reading, speaking and listening systems. In this complex fashion, academic English is associated with academic success and completion of studies in HE. Academic English offers more opportunity for professional advancement and financial rewards. Scarcella however, notes with concern that academic English continues to suffer policy and instructional exclusion due to a misunderstanding of its importance in ensuring students' functional communicative competence in academic settings.

A similar perception was earlier documented by Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002: 3) who assert that English for academic purposes is the English for research and instruction. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons posit also that academic English focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts. The authors further point to the intrinsic relationship between critical thinking, socio-cultural context and academic English in their assertion that it is about the grounding of instruction in the understanding of the cognitive, social and linguistic demands of specific academic disciplines.

Academic English is understood also in terms of both the educational levels it is most suited to and the pedagogical implications thereof. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002:3) in particular, opine that it is not only conventionally associated with university level learning and teaching but is also with the need for practitioners to develop in students, new literacy skills for participating in particular academic and cultural contexts"; thus going beyond mere mastery of conventional communication skills. It is therefore English of the academy. Academic English calls for high-level of competence in skills for reading, writing and engaging in substantive conversations in different academic subjects.

Consistent with Cummins (2000) and contemporaries in the distinction they draw between language for basic interpersonal communication purposes and language for academic purposes as discussed in 4.2 above, some authors differentiate between everyday English and academic English. Zwiers (2007:4) for instance, asserts that academic English is full of new subject-specific words, phrases, figurative expressions, grammatical structures and communication strategies that render it more formidable than the English for day-to-day social interaction. This author argues that academic English is therefore, as good as a third language in academic situations where English as both a subject and medium of instruction, is a non-mother-tongue language for students. Advancing the same notion, Scarcella (2003:6) opines that learners from communities in which English is not often used, never acquire proficiency in it as a medium of learning.

The argument put forward by Scarcella and Zwiers has relevance to students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In the case of Lesotho most of these students enter university from a linguistically isolated community in terms of everyday and academic English. These students are faced with the challenge of having to access academic knowledge in English as their third language. In this study, I perceived this as a complex and academically challenging situation which can only be best understood from the perspectives of those involved in, and most directly affected by it. I viewed this as a predicament situation for research to unpack.

Academic English is a register or variety of English used in professional and academic books and texts. It is characterised by area-specific linguistic features (Scarcella, 2003:9). This position about academic English is consistent with that held by Webb (2002) as cited in 4.2 of this chapter. The understanding implies that students studying in English-medium HE institutions should be register-literate in the English of their specialization subjects regardless of whether or not they are non-native speakers of such a medium. The next section outlines the types of English these students should be linguistically and communicatively competent in.

4.3.2 Types of academic English

In addition to the foregoing understandings, academic English is conceptualised in divisional terms. Mo (2005:62) conceives of the divisions as English for general academic purposes (EGAP) and English for specific academic purposes (ESAP). The former (EGAP) refers to skills and English that cut across academic disciplines. This understanding implies that HE students need to acquire forms of English that would enable them to use it generally, but more academically.

English for specific academic purposes (ESAP) on the other hand is about mastery of linguistic features that distinguish one academic discipline from others. ESAP implies need for knowledge of English that is unique to individual subject areas. This particular division clarifies the notion of the language of "the science" as understood by Webb (2002:52) in his argument that individual academic disciplines are sciences with their own language forms which must be mastered by all students in English medium HE institutions.

Academic English, like all academic languages, is not monolithic. It therefore calls for a sociolinguistic understanding which depicts it as characterized by distinctive linguistic features and rule-governed systems of communication. This type of English language is deemed more appropriate in HE than it is in other contexts. It varies with respect to factors that include topic, purpose, situation, region, social class and ethnicity (Scarcella 2003:10). There is also a view that academic English is dynamic by virtue of continually evolving and shaping meaning in different educational contexts. This perception implies that acquisition of academic English is not terminal because it shifts to meet the literacy demands of the various tasks that students have to undertake in learning different academic disciplines (Scarcella, 2003:10).

The essence of the foregoing general observations is that academic English is structurally correct English that is cross-curricular and discipline-specific for purposes of

successfully doing school in English medium educational settings such as the NUL in the case of Lesotho. According to Scarcella (2003:6), incompetence in academic English leads to exclusion of one from participating in the educated society. According to Mo (2005:62) extended analyses of academic English for what it involves has over the years, revealed that functional knowledge in the register, rhetorical and discourse aspects, study skills as well as academic English-specific learning needs, are some of the credentials for membership to the academic community. These aspects are clarified for their implications for the inquiry.

(a) The register

Historically, analysis of academic English for its register was based on the assumption that some grammatical and lexical forms of English are more typical of scientific and technical writings than they are of general English (Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998, cited in Mo, 2005:63). Against this background, the teaching of academic English, syllabus design and development of instructional materials for it seemingly have to focus on subject-area-oriented and therefore restricted range of grammar and lexicon. Considering that academic English is English for management of academic discipline-based knowledge, it makes academic sense to conclude that it is academic discipline-bound. For my inquiry this suggests that NUL students need to demonstrate linguistic and communicative competence in the grammar and lexis of their different academic disciplines. The issue of register therefore provoked several questions, answers to which were sought in the interpretive narratives of participants. Such questions were: Are Sesotho-speaking students aware of the subject-oriented nature of academic English? What pedagogical practices does the NUL have in place for development of proficiency in concepts such as subject-oriented English register? Are the NUL SSBSs aware of the role that application of Sesotho traditional knowledge can have in their acquisition of proficiency in academic-context-specific English?

(b) Rhetorical and discourse competence

Mo (2005: 63) draws from Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) to posit that rhetorical and discourse competence refers to how sentences merge as discourse from which textual meaning is sourced. This position calls for academic English courses syllabi to be developed with a focus on organisational patterns such as markers of cohesion and coherence in spoken and written texts. The present study is among others, premised on documented literature indicating that oral Sesotho text observes specific organisational devices in the form of rhetorical and discourse patterns. Thus, communicative competence in Sesotho is measured also by its users' ability to develop or produce organised spoken-text – especially for formal communication contexts such as *lipitso* (public gatherings), *liphupung* (funerals) and different ceremonies. This character is not unique to Sesotho text in that written text in the print-oriented HE culture, mastery of certain discourse and rhetorical rules is expected of members of the HE community for academic achievement to be realized.

For purposes of this study, I drew from the contrastive and comparative analyses (Brown 1980) to assert that depending on specific circumstances, use of some contrasting and comparing aspects in Sesotho TK and English can be explored for how they inform proficiency in the students' medium of learning in HE. It was for this reason that in the study narratives of personal experience were interrogated for among others, participants' awareness of how knowledge of Sesotho rhetorical and discourse devices can facilitate their understanding of rhetorical and discourse devices in the English for acquisition and communication of knowledge.

(c) Study skills analysis

Mastery of the rhetorical and discourse aspects of academic English does not automate achievability of proficiency in academic English. Knowledge and application of study skills is still needed to enhance learners' proficiency in academic English. According to Mo (2005:63), study skills in academic English include reasoning, interpreting abilities

and others which challenge higher-order thinking. Implicit here is the Vygotskian theory (Vygotsky 1986) about the intrinsic relationship between thought and language development. This notion of academic English is in line with that advanced about academic language proficiency in the previous chapter, particularly Matsoso's (2007:162) assertion that critical thinking skills are in their own right, contexts for acquiring competence in academic English.

Effective use of Sesotho as a language and culture involves the need to think and interact with the environment and its people critically. This need is embodied in cultural aspects such as value systems, belief systems, attitudes, as well as social practices and behaviours, most of which are reflected in Sesotho proverbs, customs and norms which are a normal adornment of communicative practice in oralate Sesotho. Furthermore, the ability to analytically listen to and use spoken Sesotho effectively is embedded and informally acquired in the nurturing practices of Basotho. With regard to spoken Sesotho, eloquence, fluency and communicative competence are measured by ability to choose and use appropriate words and sentences for explanations, interpretations and other higher-order skills required for articulate and persuasive deliverance in different situations.

Critical ability is equally fundamental in spoken Sesotho. Just as it is necessary for interaction with written text, the listener's ability to meaningfully interrogate explanatory, interpretive, inferential and judgmental statements for synthesis of the texts is a study skill which is acquired informally in the different educational activities and practices forming the Sesotho cultural milieu. Coming from such a background, SSBSs can be assumed to have a knowledge reserve to source from to solve problems encountered in academic English contexts when need arises. The investigation sought to determine from the experiential narratives, participants' awareness of how the information-processing skills normally acquired from the Sesotho ethno-cultural background enhance understanding and application of study skills requisite for acquisition of knowledge in their areas of specialization at the English-medium NUL.

(d) Learning needs analysis

Needs analysis is in fact regarded as one of the key issues in the understanding of and teaching for mastery of the English for learning (Mo 2005:63). Analysis of learning needs, according to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), cited in Mo (2005:63), is a highly involved process. It involves among others, consideration of the process of learning and student motivation; working out what is needed to enable students to reach the academic target through English as a medium of learning and on this basis, exploiting how best the identified academic English-related needs can be pedagogically addressed. Analysis of needs also takes cognizance of the fact that different students learn in different ways. The understanding has implications for the present study. For instance, the fact that English as the medium of teaching and learning at the NUL is a non-mother-tongue language for Basotho students has motivational and pedagogical implications for not only such students, but their educators as well. Also, by virtue of being non-mother-tongue speakers of English as the medium for acquiring knowledge, SSBSs are therefore different and likely to learn in different ways from those of their colleagues from English-speaking backgrounds.

I as the insider-implicated researcher in the present inquiry, hold a view that the current perception of academic-English-related learning needs should be reviewed. Granted, academic English itself is a learning need for academic achievement. It is even more so because of its difference from everyday English. The problem is that university lecturers, because of their assumption that English Language as a subject equips students with the English for learning, take academic English proficiency for granted (Matsoso 1995:112). It is a position in this inquiry that by virtue of being non-native-speakers of English as a medium of learning at university, SSBSs therefore have more learning needs. One such need, and making the subject of this inquiry, is students' Sesotho TK. However, since in the absence of empirical evidence such a view of knowledge would be subject to questioning, an experience-informed inquiry based on the "I" perspective had to explore Sesotho TK for how it is a need for acquisition of

proficiency in academic English by SSBSs studying at the NUL. The inquiry determined perceptions that participants hold about academic English as a learning need. Specifically, it focused on how traditional knowledge of SSBSs is a learning need for mastery of English of meeting the demands for knowledge construction in different academic contexts in HE. Is this a culture-sensitive "win-win" situation kind of inquiry? Perhaps it is.

Proficiency in academic English as a learning need must be understood in the context of some existing frameworks that are benchmarked on extensive literature review. One such framework has been developed by Scarcella (2003) as the conceptual framework for academic English. It is the subject of section 4.4 below.

4.4 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ENGLISH

This section opens with a presentation of Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework and proceeds to motivate for adoption of such a framework to underpin an understanding of academic English as a concept in this inquiry.

4.4.1 Scarcella's conceptual framework for academic English

A number of reasons led to adoption of Scarcella's conceptual framework for academic English in this inquiry. Firstly, unlike other understandings which confine the socio-cultural aspect of academic language to the literate educational socio-cultural settings, Scarcella's academic-English conceptual framework stresses the importance of personal socio-cultural factors that affect particular students' learning and linguistic choices for academic survival. Scarcella's framework does not in the first instance, insist on "perfect error-free" competence in academic English. As its proponent says, it does not confine an understanding of academic English to surface-level formal descriptions of the features of language. In the present study, noting the "personal socio-cultural" aspect of academic English signifies appreciation of the fact that some students as individuals

enter the formal secondary socio-cultural setting from an ethnic primary one. Such a background, I assumed on the basis of personal experience as a former student of the NUL, could, depending on individual circumstances and related needs of individual learners, become an academic English proficiency need. My personal experience with the circumstance-dependent potential of my Sesotho TK to impact positively on my academic English proficiency also led to an assumption that ethno-knowledge therefore, could have perceptual and pedagogical implications for understanding academic English proficiency needs of SSBSs in English-medium HE institutions of which the NUL is part. However, in the absence of formal research, such assumptions would remain questionable to scholarship. Hence my decision to embark on an auto-ethnographic inquiry in which participants shared their life of personal experiences with how Sesotho TK can be/is an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs enrolling into the English-medium NUL.

In this inquiry Scarcella's conceptual framework merited rejection of the view that proficiency in academic English cannot be taught since it consists of multiple evolving discourses and is assumed to already exist upon students' enrolment in English medium institutions. In step with the notion of academic language as a key to membership into the academic community, Scarcella (2003:6-7) argues that academic English must be formally taught because it is needed by all students for long-term academic success and participation in educated society. I perceived relevance of Scarcella's conceptual framework to my inquiry based first on my personal experience background as a Sesotho-speaking background student at the NUL and secondly on Cummins' (1999; 2000) and Scarcella's (2003) contention that academic English deserves pedagogical attention. About the NUL SSBSs in particular, this helped my argument that academic English as a non-mother-tongue medium of teaching and learning is more of a challenge to pedagogical practices of HE institutions which are predominantly populated by students from non-English-speaking backgrounds such as the Sesotho ethno-cultural background. But I had to concretise such a position through research.

Further signifying adoption of Scarcella's framework in this inquiry is its comprehensive consolidation of notions and definitions of academic English as provided by different authors and researchers referred to earlier in the chapter. Moreover, Scarcella's framework has been referred to by some authors too often to ignore. In sum, it is the extensive literature study grounding Scarcella's conceptual framework for academic English that merited its adoption for operationalisation of the term - academic English in this inquiry. In the next sub-section the framework is presented with an explanation of each one of its dimensions- namely, the linguistic, the cognitive and the socio-cultural.

4.4.2 The linguistic dimension

The linguistic dimension is viewed as central to the understanding of academic English. It refers to mastery of the phonological (sound-related), lexical (meaning-related), grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse features of academic language. Scarcella criticises previous scholars such as Canale and Swain (1980), and Canale (1983) for confining the linguistic dimension of academic English to grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. According to this author, this was a minimal understanding of the construct academic English. Instead, Scarcella's linguistic dimension is more accommodative with addition of two additional componential aspects to the previous dimension – namely, the phonological and the lexical competence. Table 1 below is an adapted presentation of Scarcella's (2003:12) concept of the linguistic dimension of academic English by type of linguistic component and requisite proficiency. It is followed by a brief discussion of each component.

Figure 4.2.2 An adapted descriptive summary of the linguistic components of academic English

Linguistic Dimension	Requisite Competence/proficiency
Phonological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⬇ Knowledge of phonological features of academic English (stress, intonation, sound patterns) ⬇ Knowledge of graphemes, and symbol systems of English.
Lexical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⬇ Knowledge of the forms and meanings of English words used across academic disciplines as well as in everyday situations outside of the academic settings). ⬇ Knowledge of formation of academic words (prefixes, roots & suffixes, parts of speech of academic words together with the grammatical constraints governing academic words.
Grammatical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⬇ Ability to make sense of and use the grammatical features (morphology & syntax) of English for developing and understanding from different writing genres (argumentative, descriptive, analytic, definitional, evaluative, etc). ⬇ Knowledge of more complex rules of punctuation
Sociolinguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⬇ Knowledge of an increased number of functions of the English language commonly used across and within academic fields. ⬇ Knowledge of an increased number of genres requisite across and within academic fields.
Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⬇ Knowledge of academic writing genre-specific discourse (discourse-transitional markers/ features), which in reading help formation of perspectives, seeing relationships and following the lines of thought and drawing conclusions about what is being read.

4.4.2.1 The phonological component of the linguistic dimension

Unlike Cummins (2000) who views everyday English as playing a minimal role in enhancement of students' proficiency in academic English, Scarcella (2003:11) argues that for students to use academic English proficiently, they must learn the phonological features of everyday English. Scarcella advises that academic words, particularly those borrowed by some academic disciplines from other languages (*de jure, facile etc*), impose on learners the need for knowledge of new stress and sound patterns.

Scarcella observes that for effective academic reading, the phonological component of the linguistic dimension calls for knowledge of graphemes and arbitrary sound-symbol correspondences. The component also includes need for knowledge of the English spelling which as rightly observed by Scarcella (2003:13) and others (Delpit, 1998; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000, cited in Scarcella, 2003:13), poses serious challenges for students due to the fact the English spelling is often irregular.

Given that phonology has to do with the sound system of a language, it is therefore oral. This confirms Jousse's (2000) notion about the natural oralateness of all languages (*vide* 2.4). Translated to the study, this implies that the SSBSs at the NUL enter university with a knowledge baggage of the sound and stress system of their Sesotho language. This knowledge can either negatively and/or positively impact on their encounter with the same system of the academic English, thus imposing an academic challenge that merits identification and pedagogical attention in the interest of acquisition of academic English proficiency for successful management of academic tasks in their different areas of specialisation. Therefore, the study's foci were not only how the phonological components of Sesotho as a language and those of the academic English interface, but also on the pedagogical implications of the interface for mastery of stress patterns, sound system and sound-symbol correspondences for speaking and reading effectively in academic English by Basotho students studying at the English medium NUL.

4.4.2.2 The lexical component of the linguistic dimension

Scarcella draws from ample literature study and cites authors such as Nagy & Herman (1987), Anderson & Nagy (1992), Nation (1990; 2001) to maintain that academic English is characterized by three types of words - namely, general words used across academic disciplines and everyday situations outside of academic settings; technical words used in specific academic fields; and non-technical academic words used across academic fields. As earlier indicated in 4.3.2, this notion was shown to obtain in Mo's (2005:62) perception of academic English as consisting of English for specific general academic purposes.

For this inquiry the question was whether or not the lexical component of Sesotho has a role to play in Basotho students' understanding of some of the the lexical components of academic English. As a Sesotho-speaking background person I draw from personal experience for a position that Basotho as a cultural group have specific lexis for reception and communication of knowledge pertaining to the different aspects and contexts of their traditional life. Such are environmental, agricultural, ecological, socio-cultural, etc. Basotho's life is therefore endowed with indigenous scientific, socio-cultural and other forms of knowledge from their environment. Choice and use of Sesotho words and behaviour vary according to each one of the indigenous contexts in which Basotho experience life. Scientific knowledge and life of their physical environment is for instance, typified by use of words such as "*letolo/maru*" (*lightening*). Knowledge of their socio-cultural practices is embedded in use of special lexis such as *bofifi* (mourning period), *ho pepa* (to give birth).

As an academic I observe also from experience that most of what the literate academic setting/cultural context depicts as formal education academic disciplines, has equivalents in the Sesotho culture and its informal education. Take Physical science with topics such as lightening; natural disasters in subjects such as Development Studies to name but a few.

Critical self study for improvement of personal practice coupled with principles of the living theory afford the insider-implicated researchers such as myself in this inquiry the authority to source from personal experience for personal stances about educational research issues of personal interest (Conolly *et al* 2009; Whitehead & McNiff 2006). I am from a Sesotho-speaking-background and as stated under the personal reasons for the inquiry (*vide* 1.1.1), can attest from experience how strategic application of my ethno-cultural knowledge at all levels of my education as a student benefited my understanding of different aspects of the English for learning. I am presently an education-practitioner in English education at the NUL. The topic *Error Analysis* is one of the areas of coverage in my course - *Curriculum and Instruction in English Language*. The many years of my professional career have been adorned with among others, a realization of how some of the errors that students make in English benefit from application of some of the linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of Sesotho. It is on the basis of this experience that I confidently declare my stance that interlingual and intercultural transfer of knowledge can facilitate acquisition of context-specific English depending on learning needs of individual students in individual academic contexts. Enhancing my stance is also the second language learners' inter-language hypothesis (Brown 1980) with its assumption that lexical differences and similarities between the learners' first and target languages can be facilitative of mastery of particular lexis of the target language depending on the lecturers' awareness of the nature of the learners' lexical needs in a particular learning context. It therefore makes sense to argue that awareness and application of knowledge of the lexical differences and similarities between Sesotho and English languages may be a problem-solving strategy for adoption by HE students faced with challenges posed by English as a medium of instruction as a non-mother-tongue medium.

Another of the interests of the research was how knowledge of Sesotho lexis among SSBSs of the NUL is a lived problem-solving strategy for successful management of academic English lexis in specific academic contexts. Findings on academic-context-

specific English as revealed in Chapter 6 and synthesised for conclusions and recommendation in Chapter 7.

4.4.2.3 The grammatical component of the linguistic dimension

Academic English also comprises academic grammar. According to Scarcella (2003:19) the grammatical component of the linguistic dimension of academic English refers to not only the English grammar of everyday use; but also to more sophisticated grammar in the form of complex clause and passive structures as well as of conditionals, noun, verb, reference and modality systems mastery of all of which is of critical importance in academic English. Scarcella (2003:15) also maintains that these sophisticated grammatical structures and systems are academic discipline-oriented, because every time that students study a new subject, they learn the grammatical features that are associated with the subject. In this inquiry I was initially hesitant to regard knowledge of Sesotho grammar as an aspect of Sesotho TK and therefore meriting investigation for how it is an academic English proficiency need. The indecisiveness on my part was due to awareness of the debate among some scholars regarding how African languages such as Sesotho have been unfairly subjected to grammatical analysis and conceptualisation by the literate man. Such a move by print – oriented grammarians could be interpreted to have been motivated by among others, intention to modernise/colonise African languages by de-ethnocising their orality in pursuit of a print-related understanding of the structure of such languages. The process involved application of terms of the grammatical structures of the English language to the structural features of such languages (Sienaerd input during discussion of my study proposal in March 2009 CHEDS at UFS).

Sesotho as a language was no exceptional. The grammar of Sesotho was consequently taught in English at all levels of education until in the early 1970s when the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho nationalised a policy on Sesotho as the medium for teaching the grammar of Sesotho. Was this a reactionary post-independence move by

the education sector in Lesotho? Personally I deem this as hybridization of the structure of the Sesotho language. However, considering that the focus of the study was on how knowledge from traditional Sesotho in general can benefit acquisition of academic English, regardless of whether or not such knowledge has been subjected to print, participants' acknowledgement of the positive impact of knowledge of Sesotho grammar on acquisition of academic English still served the purpose of the investigation.

4.4.2.4 The socio-linguistic component

Scarcella (2003) views academic English as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. The perspective is based on the generally held notion of language as a phenomenon involving functional knowledge of language functions for appropriate adjustment of register/style according to the audience, situation and purpose of the communication text. On this basis Scarcella (2003:17-18) cites several celebrated sociolinguists such as Reids, (1956), Labov (1963; 1966; 1970; 1972), Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens (1964), Ellis (1964), Swain & Lapkin (1990) to advance the notion of academic English as involving knowledge of an increased number of language functions that characterise the academic setting. Such functions include those which signal cause-and-effect, hypothesizing, generalizing, comparing/contrasting, explaining, describing, defining, justifying, giving examples, sequencing, and evaluating. Note must be taken that all these functions are higher-order thinking skills which Matsoso (2007:167) attaches a sociolinguistic understanding of functions of academic English as contexts in their own right in that *you cannot describe without mastery of the jargon of describing*".

The sociolinguistic nature of academic English is also about appropriate uses of English within each one of the four conventional communication skills – namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking. For instance, sociolinguistically receptive readers and listeners are able to apply their knowledge of the lexis, phonology and grammar of English to analytically, interpretively, judgementally etc. interact with spoken and read text for appropriacy of the English therein used to context. Similarly, socio-linguistically

proficient writers and speakers of academic English maintain cohesion and coherence through their ability to use the linguistic devices for among other functions referencing, substituting, ellipsis, conjunctives and lexical cohesion in their spoken and written argumentative and expository essays, research papers, abstracts and dissertations (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Sawles, 1990; McCarthy, 1991; Freedman & Meadway, 1994; Kaplan, Cantor, Hagtrom, Kamhi-Stein, Shiotani & Zimmerman, 1994; Johns, 1997, cited in Scarcella, 2003:19).

What does the sociolinguistic notion of academic English imply for this study? If language is a context-bound phenomenon as generally understood, then Sesotho as a language is not exceptional. As a Mosotho born and nurtured in a Sesotho cultural context, I am competently aware that all the sociolinguistic functions referred to by Scarcella are typical of communication in Sesotho as a typically oral language and culture. In sum, communication in Sesotho has always been characterised by register variation depending on context of the communication act. Among others, the study sought to determine from participants' experience-appraised reflections the extent to which pedagogical practice in the English medium NUL gives students an opportunity to explore and exploit their sociolinguistic knowledge of Sesotho for clarification of the English for meeting the demands of different academic contexts. Chapter 6 comprehensively presents findings pointing to how application of knowledge of different aspects of Sesotho TK positively relates to acquisition of proficiency in the English of different academic contexts.

4.4.2.5 The discourse component of the linguistic dimension

The basic definition of the term 'discourse' is that it is spoken or written language (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2006:398). Understood more academically, discourse refers to a combination of linguistic forms and communicative functions of language for purposes of transmitting and receiving thoughts, ideas, feelings and acquired knowledge (Brown, 1980:189). Put simpler, the essence of discourse is that the apex of

language learning is more than mastery of linguistic forms. It also involves mastery of the linguistic forms for purposes of accomplishing the communicative functions of language (Canale & Swain, 1980, cited in Scarcella, 2003:19). Further unpacking the concept is Scarcella in the view that "forms of language are the manifestation of language; while functions are the realization of these forms. Functions therefore refer to the pragmatic purpose of language".

Scarcella adopts a student-centred conceptualisation of discourse by discussing it in terms of its implications for students. For academic reading Scarcella notes that mastery of discourse enables students to gain perspective, understand relationships and contrasts between thoughts and follow logical lines of thought in what they read. About academic writing, Scarcella (2003:19) observes that mastery of discourse features of academic English (e.g. transitional discourse markers) enables students to develop their theses and maintain smooth transitions between their ideas. For purposes of my research I note from authoritative experiential knowledge that the discourse component is not unique to academic English. Sesotho as a language has a plethora of discourse patterns which are used to punctuate text development in the traditional oral communication of Basotho (e.g. *le ha ho le joalo* (however), *Ho thathiselletsa* (to augment/add/clarify) *Ka nqe nngoe* (on the other hand)). Most of these are synonymous with those normally used to punctuate oral and written texts in academic English. One of the interests of the proposed research was how knowledge of discourse patterns for development of Sesotho texts could be/is a positive factor in acquisition of the same knowledge in the English for doing school.

While I do not doubt Scarcella's assertions about the discourse component, particularly the commendable prominence given to discourse which is discussed as a stand-alone aspect of the socio-linguistic aspect of academic English, I note a constraint in this notion of the concept. Scarcella's assertion confines the capacity of discourse to what it enables students to verbally do with academic English. In my view Scarcella overlooks the non-verbal dimensions of discourse such as visual modalities (gesture and body

language), kinesic modality and olfactory modality all of which like the verbal dimensions, are part and parcel of language for internalisation and expression of knowledge in all communication contexts inclusive of lecture delivery. Silence about non-verbal communication strategies as aspects of academic language proficiency in general gives a questionable impression that they have no place in academic English proficiency.

The foregoing observations bring to surface one important assumption which adds to the driving forces in my study. Based on the intercultural nature of some discourse patterns, regardless of whether verbal and/or gestural/non-verbal, it can be assumed that given a pedagogical opportunity, SSBSs at the NUL can draw from their traditional knowledge of the discourse behaviour of Sesotho to understand and effectively use most of the English discourse in their learning of different academic subjects. This is one of the areas which the study set out to explore. I perceived the linguistic dimension of academic English as also spelling the need to interrogate participants' experiential narratives of how application of aspects of Sesotho TK facilitated their understanding of academic-context-specific linguistic aspects of academic English. In Chapter 6 my analysis of narratives on experiences with English grammar, phonetics and discourse patterns addressed this question.

4.4.3 The cognitive dimension

"Academic English also involves cognition" (Scarcella, 2003:22). It is therefore about students' ability to use English to engage in thinking about academic material. This thinking as Scarcella emphasises, challenges students to among others, predict, infer, evaluate, and synthesise meaning to generate, transform and communicate knowledge. Consistent with scholars referred to in the conceptual framework for academic language as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Scarcella draws from the critical literacy theory to conceive of academic English as consisting of knowledge, higher order-thinking, cognitive, metalinguistic and strategic components, all of which enable

students to access and establish from text factual information, speakers' and writers' intentions, question sources and identify others' and one's own assumptions.

What implications do Scarcella's assertions have for the inquiry? I have concerns with some of the the notions which Scarcella advances under the cognitive dimension of academic English.. The first of my concerns has to do with confinement of perception of academic English proficiency to print. The fact that Scarcella's notion of the cognitive dimension of academic English is based on the critical literacy theory suggests a writing-oriented conceptualisation of the construct. This is so particularly when one considers that in HE the operational meaning of critical academic literacy still remains confined to it as intellectual fortitude in the form of rethinking in the context of reading and writing in academic settings only. Such a notion, it was contended in this inquiry, leaves out the oral traditional style of communication which is as heavily characterised by the need for application of higher order thinking skills as the print-oriented literate style. In other words, confining an understanding of the cognitive dimension of academic English and factors for acquisition of its requisite proficiency to print-related knowledge overlooks the amply documented recommendation that pedagogical practice in HE should facilitate students' ability to actively draw from their own cultural identity and language in the process of making meaning with of their academic context.

Sesotho as a culture and language forms the identity of the SSBSs. It is not only a traditionally oralate learning context, but also one which like all cultural contexts which have been in existence and functional long before the print world, is therefore endowed with experiences that cannot be managed without the critical habit of the mind (critical thinking ability). Pedagogical practice that grants these students an opportunity to draw from their pre-university ability to think critically recognises the role of their innate cognitive ability in their acquisition of the English for demonstrating critical ability in their engagement with academic-context-specific concepts.

The second of my concerns is on Scarcella's concept of the knowledge component of the cognitive dimension of academic English. Scarcella (2003:22-23) cites works of scholars such as Spack (1997; 1997b), McCarthy, Young and Leinhardt (1998), Scarcella, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), Carrell (1984; 1998) for the contention that because of its dynamic nature, knowledge encompasses more than just facts but also the critical ability to evaluate experiences and the world. As such, Scarcella opines, knowledge plays an important role in academic literacy. Scarcella further asserts that the experiences and the world from which students enter formal education generate knowledge as the internal schemata or background knowledge which has a bearing on reading and writing abilities of students (Scarcella 2003:23). According to Scarcella, students who have acquired academic literacy have extensive knowledge of the world that is primarily built upon their previous reading, for "knowledge gained through reading is transferred from academic discipline to academic discipline."

From the foregoing assertions about knowledge as an aspect of the cognitive dimension of academic English, I make one major observation which adds to justification of the present research. This has to do specifically with Scarcella's concept of "the world" and its role in acquisition of academic literacy. In my view, the notion is curtailed if extensive knowledge of the world "is primarily built upon previous reading". The notion wrongly assumes that oral traditional background knowledge does not constitute primary knowledge of the world. Neither does such an understanding regard students' cultural backgrounds as the world. In unison with Taylor's (2004:4) view that students do not enter formal education as *tabula rasa*, I argue that by the time they enter HE in particular, the extended experiences from their ethno-cultural backgrounds such as the Sesotho TK background in the case of the inquiry, have provided them with knowledge of the primary world. Such indigenously possessed knowledge, I opine, is students' existing schemata which may not be excluded from a plethora of educational attempts adopted/adapted to help them acclimatise meaningfully in construction of new knowledge in the literate academic world. I am opposed to use of the word "assimilation" and would instead be more comfortable with word "reconciliation" in

Scarcella's assertion that "[T]he comprehension process involves, among other things, assimilation of new knowledge into existing schemata and accommodation of existing schemata to fit new knowledge". Scarcella's perception of the interface between students' background knowledge and new knowledge in my opinion, sends an inferiorating message that students' background knowledge has no contribution to academic literacy. Why should it be background knowledge in reading when cultural backgrounds such as that of SSBSs are traditionally oralate? It is notions such as Scarcella's about knowledge which lead to studies such as mine in which personal experiences with how knowledge such as that of academic English gets constructed for improvement of personal learning and teaching practices. The next sub-section reviews the socio-cultural dimension of academic English and articulates its implications for the inquiry.

4.4.4 The socio-cultural dimension

It is Scarcella's (2003:30) contention that functional knowledge of the linguistic code and cognition alone is inadequate without similar skilfulness in/about socio-cultural behaviours of academic English. Therefore, individuals who have mastered the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of academic English fail to communicate effectively if they have not also mastered the socio-cultural dimension.

Scarcella's (2003:29) concept of the socio-cultural dimension is benchmarked on Vygotsky's (1986) assumption about context-specificity of academic language. According to Scarcella academic English is the medium agreed upon, and shared by individuals within a speech community. The author cites Gee (2002) for conceptualisation of academic English as "...a secondary discourse that is socially dominant and used by those in positions of power often to exclude others who have not acquired it" (Scarcella 2003:29). Scarcella asserts that to belong with the academic community, one must demonstrate functional knowledge of conventions and norms of members of the academic community. Such are protocols embedded in values, norms,

beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, habits, motivations, etc. of the academic community for whom English is the medium of communication. Scarcella (2003:29) further cites Gee (2002) for a position that the protocols cannot be overtly taught, but can instate, be acquired through enculturation in the home or by apprenticeship into academic social practices. Gee argues that learners' value systems frequently conflict with those associated with academic communities.

The cultural protocols which Scarcella identifies as conditional to qualifying for membership into the academic community underpin values of living in many cultures which include the Sesotho cultural values. This position suggests therefore that Scarcella recognises the universality of some socio-cultural values. Also, the position could be understood as it is in this inquiry that knowledge and application of these cultural protocols, therefore of socio-cultural values in general, can be a template for acquisition of functional knowledge of these and related literacies in new learning contexts as and when the need arises.

Scarcella appreciates the arduousness of the unavoidable task for students to comply with protocols which may even conflict greatly with their home values. The author draws from Kohl (1994) who indicates that students often choose not to learn what contradicts their ethno-cultural protocols. Specifically Kohl (1994 cited in Scarcella 2003:31) says

"Not-learning tends to take place when someone has to deal with unavoidable challenges to her or his personal and family loyalties, integrity, and identity. In such situations, there are forced choices and no apparent middle ground. To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not-learn and reject the stranger's world (pp.15-16)".

Translated to the present inquiry, Scarcella's perception could be implicit of the need for recognition of socio-cultural values that students enrol into HE with as possible needs for acquisition of academic English. The inquiry interrogated experiential narratives for

among others, how Sesotho culture-oriented knowledge and application of all the protocols that Scarcella refers to benefit acquisition of academic English.

Be that as it may, I still have reservations about Scarcella's assertions. One exception that the protocols cannot be overtly taught, but can instate, be acquired through enculturation in the home or by apprenticeship into academic social practices. The assertion in my view assumes that the homes of students are so informed about conventions of the academic English-speaking/writing community that they are capable of preparing their children to enter university with requisite mastery of these protocols. Scarcella according to me, is too assuming about the ability of students' homes to enculturate socio-cultural protocols in students prior to enrolling into university. Without assuming that personal experiences of those with whom I have a common ethno-cultural background and knowledge would necessarily confirm my opposition of Scarcella's position about capability of students' homes to enculturate cultural values for onward application to acquisition of academic English proficiency, I felt the need to base my opposition not only on the "I" perspective from my personal experience but also from that of others.

Another of Scarcella's assertions which I take exception to is the position that non-English-speaking-background students are capable of becoming multi-literate, multi-cultural, and multi-dialectal in academic English without losing their home languages, cultural values and other protocols associated with them (Scarcella's 2003:31). My problem with Scarcella's position is that as long as it remains silent about whether or not and how students' ethno-knowledge can be utilized to contribute to acquisition of academic English it shifts such knowledge aside thus leaving it unexplored for its potential as an academic English proficiency need. Scarcella's assertion sends a questionable message that the ethno-knowledge which students enter higher education with and the English for learning at university can co-exist without benefiting each other. It is as if students' ethno-knowledge lies quietly locked away in some closet while

the cultural protocols of the English-speaking university community ensure multi-cultural, multi-dialectical and multi-literacy.

The phrase "without losing their home values" needs to be interrogated. Does maintaining home values mean decision not to explore home values for the possibility of their role in acquisition of academic English? Or are home values too inferior to subject to such exploration? I fault Scarcella for implying ghettoisation of students' ethno-cultural values, beliefs, behaviours in acquisition of academic proficiency as if they were intrusive. But are they? I drew from my personal experience with how application of knowledge from some of the values nurtured in me from my childhood as a Mosotho facilitated my understanding of the English for fulfilling some of the demands of the English I needed to succeed in my learning. The English-medium university setting is foreign to most of its non-English-speaking background students. As such, it presents new values and beliefs most of which may be threatening those of the learners' hearth if both are left unexplored for how they can benefit each other in construction of knowledge in higher education.

I was positively provoked also by Kohl's (1994:15-16, cited in Scarcella 2003:31) contention about students' choice "to not learn...and reject the stranger's world" for a forced adoption of "the middle ground" when their ethno-identity and the knowledge it represents are conflicted in the pedagogical practice of HE. Specifically, Scarcella (2003), through Kohl's (1994) citation set me reflecting on and discovering for the first time how the Eurocentric educational philosophy and practice that was operational at the time of my going to school imposed, therefore making it "forced middle ground", my decision to effectively apply my ethno-knowledge for my understanding of academic English throughout my academic career. It was this personal experience, among other personal and academic reasons underpinning this inquiry which set me wondering whether conception of "the middle ground" as "forced" could not be subjected to research that is undertaken from an ethno-culture-sensitive and personal experience-appraised perspective. Such research had to be benchmarked on knowledge from

previous studies on academic English proficiency needs of HE students. The next section examines such studies for their implications for my inquiry.

4.5 COVERAGE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH RESEARCH

This section reviews previous studies on academic English for extent of their coverage of the role of traditional knowledges/IKS in acquisition of academic English proficiency by HE students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It seemed from the study of documented literature that research on academic English proficiency for knowledge acquisition by non-English-speaking background (NESB) students in English-medium HE has covered a wide range of topics. The coverage included the following:

- (i) Educators' expected academic English entry requirements and needs of NESB students in English-medium universities (Horowitz 1986; Coley 1999; Academic Senate 2002; Chan 2005).
- (ii) Academic and non-academic difficulties of NESB postgraduate NESB students (Burke & Wyatt-Smith 1996).
- (iii) NESB student' perceptions of English for academic purposes (Hyland 1997; Evans & Green 2007).
- (iv) Opinions of NESB postgraduate students about their supervisors (Hall 1996);

Other previous studies were more academic subject-based in their investigation of academic English proficiency needs. These investigated the following areas:

- (i) Subject-specific reading needs of non-English-speaking background students (Parkinson 2000; Taraban, Rynearson & Kerr 2000; Spector-Cohen, Kirshner & Wexler 2001; Richardson 2004; P'erez-Paredes 2005; Mudraya 2006; Nelson 2006).

- (ii) Teaching the academic English of subject-area textbooks for textual analysis, and Writing-to-learn for subject-based genre-mastery (Ragan 2005).
- (iii) Dovetailing approach to teaching argument development in legal problem answer writing (Bruce 2002).
- (iv) Occluded academic genres in thought-essay development in MBA business management courses (Loudermilk 2007).
- (v) Understanding the performance of non-English-speaking electrical engineering graduate students in genre-based literacy (Cheng 2007).
- (vi) NESB science graduate students' thesis and dissertation writing (Dong 1998).
- (vii) Contrasting educator and student expectations and interpretations regarding written assignments by undergraduate students (Lea & Street 1998).
- (viii) Educator and student concerns in discipline-specific writing by university students (Storch & Tapper 2000).
- (ix) Communication strategies for writing answers in Biology (Chimbganda 2000).
- (x) Practices used by educators to assess subject-based written work by NESB students (Cumming 2001).
- (xi) The relationship between formal teaching of grammar and improvement in the grammar of student writing in science (Parkinson 2001).
- (xii) Instructional approaches for helping NESB university students develop academic writing skills (Morgan & Kutieleh 2005).
- (xiii) Academic English proficiencies for managing writing tasks set for non-English-speaking background graduate students (Cooper & Bikowski 2007).

Research on academic English for knowledge acquisition in HE has also adopted a transformative approach to understanding and developing academic English proficiencies requisite for management of academic content. Evidence of this lies in investigations such as those in which the action-research approach was successfully used to teach English for learning academic areas such as Law (Bruce 2002), Information Systems (Bretag, Horrocks & Smith 2002), and academic writing skills for indigenous international students in HE institutions (Davidowitz 2004; Morgan & Kutieleh 2005).

Another feature of research on academic English in the 21st century has been its student-participatory approach to understanding academic English needs of international students in HE. Zhu & Flaitz (2005) criticise the researcher-dominated perspective about HE students' academic English needs. The underlying perspective of these authors was that assessment of students' language needs from their own point of view is the indispensable first step in English for academic purposes. Hence their inclusion of NESB students themselves in their focus group sample of educators and university administrative personnel in their assessment of students' EAP needs. Holme & Chalauisaeng (2006) too successfully used the students' narrative approach through which they involved students as needs analysts in the participatory appraisal study of students' academic English for reading purposes in HE.

What did I discern from previous research on academic English? Despite its extensive coverage of topics, research on academic English proficiency needs of NESB students studying in English-medium HE can be criticised for exclusion of how traditional knowledge of such students can be factorial in teaching and learning for acquisition of academic context-specific knowledge. Even when the role of knowledge from the cultural background of such students was provided as one of the alternative responses in some studies such as that by Chan (2005) in the investigation of NESB students' language needs in tertiary setting, surprisingly, the analysis never picked it up. The second observation is the minimum attention to critical reflexive narration of

personal experience as a research strategy for understanding academic English proficiency needs of NESB students from a lived perspective. By adopting an ethno-culture-grounded and personal experience–appraised critical approach to understanding the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of English as a medium of teaching and learning at the NUL, the study adds an ethno-culture-sensitive perspective to academic subjects already examined for the nature of academic English proficiency needs requisite in them.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to examine the literature on academic English. The key concepts for the review were the conceptual framework for academic language, notions and definitions of academic English, the conceptual framework for academic English, and extent of research coverage on traditional knowledge as an academic English proficiency need for NESB students enrolled in English-medium HE institutions. The review identified and documented how academic English as an example of an academic language differs from the English from every day English for basic interpersonal communication, by virtue of being more cognitively demanding. It adopted and highlighted Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework for academic English. Furthermore, the review showed that previous research on academic English needs of NESB students barely explores not only the role of traditional knowledges in academic English of NESB students, but also the critical reflexive narration of personal experience as a research strategy for understanding academic English proficiency needs of NESB students from a lived perspective. The implications of the reviewed literature for the study are also indicated in this chapter. In the next chapter the methodology for this inquiry is discussed in detail.

CHAPTER



RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

We cannot move theory into action unless we can find it in the eccentric and wandering ways of our daily life...Stories give theory flesh and breadth (Pratt 1995:22, in Holman-Jones 2005:763).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters featured a review of scholarship on the meaning of African oral traditional knowledge, the place of traditional knowledge in higher education (*vide* Chapters 2 and 3), as well as notions and definitions of academic English and its conceptual framework (*vide* Chapter 4). It emerged from Chapter 2 that people's indigenous cultural backgrounds are a cosmos from which they derive an understanding of themselves, their behaviour, their livelihood needs and in essence, their identity as typically orate beings. These backgrounds become a strong basis of people's knowledge systems. Because of the orate nature of people's cultural background, expression of their cosmological knowledge is primarily corporeal-manual (through the entire body), laryngo-buccal (verbal) and secondarily mimographic (through writing) (*vide* 2.4).

One of the key observations from scholarship as reviewed in chapter 3 is advocacy for a postmodernist and Africanisation-oriented mainstreaming of African indigenous knowledge in HE. It seems from interrogation of the literature on academic English as the subject of Chapter 4, that academic achievement in English-medium HE depends to a great extent on proficiency in academic English. The same literature documents concern about characteristic poor academic achievement among students from non-

English-speaking backgrounds. I sadly note in the preceding chapter that hardly any effort if any, has been made to understand from their own experience-informed perspective/voice, the role of students' indigenous knowledge in development of academic English proficiency. It is among others, this observation that has driven choice of the design and methods for the present inquiry.

Chapter 5 is an explication of, and rationale for the qualitative design as an approach to understanding from participants' experience-informed perspectives, the role of Sesotho TK/IK in acquisition of proficiency in academic English. The chapter grounds the methodology of the study in theory by adopting and explaining five theories, namely – Africanisation theory, the *ubuntu* perspective, critical hermeneutic/interpretive theory, the living as well as critical self- study research for transformative professional development theories. In addition, Chapter 5 provides clarity on how these theories benchmark my philosophical stance regarding the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of university students from a Sesotho-speaking-background.

The chapter proceeds to indicate how the chosen theories underpin my adoption of critical auto-ethnography or reflexive/self-study for a method in this investigation. Explanation of the narrative as a data collection strategy in auto-ethnographic research is another feature of chapter 5. The chapter rationalises adoption of voluntary participation in the inquiry. The quality standards which the investigation adopted to ensure trustworthiness of the findings form part of the chapter. Chapter 5 closes with a graphic illustration of the rationale for a multi-theory grounding of the methodology (*vide* Figure 5.1).

5.2 THE STUDY DESIGN

The study adopted a qualitative research design. The qualitative design aims at an interpretive understanding of the meanings that people in their own voices, give to particular experiences and situations in their life (Leedy & Ormrod 2010:141; Fouche'

2005:270; Fouche' & Delpont 2005:266-267). It is naturalistic in that it establishes an understanding of people's life experiences in natural context (Babbie, Mouton, Vorster & Prozeski 2001:53; Maree 2007:78-79). The design is also vehicular in studies seeking to explore and understand meanings which individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell 2009:4). In this inquiry the design enabled me to analyse data such that it inductively built from particular to general themes which I interpreted for uniqueness of individual meanings, not for generalisation (Creswell 2007, cited in Creswell 2009:4). I chose the design also because it allowed me to act as a participant (Wall 2006:8; Berry 2006:2-3). The qualitative design therefore served as a blueprint for me to source and describe from natural context, participants' perceptions of, and perspectives about their experience-based role of Sesotho TK/IK in acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs at the NUL from their own, and not researcher-predetermined assumptions.

There is also reference to how the personal stance of the researcher underpins the research to be undertaken. Regarding this, Creswell (1998, cited in Delpont & Fouche' 2005:264) asserts that qualitative researchers using qualitative designs proceed into the field "with a strong orienting framework of what will be studied and how it will be studied". Creswell however, advises that the framework should be viewed as more of the researcher's philosophical stance and point of departure than a distinct social science theory". Specifically about qualitative research that adopts auto-ethnographic methods, Bochner (2003:91), Ellis (2004:71) and Wall (2006:10) note that methodology arises out of the ethnographic researcher. The same position is held by Whitehead & McNiff (2006:85-92) who assert that a reflective-practitioner-researcher is driven into research by certain personal values and philosophies about how human beings should live their lives with others. Personal philosophical stances underlying my adoption of a qualitative design are highlighted in 5.2.1.

5.2.1 My philosophical stance

For life to have meaning, all human beings need to be able to meaningfully relate to their cosmos. The cosmos can be the physical environment, other people, etc. To an important extent, values that a people live by are influenced by the environment in which they live (Antone, Hill & Myers 1986:2). Some of these values have been instilled and nurtured as cultural and spiritual. Others have been personally developed as a result of exposure to different contexts and encounters in life; while some are professional. Values are, in my observation, context-bound. As human beings we, over years of our life acquire values about how to relate, live harmoniously and humanely with ourselves and others in the different stages of our lives. In the context of this inquiry my personal stance is that these nurtured values benchmark our professional practice. One of the foci of this inquiry was the extent to which Sesotho cultural values have a bearing or should underpin professional practice for acquisition of academic English by SSBSs studying in Africa-based English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL.

I did not for once pretend that documented literature does not have technical terms and theories which some of my personal values and philosophies can either be consistent with or contrary to. I therefore amassed literature for scholarship on the nature of values/philosophies for not only how they impact on one's relationships with oneself and others, oneself with one's practice, but even more importantly for how they guide one's research in enhancement of personal and professional relationships.

I discerned from the literature that qualitative researchers tend to base choice of their research methods on post-modernist worldviews such as the social constructivist, interpretivist and transformative paradigms (Creswell 2009:5-11). I also deciphered from the literature that all these paradigms are linked by their common advocacy for adoption of critical and interpretive research and pedagogical approaches to [re] construction of knowledge that is often aimed at transforming [professional] practice

and relationships. Lastly, and by all means pivotal to my choice of research method and data collection technique, was awareness from the literature that there is in existence already theories that benchmark what I term experience-grounded reflexive ethno-culture and person-sensitive research.

5.2.2 Theoretical underpinnings of my design and methodology

To avoid stasis, I believe research should be perceived from a more open perspective. In other words, research should be understood as re-searching, and therefore implying among others, the need to adopt and or adapt eclectic theoretical approaches to a more insightful understanding of research phenomena. It was on the basis of this open-mindedness that my study adopted a multi-theory approach. The theories involved were the Africanisation, the *ubuntu* perspective (Beets & le Grange 2005; Seepe (1998; Makgoba 1998; Viljoen & van der Walt 2003), the critical hermeneutic (Kincheloe & MacLaren 2005; Mertens 2005), the living (Whitehead 1999; Sullivan 2006; McNiff & Whitehead 2006), as well as the critical self-study research for/as transformative professional development (Cupane 2007; Afonso & Taylor 2009; Taylor 2007). The chapter reviewed all these theories for their methodological relevance to the inquiry.

5.2.2.1 The Africanisation theory

The thesis of the Africanisation theory is that for Africans the African experience is the foundation and source for construction of most forms of knowledge. It is a post-independence mindset and perception of an Africa-based university as an intercultural educational context which is therefore, obliged to appreciate African indigenous knowledges for their contribution to construction of knowledge in the post-modernist educational arena (Viljoen & van der Watt 2003; Ntsoane 2005; Le Grange 2005; Nel 2008). According to Ntsoane (2005:99, 102) – one of the movers of this theory, endogenisation as a reformist way forward should guide HE research from the perspective of the experiencer of the colonialist, dehumanising and exploitative research

protocols in which many Africans were "objectified subjects studied by Europeans" for ends that bore minimal benefit for their personal and national development.

What room does the theory have in my inquiry? The NUL is an African university with the majority of its student population enrolling from a Sesotho-speaking cultural background. If I adopt the Africanisation stance that the primacy of students' ethno-knowledge renders it an unavoidable dynamic template in interaction with, and construction of new knowledge in HE (Beets & le Grange 2005:15), then Sesotho TK for SSBSs studying at the NUL is such. Dearth of research which adopts the ethno-culture-sensitive "I" perspective and approach to an understanding of academic English proficiency needs of non-English-speaking-background students of the NUL impelled relevance of the Africanisation theory to my inquiry. This way, adoption of the auto-ethnographic methodology as the best approach to understanding how Sesotho TK can be an academic English proficiency need renders my inquiry an Africanisation-appraised reformist research that responds to Ntsoane's (2005:107) advocacy for adoption of the proverbial Sesotho saying *motsebi wa tsela ke motsamai wa yona* (The road is best known to its traveller).

5.2.2.2 The Ubuntu perspective

Ubuntu is a Nguni word for humaneness. It is about living in harmony with others. It is an ethical value which according to authors such as Venter (2004:156) and Beets & le Grange (2005:1202) embodies among others, warmth, empathy and sympathy, as well as compassion. The perspective was deemed to have methodological relevance in my inquiry for the one reason that it is equivalent in meaning with the Sesotho expression "*motho ke motho ka batho*" (A person is a person because of other persons). This notion of *ubuntu* enabled me to perceive SSBSs of the NUL as first and foremost, human beings who are Basotho. As such they possess a wealth of knowledge from their ethno-cultural background. Educationally, SSBSs have been obliged by the British-oriented nature of Lesotho's educational system to acquire education through English as

a non-mother-tongue medium of learning. NUL students from the Sesotho-speaking-background have therefore been academically challenged often to the detriment of their self esteem by linguistic and communicative incompetence in the English of doing school. It therefore made academic sense for me to reason that these students' low proficiency in academic English renders them educationally vulnerable and therefore needy of pedagogical *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* as conceptualised by Beets and le Grange (2005:1202) seemingly embodies emotion-related sub-values such as caring, humaneness, sharing, and compassion to name but a few. It is therefore, feelings-oriented. One of the interests of the inquiry was the role of sub-values of the *ubuntu* value in development of linguistic and communicative incompetence in academic English of SSBSs at the pursuing studies at the NUL.

It was logical for research such as this inquiry to adopt critical auto-ethnography for the opportunity it affords participants to interpretively reflect on their feelings and how they wished them addressed. The challenge for participants to be interpretive situated the inquiry in the critical hermeneutic theory which is explained in the next sub-section.

5.2.2.3 Critical hermeneutic theory

According to Kincheloe & McLaren (2005:311), reasons for adoption of the critical hermeneutic theory in research include the following.

- (i) Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research involves the often-neglected domain of interpretation of information.
- (ii) The theory provides for recognition of uniqueness and not overgeneralisation.
- (iii) Interpretation involves in its most basic articulation, making sense of what has been observed in a way that communicates understanding.
- (iv) Even perception itself is an act of interpretation.

- (v) Human beings as creatures of the world have acclimation to it in a way that prevents them from grounding their theories and perspectives outside it.
- (vi) The theory targets development of a form of a cultural criticism with balanced power dynamics within social and cultural contexts. It is based on the assertion that people need to adopt an uncolonised/uncolonising interpretive understanding of their lives in order to be in a position to improve them (Cupane (2007:45).
- (vii) The theory enables critical hermeneutic researchers to produce profound findings that lead to transformative action (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005:312).

In sum, critical hermeneutics is a study of interpretive understanding. I adopted this theory for an interpretation of the interpretations which NUL graduates as participants in the study gave to their experiences with challenges of academic English and the extent to which knowledge from their Sesotho TK became an academic English proficiency need.

5.2.2.4 The living theory

“While we personally manage to realise our values in our practices for much of our working lives, we still sometimes find ourselves in contexts where we are not living our values as fully as we would like...[therefore] We regard ourselves as living in contradictions when our values are denied in our practice” (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:25).

Embedded in the foregoing quotation is an understanding that personal values are by nature so endeared that where and when circumstances in the practice of life impose their exclusion, people who possess them (values) perceive themselves as living in contradictions. Ideally, practitioners therefore prefer to “root their work in their values” (Sullivan 2006:137; Whitehead & McNiff 2006:82). It is from this understanding that the

living theory as first initiated by Whitehead (1999) originates. Notions of the living theory are highlighted below for their relevance to my philosophical position in this investigation.

(a) *Notions of the living theory*

The living theory is about how a people live the realities of its life based on expectations and standards agreed upon as acceptable and humane (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:85-92). Applied to education, the theory refers to explanation which individuals give about educational values and influences in their own learning and that of others" (Whitehead 2009:2). Whitehead & McNiff (2006:80) understand educational values in ontological, epistemological, methodological, and pedagogical/educational terms. Because they are about "being", ontogcal values were deemed to be more relevant to this study which focused on personal experiences of individual "beings". These values are reviewed below.

(i) Ontological values

According to Whitehead & McNiff (2006:22, 86) ontological values are foundational, and as such give direction to other values. These values are premised on ontology, which is the theory of being. They influence not only people's perception of themselves in relation to their cosmos and other people with whom they interact, but also how they organise their research. The authors note further that ontology affords people an understanding of how and why they live their lives as they do, and in this regard concur with Bullough & Pinnegar's (2004:319, cited by Whitehead & McNiff 2006:86) position that "the consideration of one's ontology, of one's being in and towards the world, should be a central feature of any discussion of the value of self-study research". Whitehead & McNiff (2006:85-87) depict ontological values as inclusive of:

- ‡ Recognition of uniqueness of us and other people.
- ‡ Understanding of our relationship with our universe marks our involvement in a constantly and continually unfolding process of self-creation in the form of free,

self-transforming, relational and inclusive practices and knowledge.

- ✚ Recognition of and commitment to tacit/embodied knowledge which spells our capacity to create new ways of thinking, inquiring and acting in quest for improvement of practice.

Whitehead & McNiff (2006:87) use this ontological perception of value to posit that people have the potentiality to turn their tacit knowledge into their "living educational theories". The authors apply this understanding to academia by encouraging education-practitioners and researchers to value inquiry-learning and perceive themselves as having a professional responsibility, academic freedom and right to claim knowledge and retain ownership of their work. Whitehead & McNiff (2006:87) and Sullivan (2006:127) observe that when practitioners value inquiry learning, their practice is underpinned by the questions: "how do I improve my practice?" How do I live my values in my practice?

It seems sensible from the foregoing notions to view ontological values as spelling not only the need for constant reflection and dynamism of thought in professional practice, but also as indicative of the need for professional practice to be transformative. In my observation, Whitehead & McNiff's concept of living theory seems consistent with notions embodied in Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory, particularly his law of mimism in which he explains how the intertwined and dynamic relationship between man and the cosmos/environment contextualises and shapes construction of knowledge (*vide* 2.4.)

How then does the foregoing perception of ontology and ontological value relate to my personal values – therefore my study? Whitehead & McNiff's (2006) postulations about ontological values, suggest the need for awareness of the fundamental values of practitioner - researchers and the researched. The ontological angle of my inquiry is in the fact that I sought to understand how myself and my participants perceive ourselves and others in relation to our environment in the form of our Sesotho cultural background and the formal academic university setting in which acquisition of

knowledge is through the medium of English which in this context, is not only a non-mother-tongue language to the majority of the students and educators, but also a hosted language in Lesotho.

The study sought to establish among others, not only the ontological values of participants, but also the extent to which these values are factorial in participants' articulation of perspectives about the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of the English of learning and teaching in the English-medium NUL. Moreover, because ontological values are also about how one can live and improve one's practice, adoption of ontology forms the rationale for probing participants to reflect on how application of knowledge from Sesotho traditional knowledge helps them live their ontological values with regard to acquisition of academic English; as well as how living such values improves the teaching and acquisition of proficiency in the English that is requisite for achievement in different academic contexts.

(ii) Epistemological values

Whitehead & McNiff (2006:87) posit that epistemology is about research-based claims to knowledge. According to these authors, research aimed at such knowledge should observe values that form a basis for a claim to knowledge by the practitioner-researcher. The values are to do with the practitioner-researcher's capacity to:

- ✦ Identify and articulate clearly what they are studying.
- ✦ Explain the intellectual and practical processes involved in the study.
- ✦ Generate evidence via those intellectual and practical processes.
- ✦ Articulate their claims to knowledge in terms of quality standards appropriate for chosen qualitative design methodologies.

The authors' concept of epistemological values challenged me to reflect on my practical experiences with academic English from primary to tertiary where I have been an English education practitioner for nearly three decades. Over this period, my practical

experience has led to an understanding of the challenges of being a Sesotho-speaking-background pupil, student and education-practitioner in an English-medium setting. This extended period has been in the form of exposure to a variety of learning and teaching circumstances and experiences which have led to reflection on and development of personal values and experience-based beliefs regarding the relationship between academic English proficiency and Sesotho TK of students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

As products of the Lesotho education system up to university and now education-practitioners at tertiary and high school levels, my participants have similarly been in situations of encounter with English as a medium of learning. Presumably such experiences may have impacted on their perspectives about the role of traditional knowledge and academic English. However, in the absence of empirical evidence regarding the relationship between acquisition of proficiency in academic English and strategic application of Sesotho TK/IK of/by SSBSs in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL in particular, the beliefs and values held by us as participants remained personal stances from which we may not claim epistemological knowledge. Validity of our stances depended on research that recognised standard research values as spelt out earlier in this section. To this end, the intellectual and practical processes involved in the study are explained in the sub-section on data collection methods and procedures; while evidence-generation and articulation of claims to knowledge about the relationship between acquisition of proficiency in academic English and ethno-Sesotho knowledge are featured in the sub-section on analysis and explanation of standards for trustworthiness. Whitehead & McNiff (2006: 88-89) say these are guided by methodological values which I highlight below.

(iii) Methodological values

Methodology in research refers to order and discipline requisite in the process of the inquiry (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:89). It therefore embeds as its value, sustained and systematic inquiry which can transform into a living quality standard for trustworthiness

(Whitehead & McNiff 2006:90). Over the years of my practice in English education and former student in educational research methods courses, I have understood methodology as explained by Whitehead & McNiff. I therefore constantly felt the need to document the students' perspectives in their own voices and on the basis of an interpretive understanding of mine and their own experiential perspectives, transform personal professional practice. Without implying that it now does, unfortunately at the time scholarship in research methodologies and methods was still too positivist to see credibility in pedagogical transformation based on personal experiential stories. Another curb was the relative dearth of literature on systematic methodological procedures for studying phenomena from the lived experiences of the investigated. Knowledge from theories such as the living theory was therefore not at my disposal for me to confidently benchmark my methodological value, stance and research on. This chapter explicates how my methodological living values translate into systematic methodological procedures appropriate for studying lived experiences with regard to the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in the academic English proficiency of university students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

Why did I live with concern about my lived professional experiences as a lecturer? Because "[T]he values we bring to our work, in the nature of our ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments, coalesce in the value we give to our pedagogies" (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:90). Pedagogical values are explained next for how they drive the present investigation.

(iv) Pedagogical values

Bernstein (2000:78, cited by Whitehead & McNiff 2006:90) explains pedagogy as,

"...a sustained process whereby somebody(s) acquires new forms or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria from somebody(s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and evaluator – appropriate either from the point of view of the acquirer or by somebody(s) or both".

Education practitioners are providers of this process. They are known to normally root their work in their values and in so doing, live their values in their work (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:90). Whitehead & McNiff cite Bernstein (2000) to argue that as they do this, education-practitioners are engaging in "pedagogisation" of their values.

What I discerned and adopted from Whitehead & McNiff's (2006) concept of living theory especially as it applies to practice in/with education, was that personal values and stances of education-practitioners inform their pedagogical practice. Essentially, personal values and philosophical stances of practitioners are a driving force in reflecting on one's practice for its improvement. In this inquiry the living theory supported my stance which is also my pedagogical value on which I base the following pedagogical assumptions on my part:

- ✚ Just as much as the practice of educating is a living social reality for educators, so is the practice of learning for learners. In this regard, learners therefore possess ontological, epistemological, and to some extent methodological and what for now I term **learning values** all of which have potential to influence how they manage and improve their learning.
- ✚ Therefore, improved pedagogical practice informed only by practitioners' reflections on the relationship between personal values and professional practice, may be questionable if lessons from learners' personal reflections on how their own values influence their learning and should be pedagogically be provided for are not considered.
- ✚ If I hold my profession as an English education lecturer close to my heart, and would like to see my practice of it equally benefit all - regardless of their ethnicity and language background, then love for my work coupled with respect for all students' ethnicity and

quest for a non-discriminatory professional practice should pass for an important standing as one of my living pedagogical values.

It is in view of the foregoing assumptions that the values of the participants were interpreted for their implications for improved pedagogical practice with regard to acquisition of academic English proficiency among Sesotho-speaking background university students. This way the investigation created an opportunity for me to adopt from McNiff & Whitehead (2006:25) to experience myself as living in contradictions when my pedagogical and andragogical practice is not based on research-informed knowledge and/or awareness of perceptions, perspectives and values that my students hold about the role of their Sesotho TK in their acquisition of academic English proficiency.

I assume that my students too have reason to feel that their value of being is being live in contradicted when their ethno-cultural knowledge in the form of beliefs, perceptions and perspectives remain unexplored for their role in acquisition of proficiency in academic English. The same view holds if I cannot freely educate for recognition, respect and where possible, application of the same values. For purposes of this inquiry the values which needed to be explored for the extent to which they are living theories rooted in how I should live my professional practice and how my participants should live theirs included:

- ✚ Recognition and respect for the ethno-cultural identity and culturally-informed knowledge of all persons; and
- ✚ Equality of the contribution of all forms of knowledge in acquisition of formal education. For research to bring these to surface, the qualitative design provides for adoption of the theory of critical self-study research as/for transformative professional development. The theory is expounded on below for its relevance to the study in question.

5.2.2.5 Critical self-study research for transformative professional development

Transformative professional development is informed by the transformative learning theory which calls for development of critically reflective professionals (Taylor 2007:3). According to Taylor such a perspective challenges prospective teachers and lecturers to "question critically and personally, their own standing in the world..." through transformative questions that bring forth the following:

- ✚ The key social, cultural and political challenges facing the educators/ teachers' changing society;
- ✚ An awareness and understanding of those whose cultural interests remain marginalised by traditional educational policy and practice;
- ✚ An awareness of not only the students one meets daily, but also of the world views, languages, and life-long needs of such students;
- ✚ An understanding of the cultural self who educates and the fundamental life-world-experiences and values rooting his/her personal professional practice and aspirations;
- ✚ An educator's vision of a better world and how personal professional practice can lead to realisation of such (a better world).

The foregoing issues add to what in this study is called a transformation-gearèd thought. I assent to Taylor's (2007:4) position that such a thought involves developing diverse ways of thinking in the form of among others, critical reflective thinking and integral thinking. Such, Taylor (2007:4) further opines, is transformative professional development (TPD) which enables students to invest "in the growth of their own cultural capital and becoming producers of culturally-situated curricular".

Taylor (2004:5) therefore recommends adoption of self-study/reflective intercultural research for transformative pedagogy. Loughram, Hamilton, LaBoskey & Russell (2004)

are cited by Coia, & Taylor (2009:4) for their recommend that respect for identity should be a central concern in self-study of teaching [and learning] practices, since the purpose of such research "is to improve or at least better understand our practice". Such is practitioner-research that generates practical knowledge for improving professional practice. It can be premised on anyone or most of the paradigms and or living theories of educational research (Whitehead 2011). In the section below I provide an explanation of how a multi-theory approach was deemed appropriate for inquiring into how academic English proficiency of SSBSs can benefit from application of Sesotho TK.

5.3 THE MULTI-THEORY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SESOTHO TK IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH

My summative perspective takes the form of motivation for my adoption of a multi-theory approach to researching Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. Rendering the theories adoptable as a collective in this inquiry were their common and distinguishing features.

5.3.1 Common features

The theories appealed to me because of the cross-cutting nature of most of their features. All emphasise:

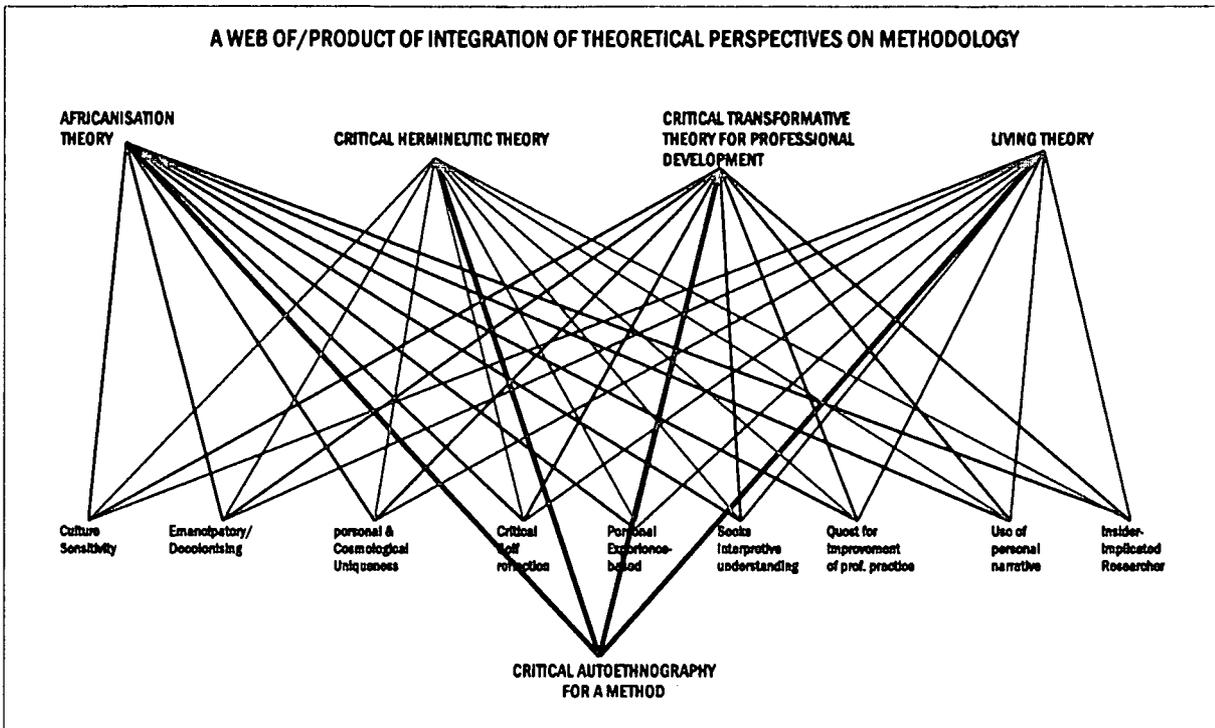
- ⚡ The importance of the interpretive/constructivist approach to meaning-making in the research process.
- ⚡ Adoption of critical reflective self-study research as/for improvement of professional practice. This perhaps explains the common use of the term *practitioner-researcher* by Whitehead & McNiff (2006).
- ⚡ Need for an experience-based and culture-contextualised understanding of perceptions and perspectives that people hold about their life-world needs. They are therefore about capitalisation on local and culturally lived knowledge

and experience which have been marginalised for a long time. Thus the theories are essentially emancipatory in nature.

- ✚ Need for appreciation and recognition of personal and cultural diversity and therefore identity of individuals - therefore of how an individual's ontological and epistemological values impact on their practice – be it in teaching, learning and research.
- ✚ Need to avoid "othering" but adopt the "I-Thou" approach which is characterised by respect for perspectives of others, particularly students (Whitehead 2000:91; Sullivan 2006:137; Whitehead & McNiff 2006:85).

This kind of relationship is graphically illustrated in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: Mpho's multi-theory methodological approach to understanding the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency



I regard this intertwining relationship as serving to emphasise the importance of an experience and culture-sensitive multi-theory approach to investigating phenomena such as the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of proficiency in academic English by NESB students such as the SSBSs studying at the NUL. Also, important is the fact that not only the common features/assumptions of the theories have relevance to the inquiry, but their distinguishing features as well.

Critical hermeneutic theory emphasises the need for critical interpretive understanding of meanings or interpretations attached to phenomena. It is mainly about interpretation of interpretations. The living theory dwells more on the role of ontological, epistemological, methodological, as well as pedagogical values in understanding personal experience-appraised perspectives. It is also about the "I-thou" and reflective practitioner-researcher approach to investigation of phenomena. The theory is value-

laden. The critical self-study/reflexive research for transformative professional development like the living theory, emphasises the "I-thou" research approach. The distinguishing features of the theories too had relevance to my methodology. In the next sub-section these features are identified with a case made for their relevance to the inquiry.

5.3.2 Distinguishing areas of emphasis in the theories

In this investigation the distinguishing features of each theory belong. For instance, regarding the emphasis of the Africanisation theory on need for recognition of African knowledge as foundational to acquisition and construction of subsequent new knowledge by students from an African background, narratives were interrogated for interpretations pointing to experiences with pedagogical provision for application of knowledge from the Sesotho TK. Briefly, instances of attempts by the NUL to decolonise teaching and learning for the benefit of acquisition of academic English proficiency were determined from the personal-experience narratives.

Living in harmony with others is a distinguishing feature of *ubuntu* as explained in 5.2.2.2 above. *Ubuntu* or *botho* in Sesotho is a fundamental value in the Sesotho TK. Participants' accounts were therefore interrogated for among others, experiences which were evidential of applicability of *ubuntu* in acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs enrolled into the NUL.

To address the key feature of the critical hermeneutic theory, I subjected the interpretations to further interpretation. I sourced from the narratives not only the different personal values of participants, but also interpreted their interpretations of their experiences for the role of Sesotho TK/IK in acquisition of academic English proficiency. This way I addressed the key features of both the living theory and the theory of self-study for transformative professional pedagogy.

In sum, the essence of the five theories adopted for the methodology of this investigation is that HE researchers can profitably harness their own life-world experiences as a primary source of authentic narrative data in order to examine critically, key philosophical and political assumptions underpinning education policies and practices that govern teaching, curricular, [learning] and research practices in their own countries. Researchers therefore, have the authority and professional responsibility to transform policy, curriculum and pedagogical practice through self-study research. Such research becomes advocacy for educational practice that focuses policy, curriculum and pedagogical attention on socio-cultural needs of education consumers (Sullivan 2006: 137; Whitehead & McNiff 2006: 82 and 84; Taylor 2007: 3-4).

5.3.3 Summative perspectives

I discern from the foregoing that people's indigenous contexts form their world too and as such, become a legitimate basis for their perspectives in construction of extended knowledge. In this inquiry the micro/macrocosm of which I am a creature and which contextualises my values, personal philosophies and beliefs, is the country Lesotho, my Sesotho ethno-cultural background, and the formal educational context. My educational context is particularly, the English-medium university-setting at the NUL where I have been a student and now work as a lecturer in English education. The participants in this study, inclusive of myself the insider-implicated researcher, were not only nurtured as much as possible according to cultural norms and values of Basotho, but were in the same country and also formerly exposed to Westnocentric formal education through the medium of English from the fifth year of primary schooling to HE.

It is in this context that our pleasant and otherwise experiences with academic English, particularly how we interfaced knowledge from our indigenous Sesotho cultural background and that encountered in the Western English-medium HE setting in Lesotho, should be interpreted and understood. I contended on the basis of the foregoing stipulations that application of the theories reviewed (*vide 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.5*)

enabled me to probe participants for interpretive narratives which in turn would be interpreted for types of contexts in which acquisition of the English for learning and teaching in HE can benefit from application of different forms of Sesotho TK. Notions from the reviewed theories enabled me to also interpret the narratives for personal experiential perceptions and possible personal philosophies about the relationship between acquisition of academic English proficiency and application of knowledge from the Sesotho TK.

It was for this reason that I engaged in an interpretative understanding of the meanings which participants and myself in our own voices attached to the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English among Sesotho-speaking background students at the NUL. I based this interpretive approach also on Whitehead & McNiff's (2006: 25) contention that according to the living theory people not only live in, but live their ethno-cultures in their work. I also adopted the Africanisation and *ubuntu* perspectives for a contention that living one's ethno-culture should be explored for how it can benefit construction of knowledge related to acquisition of academic English. Specifically for the present inquiry, I assumed that students studying through English as a non-mother-tongue language have as part of their living educational challenges, the need to reflect experientially on the extent to which their ethno-cultural knowledge positively impacts on acquisition of academic English.

The logical question was about the method that rendered this investigation an African-culture-sensitive, critical living, and interpretive self-study/reflective research for transformative professional development. Such a method was critical auto-ethnography. It is explained below for its meaning and rationale for its adoption in the inquiry.

5.4 CRITICAL AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

Literature was studied for the definition, theoretical basis, the goal(s), and rationale for seeking an understanding of research phenomena from an auto-ethnographic perspective.

5.4.1 Definition of auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is both a narrative of the self and a research method (Sparkes 2000: 22).

5.4.1.1 Auto-ethnography as narrative of the self

Breuer (2005: 109, cited by Cupane 2007: 33) unpacks the concept of "the self" by perceiving auto-ethnography as "knowledge of the position, behaviour and experience of the self as a significant example of universality, the concrete realisation of culture in a concrete, situated and embodied person". Such knowledge, Breuer (2005: 109) further asserts, is the first step towards improvement or betterment of professional practice of the self. Hence its relevance to the theory of critical self-study research for transformative professional development (*vide 5.2.2.5*).

Auto-ethnographic narratives are culture-situated. It is perhaps for this reason that auto-ethnography is defined as writing genre that displays "a multi-layered consciousness linking the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 739; Berry 2006: 2; Trahar 2009: 7). Based on these postulations, auto-ethnography as narrative of self is understood in this inquiry as the culture-based and experience-informed interpretive narratives of participants' personal encounters with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs studying in an English-medium African university setting such as the NUL. Critical auto-ethnographers translate this

understanding to qualitative research and perceive auto-ethnography as an experience-based and culture-sensitive qualitative research method or narrative of the self.

5.4.1.2 Auto-ethnography as a research method

The notion of auto-ethnography as a research method is amply documented in the literature. Wall (2006: 1-2) for instance, views it as an emerging qualitative research method that allows the researchers/authors to write in a highly personalised style by drawing from their personal and others' experiences to depict an understanding of a societal phenomenon. Cupane (2007: 33) conceives of auto-ethnography as a qualitative research method in which the researcher engages in the act of talking about others through him/herself and therefore, implying talking about him/herself through others in the same societal context. The author asserts further that auto-ethnography is research depicting multiple aspects of awareness of cultural embeddedness of perceptions that individuals hold about different phenomena.

Also stressing perception of auto-ethnography in methodological terms is Taylor's (2007:5) take of it as a research method situated at the nexus of a variety of qualitative methods which include narrative inquiry, evocative auto-ethnography, and practitioner inquiry. According to Stapleson & Taylor (2003, cited by Taylor 2007: 6) auto-ethnography is an interpretive form of inquiry typified by the emergence of unanticipated research questions, research methods, and thematically structured report writing. Auto-ethnograph is writing practice that involves highly personalised accounts where researchers and the researched in their own voices draw on their own experiences to extend an understanding of a particular discipline or culture/phenomenon (Trahar 2009:7).

Summing up perception of auto-ethnography in methodological terms is the contention that it is an autobiographical genre of interpretive reflection and writing of stories of the self and of others. Such stories, it is asserted, can take the form of poetry, fiction,

novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, etc. In a nutshell, Ellis & Bochner (2000:739-740, cited by Wall 2006:4) see auto-ethnography as autobiographical research method which includes use of personal narratives, evocative narratives, lived experience, critical autobiography, etc.- all pointing explicitly and/or implicitly at how improvement in personal practice can be achieved. Thus auto-ethnography is a form of action-research for the individual (Taylor 2007:5; Cupane 2007:33). Auto-ethnography is recommended for adoption as one of the best research methods for inquiring into the cultural practices of formal education (Taylor 2004:9). But what is the theoretical basis for auto-ethnography?

5.4.2 Theoretical basis for auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is grounded in post-modernist philosophy and its advocacy for adoption and promotion of reflexivity and voice in social research (Wall 2006: 2-3; Taylor 2007:5; Cupane 2007:36). Wall (2006:2-3) for instance, notes the following as assumptions that underpin the post-modern philosophy – thus, justifying adoption of auto-ethnography in qualitative research:

- ✚ All the many ways of knowing and inquiring are legitimate and so no one should be more privileged.
- ✚ While all methods are subject to critique, they cannot automatically be rejected as false.
- ✚ What the researcher [and the researched] know(s) matters regardless of their status.
- ✚ Because individuals' interpretations of phenomenon and how it is experienced in their lives are unique, they cannot be generalised.
- ✚ The inextricable link between the personal and the cultural impels the researcher and the researched to reflect and tap on personal and cultural background knowledge to solve learning problems encountered in new contexts.

The interpretive nature of auto-ethnography grounds it in critical hermeneutics and practitioner inquiry theoretical understandings which characterise transformative research by education-practitioners (Taylor 2007:5; Wall 2006:4). But what are the goals of auto-ethnography?

5.4.2.1 Goals of auto-ethnography

The following are the goals of auto-ethnography as perceived by various authors.

- ↓ The communicative goal in which story tellers creatively and evocatively engage in critical and interpretive reflection on the societal phenomenon and its implications for improvement of their life-world (Bocher & Ellis 2000, cited by Berry 2006:2).
- ↓ Acknowledgement of the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural (Wall 2006:2; Trahar, 2009).
- ↓ Creation of room for non-traditional forms of inquiry and expression (Wall 2006:1; Cupane 2007). So why auto-ethnographic research?

5.4.2.2 Rationale for auto-ethnography

Although criticised for being self-indulgent, narcissistic, intro-spective and individualised (Atkinson 1997; Sparkes 2000, cited by Wall 2006:8 and Holt 2003:3), auto-ethnography as a research method is in this study adopted on the grounds that it:

- (a) Allows for fieldwork to be conducted within my mind and heart as the researcher who must critically focus on my professional authority as the producer of culturally situated knowledge (Taylor 2004:9; Taylor 2007:4) – in my case about the role of Sesotho oral traditional knowledge in the academic English proficiency of university students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

- (b) Challenges me to examine reflexively and critically, mine and my students' culturally-situated lived experiences (Taylor 2007:6; Holt 2003:2; Cupane 2007:34) - thus enabling us to reconceptualise our Sesotho cultural identities and traditional knowledge for extent of their role in academic English. Essentially, auto-ethnography as a research method enables me to explore Sesotho oral traditional knowledge for the extent to which it enables me to develop educational philosophies for rendering the teaching and learning of academic English in HE culture-sensitive.
- (c) Enables us (me the researcher and the researched) to retrieve and create facts, recall and create "modal moments"/experiences (Luitel & Taylor 2005, cited by Cupane 2007:34) in which we express how application of our cultural, ontological, epistemological (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:82-92) values seemed suggestive of the positive role of Sesotho oral traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English.
- (d) Is based on an assumption that "an individual is best suited to describe his/her own experience better than anyone else" (Ellis 1991, cited in Wall 2006:3). Thus myself as a former student and educator who has lived through an experience of learning and teaching through English as a non-mother-tongue language, and has unanswered questions and undocumented answers about the role of Sesotho oral traditional knowledge in academic English, I concur with Wall (2006:3) that critical introspection or self-study is a viable data source.
- (e) Enables me the auto-ethnographic researcher and the researched, to tap the frameworks of our own culturally-lived life (Cupane 2007:35), to make sense of the challenges related to academic English proficiency as they present themselves to us as people from a Sesotho-speaking background.
- (f) Enables me to not only source stories from participants, but to realise that each story must be followed with interpretive commentary to render perceptions interpretive.

- (g) Provides for reflexivity and voice (Duncan 2004:3) by:
- ✚ Allowing myself the researcher, to drive the inquiry further along by seeking personal experience of myself and that of others; thus emancipating me to speak as a player in a research project and to mingle my experience with the experience of those I study.
 - ✚ Allowing us the participants to realise that we have been a previously silenced group now having an emancipator opportunity to appreciate and reflexively use our voices as a channel for our articulation of our tacit epistemologies and realisation of new ones with regard to the role of our Sesotho oral traditional knowledge in our acquisition and use of academic English in an English-medium HE setting. As such it allows for "production of new knowledge by a unique and a uniquely situated researcher [and the researched]..."
- (h) Is an autobiographical research method affording me an opportunity to adopt a thick description through which meanings of events and/or encounters pointing to the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency are told rather than inferred (Laslett 1999:391, cited by Wall 2006:9).
- (i) Allows for execution of quality standards (Sparkes 2000:29, cited in Wall 2006:9; Whitehead & McNiff 2006:82-92; Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:964; Cupane 2007:58-68).
- (j) Is not aimed at generalisability of findings to other situations (Duncan 2004:10; Sullivan 2006:126) and so enables me to explore and document perceptions about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for Sesotho-speaking background students at the NUL.
- (k) Points to not only the direct and inextricable link between the personal and the cultural experience, but also to an intense motivation to understand the

personal and cultural experiences and behaviours for what their implications for improvement of personal practice are (Wall 2006:9). In this inquiry the researcher and the researched are products of the Sesotho cultural fabric. It is against this background that their personal perceptions of the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of Basotho students at the NUL are interpreted and interrogated for their implications for the researcher's transformative professional development.

I chose auto-ethnography for this inquiry because it is a method through which I was able to refer to myself as an agent (Coia & Taylor 2009:4) for improved professional practice in my teaching for acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

5.5 PARTICIPANTS

In this study I have adopted an approach which on the one hand employs conventional approaches to thesis writing, yet on the other hand it remains non-conventional. This was done for two main reasons. Firstly, auto-ethnographic research is qualitative in nature (*vide* 5.4). It therefore made research sense to be guided by understandings from conventional qualitative designs. The understandings have to do with the rationale for, choice of and the criteria which the participants must meet in qualitative research. These understandings also help in the socialisation of participants into the study they have volunteered to participate in. To be in line with the terminology of auto-ethnographic research, I used the term "participants" for sample and sampling techniques and "number and choice of participants" for sample size and rationale for sampling". Secondly, one of the intentions of this inquiry was to raise awareness about the need for post-positivist research to bring to surface the unexplored harmony between conventional and the less conventional thesis-writing approaches. The methodology chapter of this inquiry became the first point where the interconnection between conventional and non-conventional thesis-writing approaches was possible and implementable.

5.5.1 The number and choice of participants

Qualitative research generally uses non-probability sampling approaches. Compared to those in quantitative research, samples in qualitative research are usually smaller, flexibly chosen and often continuing until data saturation is reached in the analysis (Nieuwenhuis 2007:79-80; Leedy & Ormrod 2009:147 and Maree 2007:79-80).

Of the three most commonly used non-probability sampling strategies in qualitative research, snowball sampling of a criterion nature was adopted in this inquiry. The decision was influenced by an assertion that such a procedure affords the researcher an opportunity to decide on the number of the participants with typical characteristics such as experience and knowledge or insights into the topic the problem and research question (Creswell 2009:178). According to Strydom & Delport (2004:336), such a sample is often voluntary, not meant to bring hidden agendas into the inquiry and as such, is more likely to accelerate the data-collection process.

Auto-ethnographic qualitative studies depend mainly on high critical ability and willingness of participants to honestly reflect on personal experience and depict the implications of their reflections for improvement of personal practice and the situation in which such practice is inherent (Afonso & Taylor 2009:273). Furthermore, participants in auto-ethnographic studies often include researchers as participants in their own investigations. In this capacity they are referred to as insider-implicated researchers who pursue an understanding of their perceptions of themselves in relation to how those whom they are studying perceive themselves and their lived experiences in the same setting (Coia & Taylor 2009:8).

5.5.1.1 The criteria for choice of participants

The participants in this investigation met the above-mentioned conditions. They included my self as the insider-implicated researcher and 12 others who were

snowballed into the inquiry as voluntary participants. Thus a total of 13 participated in the inquiry. We were a cross-curricular sample representing a total of ten (10) academic specialisations which are Accounting, Economics, English Language, Literature in English, History, Geography, Development studies, Religious studies, Counselling psychology, Public Administration, and Physics. We met the key criteria for participation in qualitative/auto-ethnographic research as outlined in 5.4.1.2. A common background and learning barrier are some of the criteria for sampling in qualitative research.

(a) A common background

Participants in this inquiry shared at least five characteristics which qualified them for participation. First and foremost, we all came from a Sesotho-speaking ethno-cultural background. Secondly, we all were products of the primary and secondary education sectors of Lesotho. Thirdly, all of us acquired our first degree at the NUL. Fourthly, all of us were, at the time of participating in the inquiry working as education-practitioners at high school and tertiary levels of education in Lesotho. Lastly, but not least, we all had a relatively extended experience of teaching and learning through the medium of English.

(b) A specific learning barrier criterion

A specific learning barrier is one of the characteristics that make a criterion for selection of the sample (Maree 2007:80). Linguistic and communicative incompetence in academic English is documented as one of the learning barriers for HE students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (*vide* 1.2). Academic English is, as indicated by authors such as Scarcella (2003) and others referred to in Chapter 4, therefore a learning barrier for such students. Against this background-knowledge from literature, the investigation involved interrogation of narratives for among others, academic events/incidences in which lack of functional and linguistic competence in academic context-specific English debilitated construction of knowledge – thus pointing to academic English as a specific learning barrier.

5.5.1.2 Socialisation of participants

Strydom & Delport (2004:334) advise that once he/she has secured the voluntary sample, the researcher should plan and hold meetings/a meeting with them each to establish their motives, personal experiences and pay attention to these for their relevance to the main research question of the inquiry. I adopted the advice with a modification though. I for instance had a feeling that meeting the sample as a group was likely to also turn into a situation where they would be tempted to discuss how they were going to respond to my probe for experiential narrative experiences of/with the extent to which Sesotho TK could be an academic English proficiency need. To guard against this possibility, I opted for meeting the participants on an individual basis.

5.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURES

5.6.1 Data collection techniques

The inquiry is auto-ethnographic. Its methods of inquiry were therefore reflexive drawing from the literature on auto-ethnography as a research method. However, in view of Angrosino's (2007:51) contention that "... good ethnographic research relies on a composite of conversational interviews and archival sources," data for the investigation were collected through documentary source analysis and personal narratives of personal-experience with how Sesotho TK can be a liveable academic English proficiency need for SSBSs of the NUL.

5.6.1.1 Documentary sources

Ethnographic researchers distinguish between primary and secondary documents. The former are original source material; while the latter have their basis on previously published material (Nieuwenhuis 2007:83; Angrosino 2007:50). For purposes of this investigation, documented material for analysis were mainly the primary ones. These

were the NUL Vision, Mission Statement, Values, and Policy of 2007 and the descriptions of the courses in the academic subjects which the participants majored in and were narrating their experiences around. End-of term examination question papers for academic subjects being narrated on were additional documentary material.

5.6.1.2 Personal narrative

The data collection method for the investigation was based on the critical self study theory (*vide* 5.2.2.5). Kitchen (2009:35) defines this as the study of "experience as story" or of how people use storytelling to make meaning from personal and others' experience. Kitchen (2009:38) cites Clandinin & Connelly (2004:575-576) who define narrative self study/inquiry as a multi-dimensional exploration of experience involving temporality (past, present, and future), interaction (personal and social), and location (place)", thus enhancing understandings about participant knowledge. Kitchen (2009:37-38) asserts further that in addition to being a methodology, narrative inquiry is also a method for studying phenomena, and in this capacity offers critical frames for making sense of the experiences, the personal practical knowledge underlying the experiences and their social context. The author sees narrative inquiry as also a personal experience method or "a method of researching oneself and others" (Kitchen 2009:39). Of the same opinion are Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011:7) who conceive of personal narrative as stories about authors writing about themselves as the research phenomenon who are focusing on their academic research and related personal lives.

Narrative inquiry as a method applies also to teacher education. It engages teacher educators in rigorous reflection and thinking about past and present experiences, focusing mainly on how knowledge acquired from past and present experiences and practices stimulate future plans and transformative professional actions (Kitchen 2009:39). In this capacity, narrative inquiry is used in teaching and teacher education practice to enhance teacher educators' understanding of themselves, their contexts and professional practices (Kitchen 2009: 35). In other words, the narrative inquiry method

is a means of knowing in which those who teach **[and those taught]** engage in an interpretive narration about phenomena with intention to gain deeper understandings of its implications for teacher education practices (Kitchen 2009:36).

I am a teacher educator. At the time of participating in this study my participants too were in the practice of teaching and teacher training in different academic subjects. According to Berry & Kosnik (2010:218) people in the professions of teaching and teacher education constantly live their profession with a variety of challenges from a wide range of stakeholders. Unawarely but spontaneously, these practitioners usually employ the interpretive story form to talk about the challenges involved in their profession. The stories are so spontaneous that their tellers do not realise how they (stories) are a self-presenting opportunity for them (practitioners) to unawarely share the personal philosophies and theories resulting from the challenges.

The narrative method was therefore an appropriate strategy in my study. Through it my participants and I engaged in interpretive narratives/stories of our personal experiences with English as a medium of teaching and learning in the different academic contexts we found ourselves in when we studied at the NUL and later in our professional practices. Most importantly, I adopted the personal narrative approach for the constructivist outlook that it would give the study. In highlighting the constructivist nature of the narrative Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo (2006:48) say it spotlights the self as a manifestation of human interaction with and interpretation of personal experience for what it means.

As the participants in this inquiry, we were the "selves" who have lived the challenges of having to learn through English as a non-mother tongue medium. We have interacted with the experience and know best what it feels like and means. The narrative approach provided the "I" perspective to construction of knowledge about Sesotho TK, is an example of African TKs/IKs with which many African students enrol into higher education institutions.

5.6.2 Data collection guide and procedure

A personal experience narrative guide was developed, presented and clarified to participants by myself the insider-implicated researcher.

5.6.2.1 The narrative guide

This guide featured the following four broad headings:

- (i) Personal details.
- (ii) Personal and Sesotho values, and how they relate to acquisition of academic English.
- (iii) Perceptions of participants about the role of Sesotho TK in academic English.
- (iv) Participants' vision of an ethno-culture-sensitive English-medium NUL.

5.6.2.2 The personal narrative procedure

The procedure involved introducing and focusing the narrative, addressing the issue of attentiveness, use of multi-media, identification of data pointing to improvement of professional practice and representation of data. Implementation of this procedure is explained in *a-e* below.

(a) Introduction and focus of narrative

The procedure was aligned to Kitchen's (2009:39-45) concept of personal experience methods in narrative studies. According to this author, personal-experience self-studies centre on how past experiences impact on personal practical knowledge (Kitchen 2009:39). The author posits as does Muncey (2005) that storytelling, autobiography and metaphor techniques help participants and researcher-participants tell and interpret narratives of their past experiences. According to Angrosino (2007:43) narrative procedure also involves clarification of subtle and specific aspects to be clarified about

the research phenomenon. To facilitate for provision of relevantly focused narratives I adopted the following procedure:

- (i) Prior to commencement of each narrative I introduced the purpose of my inquiry, presented and clarified the narrative guide with the participant.
- (ii) Starting with myself as the insider-implicated researcher I directed the narrative probe first to myself. I initiated the narrative with the request "As former student at the English-medium NUL, kindly share with me through stories, or poems, or any visuals about your personal experiences which you could use as a basis for making a statement on the extent to which you could say your knowledge from different aspects of Sesotho, Bosofo could be said to have been beneficial to your acquisition of academic English (English as a medium of learning and communication in different academic contexts)".
- (iii) These personal narratives involved use of the during-story probing for elaboration and further clarification of issues that came up about how application of Sesotho TK benefitted/did not benefit academic English proficiency.

(b) *Attentiveness*

The process of autobiographical narratives is also characterised by attentiveness in the form of intensive listening which enables the researcher to probe also for internal theorising, impressionistic, realist and confessionalist perspectives (Afonso 2009; Taylor 2004:10; Angrosino (2007:79-80). Some of these spontaneously made the narratives.

(c) *Use of multi-media*

Use of audio-visual, visual (photographic), recital and written poetic and prosaic texts by participants can augment the conventional verbal narrative interview data-collection procedure. According to Angrosino (2007:45) and Whitehead (Presentations in November 2009 at UFS-HES and in July 2011 at DUT) this gives the ethnographic

interview a personalised touch. Had I received permission from my participants I would have been able to electronically capture the facial and other kinesics which depicted emotions that emerged from some of the event-specific experiential narratives through which participants engaged in retrospective and critical reflection which led to personal discovery/awareness of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. By the same principle and in line with the proposition of lending a personal touch to the commentary or personalised ethnographic interview (Angrosino's 2007:45), all participants we requested but to no avail, except myself the insider-implicated researcher, to share their relevant photos and other memorabilia to "personalise" the narrative texts. Consequently, the audio recorder became my main electronic option for collection of narrative data.

(d) *Data for improvement of professional practice*

Self-studies are also focused on current practices as a means towards improvement of future practice. Such inquiries entail probing for among others, participants' reflections on existing rules, practical principles and personal philosophies for how they can inform re-orientation and improved professional practice (Kitchen 2009:39, 46). Thus reflective personal-experience studies are futuristic and improvement-oriented. It was on this basis that an integration of Angrosino's (2007:43) and Kitchen's (2009:45-46) probing techniques was adopted to solicit from participants' personal reflections, interpretations of experiential success stories of their application of Sesotho TK to academic English. The focus was on how these experiences can help improve the curricular and teaching at the NUL for the benefit of acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

(e) *Representation of data*

According to Adams (2008:43), literature on narrative data management points also to need for clarity on the procedure for representation of auto-ethnographic data. The layered accounts in the form of vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection

are some of the procedures for such representation (Ronai 1992:123 Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011:6). Other procedures include use of different points of view (Caulley 2008:442), and showing and telling (Ellis 2004:142). The procedures guided representation of data in this study. Most of the narratives were vignettes or slices of lived encounters with academic English as a barrier to academic achievement, as well as of pleasant experiences with how application of Sesotho TK benefits acquisition of proficiency in the medium of learning in a university setting.

The multiple voices featured in most of the experiential accounts. I had to pay attention to multiple voices pointing to perceptions which participants as individuals and as a collective hold about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in individual academic-context-specific narratives. I was open also to the voices of unanticipated participants and scenarios because they are to be contended with in auto-ethnographic research (Trahar 2009:9).

Display and analysis of relevant graphic representations and photographs as data became the showing and telling procedure where they were available. In this inquiry they are a picture of a celebration at my rural home village – Ha Ts’oeute (*vide* Figure 6.1) and Mpho’s methodological web of the multi-theory approach to understanding the research phenomenon (*vide* Figure 5.1).

5.6.2.3 Documentary source procedure

Permission of the lecturers was sought in vain for access to course outlines of individual subjects of specialisation that were represented by participants. Ethical reasoning prevailed. These were therefore excluded in the study with regret. Only the Vision, Mission Statement, and Core Values of the NUL were available and examined for specificity in provisions for, and articulation of institutional recognition of TK/KS. Implications of the ethno-culture provisions for academic English proficiency of students

from non-English-speaking backgrounds were the focus of documentary source analysis.

5.7 ANALYSIS

There are many ways of analysing personal-experience informed talk of informants (Tenni, Smyth & Boucher 2003:5; Walker, Cooke, & McAllister 2008:82; Boje & Tyler 2009:181-182). The investigation focused on perceptions held about the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs in African English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL. Data analysis involved the three key activities in generic qualitative data analysis. These were preparation and organisation of data, reducing data on interpretive perspectives into themes via coding and condensing of codes and representation of data through discussion of visual graphics (Creswell 2007:148). Specifically, the analysis process was grounded on Creswell's (2007; 2009) six-step procedure for thematisation of qualitative data.

5.7.1 The analysis process

Insights from personal contact with well-known auto-ethnographic researchers and education-practitioners coupled with the study of documented literature benefitted analysis of data in this investigation. Through courtesy of my Supervisor Professor 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela and the generosity of the National Research Foundation (NRF) I was able to consult with professors Joan Conolly from Durban University of Technology in 2007/2008, Emilia Afonso of Universidad Pedagogical-Mozambique in 2009 and 2010, and Jack Whitehead from Bath University in 2010 and 2011. When the actual analysis became a living challenge in 2011, I also took the initiative to consult via email with Peter Taylor from Curtin University. Note that Taylor's (2007) theory on transformative pedagogical development is one of the theoretical benchmarks of this inquiry. All of these authors could not overemphasise one message - namely the need for comprehension of one's transcribed data. Analysis of my type of

data therefore needed to involve initial and continual reading and re-reading for full comprehension which in turn facilitated the process of identification and thick description of potential and ultimate themes for interpretation into the major findings of the inquiry. To this end, Creswell's (2007; 2009) graphic below summarises the six-step procedure for analysis of qualitative data

5.7.2 Creswell's qualitative data analysis procedure

Creswell's (2007:150-166; 2009:185-189) six-step interactive procedure for analysis of qualitative data benchmarked the analysis of narrative data in this inquiry.

Table 5.1 Creswell's six-step process of qualitative data analysis

Step	Activity
1 st	Data managing: Organisation and preparation of data for analysis.
2 nd	Reading, memoing of all data.
3 rd	Classification, categorisation, coding of data either manually and/or electronically.
4 th	Description of information on people, places or events and categories and themes for analysis.
5 th	Explanation of how the themes will be arrived at and represented in the qualitative narrative.
6 th	Interpretation of the meanings of data from the researcher's culture experiences and knowledge from literature and/or theories, representation.

Adapted representation of Creswell's (2007; 2009) six- step analysis of qualitative data analysis

Creswell's (2007:157 and 2009:185) six-step-procedure was employed on a number of counts. First, it would facilitate construction of "the central meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences" (Delpont & Fouche 2005:270) with Sesotho TK as factorial in acquisition of proficiency in academic English. Secondly, Creswell's procedure is comprehensive accommodating even the narrative research approaches such the one used in my inquiry. This way Creswell's procedure provided for my right to personal stance/philosophy about my research phenomenon - thus, signifying a theoretical perspective of the investigator in critical theoretically-oriented studies.

Thirdly, the procedure allowed for recognition of overlaps of the steps, thus enabling openness to continual discovery of additional codes and themes around my research phenomenon. Fourthly, Creswell's tips include advice on how to identify types of information for coding and theme development in narrative, phenomenology, ethnographic, grounded theory, and case study research (Creswell (2007:153). My inquiry though mainly narrative, has aspects of all these research approaches. The tip therefore enabled me to justify my use of what I term a multi-research perspective to code and theme development in analysing narratives for experience-informed perspectives about the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English by non-English-speaking students of the English-medium NUL. Most importantly, this analysis procedure with its concept of winnowing (Creswell 2007:152), permitted me to decide to include and exclude certain aspects of the narratives based on the extent to which they meaningfully address the study's research questions. Below I explain and rationalise use of the winnowing technique in my analysis.

5.7.2.1 Winnowing

According to Wolcott (1994b, cited in Creswell 2007:152), not all data are equally utilisable in qualitative research. Some data may therefore be discarded. Such is the process of winnowing (Creswell 2007:152). My inquiry was not exceptional in this regard. It turned out during the reading and re-reading of the transcriptions that the narratives were not necessarily equally providing adequate information for all probes. As would be expected, some were more revealing than others in terms of the relationship between Sesotho TK and academic English. Therefore, while making sure not to compromise representation of subject areas, I decided to adapt Creswell's process of winnowing by engaging in the process of meaningful reduction of participants' interpretive perspectives about the relationship between Sesotho TK and academic English. The process was enhanced with auto-ethnographic vignettes (Adams 2008; Humphries 2005, cited in Boje & Tyler 2009:177) for authenticated crystallisation

and construction of core meanings of participants' lived experiences (Delpont & Fouche 2005:270).

5.7.3 Atlas.ti electronic qualitative data analysis software

While as much and as far as possible generic manual qualitative data analysis strategies afforded me direct interaction with raw data, thus revealing deeper meanings normally hidden in nuances of a transcript (Nieuwenhuis 2007:117), use of available electronic qualitative data analysis (QDA) software – namely, Atlas.ti facilitated the process of coding, recoding, recording of memos and ideas, production of report versions sorted out by code, category cluster, and direct quotes from raw data which I interpreted and constructed meanings from (Nieuwenhuis 2007:115-117). The rationale for use of the software was that it is able to do the following:

- (i) Automatically indicate on each data segment where the codes come from by page and line of data file;
- (ii) Print out part of or all of the data if I prefer to work from a hard copy of the data;
- (iii) Recode the data;
- (iv) Process not only textual, but also graphic, audio, and video data.

In a nutshell, *Atlas.ti* as perceived by Angrosino (2007:75), is a code-based theory builder “that goes beyond just code-and-retrieve functions, but permits the development of theoretical connections between and among coded concepts; [thus] resulting in high-order classifications and connections”.

In the next section I convince the readership that the different and convergent findings from different sources in the inquiry are legitimate and therefore trustworthy. Different authors opine that this is achieved through application of critical constructivist quality standards of trustworthiness often embedded in authenticity and persuasiveness that

are relevant to different aspects of qualitative research (Taylor 2004:9; Sullivan 2006:134-135; Whitehead & McNiff 2006:82-92; Nieuwenhuis 2007:80-81).

5.8 QUALITY STANDARDS FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to convince the readership about legitimacy of convergent and differing findings in the inquiry, I applied six quality standards. These are crystallisation, substantive contribution and verisimilitude, aesthetic merit, critical reflexivity, pedagogical thoughtfulness, and vulnerability.

5.8.1 Crystallisation

This quality standard is based on constructivist perspective with its two main assumptions. One assumption is that reality is not fixed, but dynamic and therefore emergent (Nieuwenhuis 2007:81). According to Nieuwenhuis, researchers engage in the process of crystallisation in qualitative research when they describe and analyse data for emerging not measurable reality with regard to the research phenomenon. Another view is that because human beings hold multiple realities in their minds, the different insights gained in turn depict different perspectives or multiple truths which reflect the uniqueness of reality and identity of participants (Richardson 2000:394; Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:963; Nieuwenhuis 2007:81). The same assertion lies in Creswell's (2009:192) recommendation for inclusion of negative/discrepant data that disconfirm some themes in the analysis. According to Creswell such a recommendation is on a ground that "because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account".

Auto-ethnographic data analysis is characteristically not aimed at convergences, but crystallisation of perspectives (Cupane 2007:52-58; Maree 2007:40-41; Coia & Taylor 2009:15). Every effort was made to take full cognisance of convergences as patterns where and when they surfaced in the course descriptions, outlines and the narratives by

different participants. This therefore called for the process of identification of aspect-specific converging data from the study's multiple sources. Crystallisation was ensured through layered accounts (Ellis & Bochner 2010:6). Layered accounts usually involve a process of identification of reflexive/introspective, vignettes/anecdotes through which the multiple voices of participants articulate their personal experiences with the research phenomenon (Ronai 1992:123). In line with this understanding, in this inquiry crystallisation was adopted to perceive and describe findings from each individual's experiential perspectives about the role of Sesotho TKI in academic English as unique and facilitative of a deeper understanding of the interface between academic English proficiency and the ethno - knowledge of Basotho students. Crystallisation therefore, involved use of rich description and interpretation of experiences pointing to converging findings on positive and/or otherwise (Nieuwenhuis 2007:80; Creswell 2009:191-192) role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBs of the NUL.

5.8.2 Substantive contribution and verisimilitude

This standard addresses the question of how the researcher's writing contributes to the readers' understanding of the life of the researched in relation to the research phenomenon. It also answers the question of the extent to which the auto-ethnographic researcher through his/her written text truly depicts "the cultural, social, individual or communal sense of the real" (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:965). Duncan (2004:9) in the article "Auto-ethnography: Critical appreciation of an emerging art" advances what I consider an equivalent of substantive contribution through what is termed instrumental validity. The underlying assumption to this judgement standard is that qualitative research is judged among others, by the extent of its usefulness. Duncan draws from Eisner (1991:58) three types of usefulness. These are that qualitative studies are useful if they:

- (i) Help readers to understand an otherwise bewildering situation;
- (ii) Help readers to anticipate future possibilities and scenarios for improved

practice;

- (iii) They act as guides spotlighting specific aspects of a situation that might otherwise go unnoticed.

In sum, this trustworthy standard answers the question of the extent to which the researcher's writing convincingly describes the experiential social reality in which the researched and the researcher have to interrogate and interpret the phenomenon for its implications for future improvement of life in the social situation of the researched and the researcher.

For my study, the question was how my act of writing convincingly described the experiential social reality in which myself and the SSBSs must master the English of doing school at the NUL. I ensured substantive contribution/verisimilitude/instrumental validity through a vivid and accurate description of the Sesotho cultural context and the English-medium NUL. I perceive this as a confusing scenario to students and educators because it has not been investigated for how the two cultural contexts in which the parties find themselves interface in the interest of enhancing acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs. Researching into the situation thus, implied need for depiction of the expectations, value and value systems, etc. Through an interpretive synthesis substantiated with supporting excerpts from the narratives, I vividly explained how Sesotho traditional knowledge helps acquisition of academic English proficiency among students entering the English-medium NUL from a Sesotho-speaking cultural background. Specifically, this involved choice and appropriate use of language that accurately captured from the interpretations of narratives of events/incidences pointing to the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency by NUL students who come from a Sesotho-speaking cultural background.

5.8.3 Aesthetic merit

Richardson & St. Pierre (2005:965; Cupane 2007:58-62) perceive trustworthiness of auto-ethnographic studies also in terms of the extent to which such studies achieve the following:

- (i) Evoke interpretive responses;
- (ii) Recognise factors of multiple interpretations;
- (iii) Are ethically sensitive through observance of informed consent and confidentiality;
- (iv) Show how cultural values, beliefs, and related behaviours and practices help readers to understand and deal with the anxieties and implications of living in two worlds perceived to be conflicting even when they may not necessarily be;
- (v) Maintain visual beauty and related skills for an appealing presentation of the thesis.

Like all auto-ethnographic inquiries my investigation did not aim at duplication or generalisation of the participants' experiential interpretations of the role of Sesotho TK traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency. Instead, its aesthetic merit lay in the themes and theories emerging in the findings and how these conjured up interpretive responses for possible application in other situations (Duncan 2004:10).

Analysis of multiple interpretations of the role of Sesotho TK academic English proficiency were based on among others, the factorial impact of Sesotho cultural norms/behaviours/values/beliefs around gender, marital status, age, family background, weather, climatic conditions, etc. as lived experiences in the context of Lesotho.

5.8.4 Critical reflexivity

Also referred to as critical thinking (Cupane 2007:62), this quality standard answers the question of how the researcher ensures critical and honest self-disclosure (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:964). Maintenance of the standard is through a critical reflection on not only personal stances and philosophies, but also on personal experience with the research phenomenon. Critical reflexivity is, as put by Pillow (2003:175), a quality standard answering the question of not only how the researcher and the researched truly demonstrate recognition of self and that of other, but also that of how the researcher is able to depict the transcendent character of reflection. It is about the how convincing the researcher is in his/her interrogation of the narratives for a culture-sensitive construction of the meaning and action-related implications of the research phenomenon.

Auto-ethnographic reflections are viewed as emancipatory (Cupane 2007:62). According to Cupane such reflections are so because they enable insider-implicated researchers to question accepted and authoritarian codes of conduct in society, thus seeking a contextualised understanding of their own and others' life and lived experiences from theirs and others' socio-cultural perspectives. Cupane posits further that critical reflexivity is intended to reconstruct original and authentic meanings on which improved practice can be benchmarked. Critical reflexivity, according to Cupane (2007:63), is based on the stories of lived experiences of the researcher and the researched. Such stories are usually confessional tales around oneself, others, the field or the data (Pillow 2003:180; Afonso 2009).

In this inquiry the main objective was to understand from the critical personal-experience narratives what it means being a Ssotho-speaking-background Mosotho who has to master academic English for academic survival in a Westnocentric English-medium university in Lesotho. In light of the foregoing assertions the investigation ensured critical reflexivity as follows:

- ↓ It probed, vividly described and analysed narratives for how the researcher and the researched went through the process of constructing their personal stances and philosophies about Sesotho oral traditional knowledge as an academic English proficiency need.
- ↓ It contextualised the narratives by probing them for critical reflections on lived experiences of participants as learners, teachers and lecturers in English as a non-mother-tongue medium of teaching and learning different academic subjects at the NUL.
- ↓ It probed the narratives for critical reflections on how different aspects of the Sesotho culture are academic English proficiency needs.

5.8.5 Pedagogical thoughtfulness

Also referred to as impact (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:964), pedagogical thoughtfulness is about how findings from an inquiry must be so emotionally and intellectually involving that they provoke those who read the inquiry to take action that is meant to improve personal practice in their own professional contexts (Van Manen 1991; Taylor & Settlemaier 2003, cited by Cupane 2007:63; Richardson & St. Pierre 2005:964). In amassing literature for the methodology of this inquiry I read several auto-ethnographic studies. Three characteristics of this type of studies have been most provocative in my own inquiry. They are culture-sensitive, transcendent to pedagogical improvement and impose vividness and accuracy of language which depicts need for pedagogical professional improvement on the part of the practitioner-researcher. These characteristics moved me to reflect on and write my own and others' critical reflective auto-ethnographies for improvement of my personal pedagogical practice as an English education lecturer. My strived through this inquiry to satisfy a long-lived wish to provide a research-informed basis for pedagogical practice that espouses Sesotho cultural knowledge and other ethno-knowledges as a capital to be explored for how it relates to

acquisition of proficiency in academic English by students who enter university from non-English-speaking-backgrounds such as the Sesotho cultural context.

5.8.6 Vulnerability

In reporting on and writing critically about the self-reflexive narratives of myself and those of fellow former students of the NUL, I revealed not only our personal and Sesotho cultural beliefs, values, uncertainties, emotions, etc., but also how these have impacted and still impact on our academic English proficiency. This way, readers of my thesis will know not only who I am, but also who my participants are in terms of our lived personal values, beliefs/stances/philosophies, as well as how our experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need contribute to knowledge about the role of indigenous knowledges in higher education. Thus, fulfilment of vulnerability as a quality standard in this study included among others, interpreting participants' experiential narratives for the extent to which their academic English proficiency has been affected by among others, violation and /or recognition of their living values.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the methodology of the study. First was the design as qualitative in nature. Secondly was presentation and rationale for adoption of the multi-theory methodological approach which grounded the use of critical auto-ethnography as my method. Thirdly, the chapter outlined the procedure for identification of participants, auto-ethnographic data collection techniques, procedures for data collection, the analysis framework and followed in accordance to framework. The chapter concluded with explanations of each one of the six standards that were adopted to ensure trustworthiness of the findings of the inquiry.

The literature which I amassed for execution of this critical self-study research for transformative professional development has made me emerge an intellectually

transformed researcher. I came out of the chapter with a clear sense that I was pursuing an understanding of myself and others as connected providers of knowledge about transformative pedagogical implications of being an ethno-cultural Mosotho university student who is faced with the challenge of having to successfully access and manage the academic demands of different academic subjects and contexts through English as a non-mother-tongue medium of instruction. In sum, such literature has been provocative on my part. The next chapter presents analysis of data and interpretation of the results.

CHAPTER



ON INQUIRING INTO THE ROLE OF SESOTHO TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH OF SESOTHO-SPEAKING-BACKGROUND STUDENTS OF THE NUL

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 benchmarked the design and methodology of the inquiry on the Africanisation, critical hermeneutic, living, critical auto-ethnography self-study for transformed professional development theories as well as the *ubuntu* perspective. The theories were deemed justifiable in research which aimed at improvement of personal professional practice. The rationale for a multiple-theoretical orientation of the inquiry is graphically represented in figure 5.1 of the chapter. Additionally, Chapter 5 explained and justified adoption of, and procedure for critical auto-ethnography as the methodology in this inquiry. Concluding the chapter is an answer to the question - "How do I convince the readership of my inquiry that the convergent and divergent findings from my sources are legitimate?"

Chapter 6 is empirical and presents findings from the investigation. It features six main parts. The first is the introduction. The second presents participants' profiles, while the third features findings from the literature review, documentary source analysis and narratives of participants' experience-based perceptions of the role of Sesotho TK in academic English of NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking-background. In the fourth part main findings are highlighted. The fifth part is my metaphorical synthesis of the

role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of Sesotho-speaking-background students studying in an English-medium African university such as the NUL. Metaphoricalness of this part of the study lies in the fact that I adopted a Sesotho concept of *sesiu* (silo) for my interpretation and understanding of the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency by HE students from a Sesotho-speaking background. The last section of the chapter is a conclusion.

As indicated in Chapter 5, this inquiry did not aim at generalisation of the findings to other HE institutions, or even within the NUL itself. Instead, it sought to create a knowledge base out of the interpretation of unique and cohering patterns of individual participants' experience-informed conceptions of the role of Sesotho TK in academic English of SSBSs of the NUL. In this inquiry such a knowledge base involved requesting participants for experience-appraised perceptions of the role of Sesotho TK in academic English. Such a move was influenced by Trahar's (2009:8) notion of need for narrative inquirers to "build a knowledge base without relinquishing the respect for the individual voice". Below is a summary of the profiles of the participants.

6.2 THE PARTICIPANTS

The total number of participants in the inquiry was 13, inclusive of me, the insider-implicated researcher. We were a voluntary participant group of former NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking background. We were purposively drawn from the arts and science subject-areas. The minimum qualification for all of us was a Bachelors degree from the NUL. At the time of participating in this inquiry all of us were education-practitioners in high school and tertiary institutions in Lesotho. All but my self the researcher chose to be nick-named by using the shortened form of their first names. Table 6.1 below presents each participant by nick-name, academic qualification, subject of study at the NUL and occupation at the time of participating in the inquiry.

Table 6.1: Summary of academic profiles of participants

Participant name	Highest academic qualification	Subject of study	Occupation
Abie	Honours	English Language/ Literature.	High school teacher: Senior
Bonie	Masters	Accounting/Economics	University Lecturer
Lifelile	Masters	English Language & Literature.	University lecturer
Mamane	Masters	English Language	Polytechnic Lecturer
Monie	Honours	English Language/ Development Studies	High school teacher
Musie	Masters	Development Studies	University lecturer
Newi	Ph.D	Physics	University Lecturer
Pitsos	Honours	English Language/ Geography	Polytechnic Lecturer
Relebo	Masters	English Language/ Geography	Polytechnic Lecturer
Richie	Ph.D	Accounting/Political administration	University Lecturer
Tlhorie	Honours	English language	Polytechnic Lecturer
Agie	Ph.D	Counselling psychology/ History	University Lecturer
Tsums	Masters	Religious studies	University Lecturer

6.3 FINDINGS

Findings were drawn from reviewed literature, documents from the NUL, and the experiential narratives.

6.3.1 Findings from literature study

Chapter 2 reviewed documented literature on TK. The following are some of the notions about it (TK).

- (i) It is knowledge resulting from meanings that human beings agree upon as members of a cultural group and attach to experiences in their livelihoods as a result of interaction with their environment (*vide* 2.4).

- (ii) It has built into it experiences that challenge and enhance critical ability.
- (iii) It is part of the identity of people and a basis for formation of subsequent knowledge.
- (iv) It is originally oralate and communicable via the voice, the body and art (*Vide* 2.2.1.3(a)-(b) and 2.4).
- (v) It can be synonymous with indigenous knowledge (*Vide* 2.1)
- (vi) It is dynamic (*Vide* 2.2. 4.1).

The findings have implications for the inquiry in more ways than one. The foundational nature of traditional knowledge implies that secondary knowledges such as academic English should be explored for how they can benefit from the already existent traditional/indigenous knowledge which students such as those from a Sesotho-speaking-background enrol into HE with. Experiential narratives were among others, analysed for whether or not they pointed to how Sesotho TK is foundational to acquisition of academic English proficiency.

The notion of traditional knowledge as embedding critical thinking means that it is cognitively challenging. A similar perception is held about academic English. In the context of my inquiry, it made sense to assume based on the cross-cutting nature of critical thinking, that Sesotho TK could be investigated for the possibility of whether or not and how critical thinking abilities acquired from it interface with those which are requisite for acquisition of proficiency in academic English in to be able to learn in HE institutions.

Documentation of traditional knowledge as dynamic implies its flexibility and therefore, possible transferability to different situations as and when need arises. It was against this background among others, that experiential narratives of participants were analysed for how different aspects of Sesotho TK transfer positively to acquisition of academic English proficiency by students from a Sesotho-speaking-background.

The role of traditional knowledge/indigenous knowledge in HE was the subject of **Chapter 3**. The highlights of the chapter were as follows:

- (i) Authors are concerned about marginalisation of TK/IK in teaching and learning in HE.
- (ii) Predominance of the Westnocentric mentality in HE, and use of ethno-culture insensitive research methods by culturally detached researchers is the major concern among authors.
- (iii) TK must be mainstreamed into HE because it:
 - ↳ Has potential to bring new inventions in modern education (*vide* 3.3).
 - ↳ Facilitates international interaction and integration of African communities if their education systems are rooted in locally established ways of doing things (*vide* 3.3.1).
- (iv) Co-existence should be the guiding principle of mainstreaming TK into HE; while the strategies for its implementation must be phenomenographic, constructivist, and academic-subject-based (*vide* 3.4.1.1-3.4.1.3).

Chapter 4 is a review of literature on notions and definitions of academic English. The chapter revealed as follows about academic English:

- (i) Unlike everyday English, academic English is more cognitively demanding (*vide* 4.3.1).
- (ii) It is used for general and specific academic purposes (*vide* 4.3.2).
- (iii) It is context-bound (*vide* 4.3.2(a)).
- (iv) It is comprised of linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural dimensions (*vide* 4.4.1-4.4.3).

The main findings from the three chapters on the review of literature were interacted with for their implications for the present study. As much as possible the findings from

Chapter 6 were interpreted in view of among others, those discerned from the amassed literature.

6.3.2 Findings from documentary sources

The NUL Mission statement, Vision, and Core Values, course descriptions, and examination question papers were the only documentary sources for the study. These are documented as follows in the current NUL Strategic Plan (2007-2012:23, Draft 3 (section 6.0).

6.3.2.1 NUL Mission statement, Vision, and Core values

(i) NUL's Vision

"NUL's vision is to be a leading African university responsive to national needs; committed to high quality teaching, life-long learning, research and community service, respected nationally and internationally."

The expression "...a leading African university responsive to national needs..." leaves the reader of NUL's Vision with an impression that the institution is rooted in the African soil and as such, is responsive to Nkrumah's (1965) concept of an African university (3.2). Based on this expression does teaching at the NUL have an IK/TK policy? Is the policy explicit on how IK/TK should be mainstreamed into teaching and learning in the English-medium NUL? No. It does not have such a policy. In some narratives in 6.4.9 lack of an institutional policy on TK/IK was depicted as cause for concern and non-provision for use of Sesotho TK for acquisition of academic English proficiency and other forms of knowledge. Non-provision for integration of TK/IK into NUL's structure makes the institution lag behind other African HE institutions where IKS policies are in place, and are, as in the case of *Universidade Pedagógica Mozambique* already being transformed on the basis of findings from ethno-culture-sensitive academic-subject-based investigation of Mozambican cultural knowledge in subjects such as Physics and Mathematics (*vide 3.4.1.3*).

(ii) NUL's Mission

"NUL's mission is to promote national advancement through innovative teaching, learning, research and professional services, producing high calibre and responsible graduates able to serve their communities with diligence."

Without a clear IK/TK policy in place and relevant guidelines for mainstreaming the same, important aspects which make good reading of the NUL Vision and Mission become white elephants.

(iii) NUL's Core values

"Staff and students of NUL shall demonstrate a commitment to honesty, integrity, professionalism, excellent customer care, respect, tolerance, transparency and accountability in their dealings with colleagues and others. They shall be innovative, resourceful, collaborative, cherishing academic freedom and always striving for excellence."

The Core Values of the NUL seem consistent with those revealed in the findings from narratives on Sesotho values which are nurtured in participants from childhood (*vide* 6.4.5-6.4.6). This consistency between the NUL and Sesotho values could imply that pedagogical practice at the NUL embraces and lives the ethno-cultural values that SSBSs enter the university with. Also, the congruence suggests that the NUL therefore exploits the Sesotho values for their role in facilitating learning at university. Findings from the narratives pointed to the contrary (*vide* 6.4.5-6.4.6). Logically it was concluded that stipulations in missions, visions and values of HE institutions do not automatically translate into commensurate implementation at teaching and learning levels.

6.3.2.2 Course descriptions and question papers

An examination of a random sample of examination question papers of the period 1975 to 2009 as the time covering that during which participants were students at the NUL drew a blank about formal inclusion of TK/IK in general, and Sesotho TK in particular in

the curriculum and assessment practice at the NUL. The finding was not surprising considering non-specificity about this (IK/TL) in the Vision, and Mission of the institution.

6.4 FINDINGS FROM NARRATIVE DATA

In narrative auto-ethnographic research story-telling facilitates construction of knowledge from, and not about the past (Trahar 2009:2). It was for this reason that I asked participants to reflect on and story their memories of eventful experiences with the positive and challenging interface between acquisition of academic English proficiency and Sesotho ethno-cultural knowledge. In each one of the main component sections of the chapter, narratives were discussed as individual truths based on the personal experiences with and perceptions of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs of the NUL. While non-storied accounts were referred to in the presentation and interpretation of data, the winnowing procedure that is recommended by Creswell (2007) for analysis of qualitative data, was adopted under individual themes and sub-themes to relevantly cite verbatim those interpretive narratives in which participants actually storied their personal experiences and impressions. Data were unpacked for the extent to which aspects of the unstoried and storied narratives of participants' experiential personal truths were a blueprint for perceiving Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs of the English-medium NUL. Interrogation of each storied narrative used the following procedure:

- (i) Summative and verbatim presentation of an experiential account or story.
- (ii) Articulation of findings from interpretation of aspects of an individual narrative.
- (iii) Contextualisation of the findings per narrative into theory and other documented scholarship (Afonso & Taylor 2009:227; Creswell 2009:189; Taylor 2011 via email on February 3rd, 2011) because "writing autobiographical data not only

generates theory, but is also inexorably informed by theoretical constructs we use in our daily practice" (Tenni, Smyth & Boucher 2003:5).

- (iv) Summative integration of main insights from the narratives.

Several voices were employed in the form of storied accounts of experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs. The readership is therefore "implored to listen to a blend of these many voices" (Ronai 1992:102) of the insider-implicated researcher Lifelile and her participants.

Experiential narratives were sought under four broad classifications. These were ethno-values nurtured in and experienced by participants from childhood; experience-informed perceptions of the role of such values in academic English proficiency of SSBSs enrolled at the NUL; perceptions of the place of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of students enrolling at the NUL from a Sesotho-speaking-background; as well as what participants envision to be a pedagogically transformed ethno-culture-sensitive NUL in the 21st century. Overall impressions about Sesotho TK and its role in academic English form the next sub-section.

6.4.1 Overall impressions

Three sub-headings make this sub-theme. They are the findings on the problem-solving nature of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English; the relationship between knowledge of ethno-cultural language and acquisition of academic English; as well as resultant perception of Sesotho TK as therefore important.

6.4.1.1 Sesotho TK as a problem-solving strategy

Conception of academic English as difficult for SSBSs emerged as one of the overall impressions about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. It was in this context that Sesotho TK was perceived as a problem-solving strategy. While all

responses pointed to the problem-solving nature of Sesotho TK in academic English, not all of them included events of actual experiences. Winnowing was adopted to include for analysis only those narratives in which participants substantiated their interpretations with stories of personal experience with Sesotho TK as a problem-solving academic English need. Winnowing is perceived by Creswell (2007:164) (*vide* 5.7.2.1) as a process in which the researcher analyses data for identification of those (data) he/she perceives to be more directly relevant to the research phenomenon.

Abie

Abie storied her experience-informed opinion in the following excerpt.

In my experience this is difficult English...

"Remember **you** taught us in one of your curriculum studies courses that such is the English for doing school in different academic subjects. In my experience, this is difficult English compared to ordinary English. In learning through it, students from second language backgrounds such as ourselves should be given as much opportunity as possible (*ho khoatha*) to source/tap from each and every *sekhutloana* (corner) for better understanding. In my mind as I recall how I coped at the NUL, I think knowledge from Sesotho and Bosothis should be seen and appreciated as one of such corners to run to for solution of some if not most of the problems with this type of English".

What findings does Abie's story reveal? The excerpt indicates how involved Abie's perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. Abie affirmed from personal experience that academic English is more difficult than everyday English, and as such is more problematic for SSBSs. She was served by her memory to remember that I, as her former lecturer, termed academic English the English of doing school. My

course – “Curriculum and Teaching in English Language” for instance, was one of the contexts in which she experienced problems with of academic English and knowledge of it as different from everyday English for basic interpersonal interaction.

Abie’s was a position that SSBSs need to be afforded an opportunity to resort to their ethno-knowledge for management of some of their academic English proficiency needs. Such a view was in this inquiry understood as pointing to need for an ethno-culture-sensitive improvement of professional practice for acquisition of academic English. Abie rationalised the need for the move by metaphorically referring to Sesotho ethno-cultural knowledge as *sekhutloana* (a safe/secure corner). In Sesotho the concept *sekhutloana* creates the image of a comfort or security. Abie’s perspective was therefore, that Sesotho TK is not a refuge but a capital or storage of knowledge to resort to for solution of problems threatening acquisition of academic English. This is a metaphorical perspective which in my interpretation suggests that conception of Sesotho TK in refuge terms would imply giving in to challenges by seeking asylum and comfort in Sesotho TK as if it was non-transferable to acquisition of academic English.

Another revelation from Abie’s text was in “...*In learning through it, students from second language backgrounds such as ourselves should be given as much opportunity as possible (ho khoatha)*...” The text suggests that use of Sesotho TK for clarification of academic English is restricted in teaching and learning at the NUL.

Abie’s text revealed also the power of metaphor for concretisation and imaging of problematicity of academic English and Sesotho TK as a problem-solving strategy therein. Abie for instance, adopted a medicinal metaphor to further highlight the comfort and security derived from use of Sesotho TK for solving problems resulting from incompetence in academic English. For instance, she used the Sesotho metaphor of balm or ointment normally kept safely to quell or sooth ailments in times of need. Abie’s metaphorical perception therefore equates problematicity of academic English to an ailment. Her choice of the Sesotho concept “*ho khoatha*” creates the image of the

problem-solving nature of Sesotho TK. This use of metaphor to concretise problemat�city of academic English revealed Abie's sympathetic understanding of the plight of SSBSs having to satisfy the demands of their academic setting through English as a non-mother-tongue medium. Abie's perception equated this situation to an ailment on the part of SSBSs at NUL. This participant recommended that SSBSs be given an opportunity to *khoatha* (draw wisdom) from their ethno-cultural knowledge for understanding the English for academic survival in the English-medium HE institution such as the NUL. The notions of Sesotho TK as refuge, security and authority for SSBSs to appeal to for solution of learning problems associated with academic English, were another embodiment of Abie's metaphorical perception and interpretation of Sesotho TK's place in academic English of SSBSs at the NUL.

Though not as fully storied as Abie's, this metaphorical perception emerged also in **Mamane's** interpretation of the relationship between Sesotho TK and academic English. According to Mamane Sesotho TK affords SSBSs the authority to "*call the shots*" - thus, "*opening doors into functional knowledge of academic English*". Mamane's metaphor of "*calling the shots*" brings about the image of the position of strength, confidence, security and power all effected by possession of Sesotho TK which presumably "*opens doors*" - thus, leading to acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

How relevant was Abie's perception to documented scholarship? The finding on Abie's reliance on memory bore a theoretical significance. It particularly situated the inquiry in the law of expression as explained in Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory (*vide* 2.4). According to this theory, knowledge stored in memory is a force which compels human beings to express it when time, space and other circumstances dictate. For Abie, this inquiry with its focus on academic English as a challenge to students of her type was a circumstance impelling her to reflect on and appeal to her memory of some of the learning circumstances in which she experienced not only problemat�city of

academic English, but also awareness of the difference between it and everyday English.

Abie's perception of academic English as difficult "*English for doing school*" is consistent with, and confirming of current knowledge about arduousness of academic English. This perspective about academic English is clarified in Scarcella' (2003:11-33) conceptual frameworks for academic English, and Cummins' (2000) concept of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (cited in Scarcella 2003:45) through which the authors posit that "In contrast to ordinary English, academic English is cognitively demanding and relatively decontextualised" (Cummins 2000, in Scarcella 2003:27) (*vide* 4.4). The study adds an experiential perspective to the understanding as documented in scholarship.

Adoption of an experience-informed metaphorical approach to conception of a research phenomenon is not unique to my inquiry. Use of metaphor for creation of knowledge from an auto-ethnographic inquiry is knowledge from among others, Muncey's auto-ethnographic study of herself as a teenage mother (Muncey 2005:9-12). Muncey drew from the life of plants in her garden to discover the power of metaphor in writing to explain the truth and connections between her life experience as a teenage mother and her academic experience. In my auto-ethnographic inquiry the power of metaphor surfaced in the form of Abie's and Mamane's conception of Sesotho TK as "*sekhutloana*" (corner) from which SSBSs "*khoatha*" (draw wisdom) and "*call the shots*" /appeal to for acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

What lessons emerged from Abie's impressions about Sesotho OTK as an academic English proficiency need? By challenging me to recall how as her former lecturer I taught them that "...*such is the English for doing school in different academic subjects...*" Abie presented me with two insights. One was my discovery of the power of memory in creation of knowledge regarding the extent to which Sesotho TK is an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs in English-medium HE institutions such as

NUL. Through her words "*Remember you taught us in one of your curriculum studies courses that...*", Abie took me on board forcing me to be part of her memory-driven understanding of academic English as "*English for doing school*" as I had taught it to her.

Also revealed in the same utterance by Abie was my realisation of conduciveness of reflexive auto-ethnographic research to unpremeditated implementation of the "I-Thou" approach to understanding arduousness of academic English and how it differs from everyday English. Perhaps this is what is embodied in not only Nel's (2008:107) recommendation for adoption of not only a decolonised or Africanised and *ubuntu*-oriented perspective about improvement of teaching and learning in African HE, but also adoption of the non-othering approach to understanding students' learning needs from their own and the researchers' perspectives (Whitehead & McNiff's 2006:86). Does this therefore suggest that there is a relationship between adoption of the dialogic critical auto-ethnographic research approach to understanding one's students' academic English proficiency needs, recollection and realisation of the potential of one's professional strengths in improvement of their professional practice? Perhaps it does. In sum, Abie's impression of Sesotho TK as an academic English need was deemed complex.

6.4.1.2 The relationship between culture, language and academic English

Other impressions about complexity of academic English and the place of NUL's SSBSs traditional knowledge therein were synthesised into the sub-theme which I termed the relationship between language, culture and understanding of the foreign language. Tlhorie's interpretation of Sesotho TK's role in academic English revealed awareness of this kind of relationship. Tlhorie communicated this type of perception in the following impression.

Tlhorie

We have tactics that we source from our cultures and languages

"...Sesotho as both a language and culture...helps solve some of the problems resulting from among others, foreignness of English as a medium of learning and teaching in higher education...We have tactics that we source from our cultures and languages to solve a lot of communication problems we encounter in academic English..."

Conception of one's mother-tongue as a basis for understanding academic English surfaced also in Pitsos following account.

Pitsos

...it's easier to address something when you understand what it means in Sesotho too.

"The thing is my understanding of English has always been based on the translation from any mother tongue, when sometimes you read words from a dictionary or hear them being explained I could always say "ok this is what it means in Sesotho" then it would make more sense and easy for me to understand its context when I know first what it meant in Sesotho. Apart from when you'd only know the meaning of the word in English. Every time its easier to address something when you understand what it means in Sesotho too".

Also augmenting Tlhorie's and Pitsos' conception of one's language as an academic English need was Agie's perception that "...*Language is very important because it is a tool for accessing and disseminating knowledge*".

Contextualised into scholarship on language acquisition, the participants' position added to the debate on the relationship between language, culture and knowledge of the learner. In particular, their notion brought under the spot-light the Whorf-Sapir Hypothesis about the immediate relationship between language, culture, and knowledge (*vide* 2.2.2.2). Taken in the context of this hypothesis, the participants' perception benefits the debate by bringing forward the personal experience-informed notion about how one's pre-university knowledge of Sesotho culture and language can be tapped for manipulation of aspects of academic English in the interest of access to and construction of academic knowledge. The commonly held conception brought in also the need for awareness of tacit "tactics" which enable those of us from a Sesotho-speaking-background to solve some of our problems with academic English.

What therefore did these perceptions suggest? It emphasised the commonly held perception that academic English is foreign for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In this capacity it imposes need for exploitation of avenues inclusive of such students' ethno-cultural knowledge for how they can benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English. Therefore, given a chance to be freely utilised in learning, Sesotho TK and language have potential to effect acquisition of proficiency in academic English. The excerpts therefore rendered sensible the assumption that application of one's linguistic and cultural knowledge demystifies academic English as difficult.

6.4.1.3 Importance of Sesotho TK in academic English

Narratives pointed also to importance of Sesotho TK as a problem-solving strategy in academic English proficiency. According to participants, Sesotho TK is reassuring and

therefore confidence-building. For this conception, participants who are now education-practitioners at the NUL recalled from their experience as former students how they lacked confidence in expressing themselves in English in the context of their different academic subjects. Tsums, the education-practitioner in Religious Education at the NUL opined that having suffered the trauma of Theology-based incompetence in academic English herself, she now relates to and appreciates her own students' apprehensions regarding use of academic English. Her contention is that students' ethno-cultural knowledge should, where necessary, be utilised for promotion of knowledge of and confidence in use of academic English. *"Yes with this I even help those that fear to express themselves in Sesotho so that they can reflect on real life issues in subjects in order to be able to understand the English used to explain concepts"*, she said.

Recognition of the importance of Sesotho TK in academic English was reckoned and recommended also by Abie in the following account.

Abie

Use of a person's knowledge of Sesotho and bosotho should not be denied...

"...as students from different cultural backgrounds we do not enter university empty-headed. Our Sesotho knowledge lives in us just as we live in it, and so must be used to our advantage and achievement...Use of a person's knowledge of Sesotho and Bosotho should not be denied because by nature we are rich in our knowledge from our languages and cultures. We have tactics that we can source from our cultures and languages to solve a lot of the communication problems we encounter in academic English. If lecturers can formerly give students freedom to turn to Sesotho for clarification of the English for different concepts in their subjects performance can improve soooo much! I just wish written instructional materials – particularly for problematic courses could be summarised in Sesotho so that after being taught in English, students can have an opportunity to refer to the Sesotho summary for verification of their understanding. I am telling you Mme that these students can earn amazing academic achievement from such instructional practice on the part of NUL".

What does Abie's perception of the importance of Sesotho TK in academic English interpret into? At least four perspectives emerged from Abie's conception of the importance of Sesotho TK. Because Sesotho TK is a capital of learning, it can be tapped on for tactics leading to solution of communicative problems in English-medium contexts. As articulated in Tsums' conception, perception of Sesotho TK as reassuring and confidence building resurfaced in Abie's text. Abie pointed also to the positive relationship between use of Sesotho TK and improved academic performance.

Abie's text also depicted the importance of Sesotho TK in academic English in emancipatory terms. According to this participant, formal provision of Sesotho versions of instructional materials would give students freedom and opportunity to verify their understanding of the English version of such materials. This way, Abie advocated emancipation of students from the rigid Western approach to learning in Africa-based English-medium HE institutions.

What is the contribution of Abie's perception to scholarship? Abie's position which in my view enhanced current documented criticism of HE practices for exaggerated adherence to what Ntsoane (2005:93) terms the Western and English-mainly ways of knowing. The participant's conception is an advocacy for freedom of pedagogical practice and learning in HE to be ethno-culture-sensitive. As such, it suggests need for a subject-based perceptual shift from what ethno-culture-sensitive auto-ethnographic researchers such as Afonso (2009) and Cupane (2007) term the colonial hegemony dominating educational practice in AHE. Abie's stance therefore qualifies to be read alongside documented recommendation for adoption of an Africanised perception of teaching and learning in African HE (Nel 2008; Le Grange 2005). Participants' perspective about the importance of Sesotho TK in academic English synchronised with the research-evidenced assertion that IKSs are a capital and resource to draw from in new learning situations.

User-friendliness of Sesotho TK adds to its importance in academic English proficiency. Knowledge of Sesotho should therefore be enhanced in SSBSs for the benefit of their easier understanding of concepts taught in English in their different academic subjects. Tlhorie articulated this perception of Sesotho TK as follows.

Tlhorie

...Sesotho as both a language and culture is very user-friendly...

"According to me, I wish they could proceed to higher education knowing that knowledge of Sesotho as both a language and culture is very user-friendly, and helps solve **some of the problems** resulting from among other things foreignness of English as a medium of learning and teaching..."

What findings do Tlhorie's perceptions reveal? Tlhorie's interpretation of Sesotho TK as an important problem-solving strategy in acquisition of proficiency in academic English suggested as did that of Abie that academic English is difficult and so poses learning challenges to students SSBSs. As in Abie's conception in the story "*In my experience this is difficult English...*," Tlhorie's conception embodies a recommendation for improvement of pedagogical practice in HE. Taken in sum, Tlhorie's, Abie's and Tsums' texts as cited, embody a proactive or transformative perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need.

Monie

This participant summed up perceptions about the importance of Sesotho TK in academic English in his contention that Sesotho TK as part of the identity of SSBSs lives with and in them. Sesotho TK is therefore, a resource up to university level regardless of what the medium of instruction is in an institution. Below is his experiential perspective.

Sesotho and bosotho are our identity

"Sesotho and Bosotho are our identity. They provide us with knowledge that does not make us **tabula rasa** when we arrive at our university. Properly used with the right context and concepts, this identity in the form of what you call pre-existing knowledge, enables better understanding of English. ...But I emphasise that it should not be used for literal translation. Also we should not force things to compare because that's not how it is".

What findings surfaced from Monie's text? Three ideations emerged in Monie's perception of Sesotho TK as important. Firstly, Monie's reference to cognitive psychology for a position that SSBSs are not empty-headed upon enrolling at the NUL, highlights the importance of Sesotho TK as pre-existing capital and reserve to tap on to meet the academic English proficiency needs of their different learning and communicative contexts. Therefore, strategic and meaningful utilisation of Sesotho TK according to Monie impacts positively on academic English proficiency.

The second disclosure from Monie's text was applicability of knowledge from some academic disciplines to interpret and form perceptions in others. For instance, Monie relevantly utilised his knowledge of the term - *tabula rasa* from cognitive psychology for his conception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. The third revelation from Monie's perspective is advisory. Applicability of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency should for instance, not be generalisable to all encounters with challenges from academic English. Thus, use of Sesotho TK for understanding the English of learning should be cautious.

Further interrogation of data on problematicity of academic English and importance of Sesotho TK therein brought to surface the theme on participants' actually lived experiences of Sesotho TK as a problem-solving strategy. As is typical of auto-ethnographic and narrative inquiries, participants' personal experiences make the next subsection.

6.4.2 Academic context-specificness of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need

Narrative data also thematised into practical experiences with how Sesotho TK benefits academic English proficiency in out-of and within course academic contexts.

6.4.2.1 Sesotho TK as an out-of course academic English proficiency need

While all participants indicated that as former students of the NUL they experienced Sesotho TK as an academic English need at pre-classroom level, it was however not all of them who recalled specific instances in which application of Sesotho TK salvaged their academic English. The situation therefore necessitated adoption of Creswell's (2007) winnowing (5.7.2.1) process to use data on storied accounts of incidences of actual pre-classroom experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English need. The texts are made up of verbatim selections from selected participants' personal

experiences (Boje & Tyler 2008:179). The selected interpretive narratives were those by Bonie, Abie, and my self - the insider-implicated researcher.

Bonie

In response to my request for storied pre-classroom experiences with the positive relationship between Sesotho TK and academic English, Bonie did so in retrospect by referring me to her homestead-based encounter which if given a chance, could have benefited her understanding of the English of Accounting at university. Her story went,

Accounting that was practiced at home

"Let me give you an example of Accounting that was practiced at home and which as our Sesotho my indigenous/traditional knowledge, should have been tapped to facilitate our understanding of the English of Accounting. Counting the sheep for instance, we knew how many they were and kept this in unwritten record. Sometimes we just looked through the flock and were able to identify any missing one/ones by their colour, size and sometimes their manners/behaviours no matter how big the flock was..."

What did Bonie's text reveal? First was her knowledge and awareness of the contribution her Sesotho indigenous knowledge of stock-farming could have had to her Accounting-related English if its value had been appreciated. With regard to contribution to current knowledge, Bonie's conception had a theory-related significance. In particular, it concretised the oral style theory (Jousse 2000) with its stipulation about the intertwined nature of the relationship between humans and their cosmos and how such a relationship contributes to creation of knowledge (*vide* 2.4). Also affirmed by Bonie's perception is the notion of oralateness of African knowledge as advanced by

Conolly *et al.* (2009) in their assertion that knowledge in its virgin stage is non-print (*vide* 2.2.1.3). This relationship to current knowledge was revealed in Bonie's pre-classroom ethno-culturally experienced truth about the relevance of pristine oral counting competence of Basotho in addressing needs for the English of Accounting.

So what lessons emerged from Bonie's text above? Bonie's perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need drew my attention to the issue of non-exceptionality of Sesotho TK to the notion of the pristine nature of ethno-cultural knowledge. It is for instance, true that pre-print Basotho lived what in this inquiry I termed ethno-numeracy proficiency. This competence was necessary for them to be able to interact with and construct knowledge from their indigenous environment - livestock farming in the case of Bonie's account. This ethno-numeracy proficiency is necessary knowledge to tap on in the teaching and learning of numeracy-related subjects such as Accounting to SSBSs.

Abie

Abie storied her pre-classroom lived experience with the problem-solving nature of SesothoTK around the *Orientation week* at the NUL. Her recollection was on the tour of the NUL Library.

The library tour session

"Sessions in the Library tour were a nightmare for me. At times **I felt like not attending** them because I did not follow the type of English used to refer to library-related matters. An unforgettable experience was with classification of books in there. Cataloguing was the word. To me I thought we were being told about some machine. You see I knew the word catalogue to be a magazine /book from which we order clothes. This was my concept (She laughs). It was not until I intimated my predicament to one of my

friends who explained classification and cataloguing to me in Sesotho. I remarked "Why didn't these people first tell us that "classification *ke mahlofo*?"

What did Abie's account communicate? Foreignness of the English jargon for book-classification in the Library can be shockingly challenging to some SSBSs enrolling at the NUL. For instance, the unpleasant encounter with the different meaning of the Library literacy term – "cataloguing", remains indelible in Abie's memory. The foreignness of the term consequently dissuaded Abie to continue attending the sessions. Thanks to her courage to seek clarification in Sesotho which led to her discovery of the equivalent Sesotho term - *mahlofo* (classifications) in Sesotho. The question remains however, why Abie says "...*It was not until I intimated my predicament to one of my friends...*"

Does Abie's text contribute to current documented scholarship? Abie's loss of interest in the Library-tour sessions was not surprising if cognisance is taken of Kohl's (1994:15) observation of the tendency among students to choose not to learn if they do not understand. Abie's experience adds an evidence-informed understanding to Scarcella's (2003:31) conceptual framework about academic English – namely, its socio-cultural/psychological dimension about students' reluctance to continue with learning when academic English poses as a challenge. By seeking clarification in Sesotho instead of English, Abie brought to surface another dimension to the notion of "self-advocacy" – namely, a research-informed assertion that incompetence in academic English hampers the ability of non-English-speaking-background students in American colleges and universities to seek clarification during lectures (ASCCC 2002:12).

What insights emerged from Abie's account? At least four understandings surfaced. It seems that some unpleasant learning experiences with technicalities of academic English are unforgettable. "...*An unforgettable experience was with Classification of books in there. Cataloguing was the word...*," Abie said. The purpose

of enrolling into HE institutions is to learn. Therefore, those whose responsibility is to facilitate learning via the English-medium remain challenged if prevailing circumstances sometimes lead to learners' decision to refrain from learning because of incompetence in the language of understanding in such. Furthermore, Sesotho in its problem-solving nature serves as a self-advocacy strategy. This is why Abie used Sesotho to intimate her problem to a friend.

The issue of power relations between academic English and Sesotho as a language seemed to emerge in Abie's account. Note the narrator's "...until I intimated..." The English term "intimate" means among others, "to whisper". We whisper when we do not want a wider audience to hear us. Often it is because of fear of being undermined. Abie was in that position. It is reasonable to assume on this basis that incompetence in academic English may temper with self-esteem of the learner.

Surely there is/was something to the orientation period at university, particularly at the NUL. I, the insider-implicated-researcher, and former student of the same institution, had a related pre-classroom story to tell about my unpleasant encounter with the English of book-classification in the NUL library.

Lifelile: The insider-implicated researcher

The Dewey decimal classification system and cataloguing

"Then it was library orientation week. The guide was a Mosotho man. He addressed us in English throughout the excursion. He told us that the books were catalogued and classified according to the Dewey decimal classification system (DDCS). I had no idea what the DDCS was. About catalogue, I relived personal experiences at home and learning at primary school. I recalled that my mother used to order clothes from Ilanga Wholesalers catalogue. At primary school learning how to order from a catalogue was one of the curriculum topics in the subject English Language. "Does it mean that one of the learning requirements was ordering books from a book called catalogue?" I asked myself, too shy to seek clarification in English. At the end of the session that day I sought clarification with Tebo - one of my friends. She was in the same position as I was. We together gathered courage and whispered our plight in Sesotho to Ntate Molise— a senior

desk assistant in the Library. He smiled fatherly, held our hands in his, and was simple and clear. *Barali! Ke hore feela libuka li behiloe ka mahlofo* (My daughters, it simply means that the books have been shelved according to different categories). An Aha! Moment for me. Why did it not for once strike the tour-guide that because of our linguistic background, some of us might need to be clarified in our own languages?"

What were the disclosures from my account? Problematicity of the library jargon to students such as me enrolling into the NUL from a Sesotho-speaking background was one of the main revelations from my personal experience. As in the experience of Abie, I did not know that academic English is context-specific. That is why I applied the meanings of "*catalogue*", "*reading*" and "*programme*" as I knew them from other contexts. Like Abie, and in consistence with the non-English-speaking-background students referred to in the ASCCC (2002) study, I linguistically lacked what it took to self-advocate in English. This explains my diffidence to seek clarification until I had gathered courage.

Also revealed in my narrative was the relationship between the practitioners' knowledgeability in, and commitment to their profession and success of their clientele. In my account, Tebo and I for instance, recognised Ntate Molise or the knowledge source that he was as a Senior Desk Assistant in the then UBLS library. We felt we could depend on him for clarification of the unfamiliar library lingo. This was why "...*We together gathered courage and whispered our plight in Sesotho to Ntate Molise— a senior desk assistant in the Library...*"

A further revelation is implicit in the answer to the question "But why did we whisper our plight? The issue of power relations in which Sesotho seemed relegated seemed to be another of the revelations of my account above. We felt, believed and accepted that our Sesotho TK did not have a place in an English-medium university setting. Hence, our decision, as was Abie's decision to "intimate" to a friend in the story "The Library tour session", to gather courage and whisper our dilemma to Ntate Molise. The role of the Sesotho value of *botho* in academic English emerged in my accounted experience.

Recall from an account of my roots and Sesotho values nurtured in me that my home village is where every adult ethno-culturally had a parental responsibility to every child in the community (*Motho ke motho ka batho*). It takes *botho/ubuntu* to understand academic English proficiency needs of SSBSs from an ethno-culture-sensitive perspective. For instance, Tebo's and my own academic English benefitted from radiation of the parental value to us in the form of Ntate Molise's explanation for our conceptualisation of the Dewey decimal classification system in Sesotho and from a Sesotho TK-oriented perspective. Furthermore, my accounted experience brought to light the positive effect and reassuring nature of Sesotho TK. The experience created an *Ahaa* moment for me in my encounter with the English of effective use of the library. It was as a result of this ethno-culture-sensitiveness that Tebo and I left Ntate Molise's desk more literate in some of the technical jargon of book-classification and shelving in the library.

How does my account situate into current documented knowledge? My account concretised knowledge documented in the literature on TK (*vide*, Chapter 2) the role of TK in HE (*vide* Chapter 3), a conceptual framework for academic English (*vide* Chapter 4) and theories underpinning an understanding of traditional knowledge, its role in HE and use of auto-ethnography as a research method. It is one of the stipulations in TK literature that the elderly are sources of knowledge. Ntate Molise, the Senior Desk Assistant in the NUL Library then in his mid 50s, was not only an elderly in age, but in professional standing as well. These positions rendered him the rightful source of my knowledge and understanding of the terms "DDCS" and "cataloguing".

One of the insights from amassed scholarship on the rationale for mainstreaming traditional knowledge in HE is that all cultures and knowledges embedded in them are equal (*vide* 3.4.1.2). This means therefore that no one culture contributes more than others to knowledge construction. The ease with which we understood the meanings of "DDCS" and "cataloguing" from Ntate Molise's application of Sesotho language concretised this assertion.

One of the features distinguishing academic English is its specificity to context (Webb 2002:52). Unaware of this character of English for doing school, I overgeneralised my knowledge of the meaning of the term "catalogue" as used in the library and in the process failed to conceptualise accordingly. Then I, like Abie, was shy to self-advocate in English. In fact I noted as I wrote the auto-ethnography of my life as a new student in the NUL Library that coyness to seek clarification in English is not typical of those students in Africa-based English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL, but even to those non-English-speaking background students from English-speaking backgrounds. For instance, in the findings from a study of academic literacy competencies expected of students entering Californian public colleges and universities, students from non-English-speaking backgrounds lacked requisite linguistic competence to seek assistance from lecturers (the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) 2002:13). Could this suggest that students' ethno-cultural knowledges need to be explored for their benefit to academic English proficiency?

Specific incidences in my library experience added specificity to theories benchmarking this inquiry. The corporeal-manual as an aspect of the law of expression in the context of Jousse's (2000) oral style theory emphasises use of body language as one of the ways of showing creativity in communication of knowledge. In my accounted experience above, Ntate Molise "...smiled fatherly, held our hands in his, and was simple and clear. *Barali! Ke hore feela libuka li behiloe ka mahlofo...*" *Barali! Ke hore feela libuka li behiloe ka mahlofo...*" Through his touch Ntate Molise made us feel less estranged. The touch reassured us that it was after all not offensive not to understand, for we were welcome to seek clarification in our own language. It filled us with a sense of belonging with the institution – at least the library section of the university. Ntate Molise's use of body language complemented the laryngo-buccal (through voice) (Jousse 2000) Sesotho version of his expression of knowledge of the term "catalogue".

Ubuntu/botho (humaneness) is a fundamental aspect of the Africanisation theory and *Bosotho* as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis. It is even embedded in Sesotho

TK as the proverb "*motho ke motho ka batho*" (I am because we are, and because we are, I am too). As a value of being *ubuntu/botho* therefore has a place in the ontological value as articulated in Whitehead & McNiff's (2006: 22, 86) living theory (*vide* 5.2.2.4). According to this theory, people regard themselves as living in contradiction when their values are denied in their practice. Learning was my main if not the only mission as a new entrant at the NUL in 1974. In pursuance of this goal I embarked on the practice of learning with intention to benefit from all it took to achieve the value of success. I was entering the NUL with a baggage of values from my cultural background. My expectations, even if subconscious, included need for others, particularly lecturers to appreciate me as a Mosotho cultural being. My values and what all also implied for my success in learning through English as my non-mother-tongue needed to be exploited for how they could contribute to my acquisition of proficiency in the English for meeting the performance standards at university level. Everything had to be pedagogically in place for me not to find myself in a situation where I would feel like I was in a context that violated my main value and goal – namely, academic success.

In my foregoing experiential account the *botho/ubuntu* value was experienced in the form of the generosity and hospitality which Ntate Molise radiated in Sesotho to Tebo and I for the benefit of our proficiency in the English of the library. The *ubuntu/botho* value as lived in my experiential account assumed also the Sesotho value of constructive parenting in my acquisition of the library-based English. Ntate Molise became a living symbol in this regard. As the front-desk-Assistant in the Library his work involved among others, assistance of students in their different needs regarding utilisation of the Library. In such a context Mr. Molise presumably had specific personal and even professional values which he had to live by to not only meet the terms and conditions of his employment, but even more importantly, to satisfy his personal professional being. Ntate Molise lived his professional being by regarding Tebo and I as his academic daughters and welcomed us into the linguistically daunting library context by drawing from our traditional knowledge to clarify the English of the situation.

Does this mean therefore that Mr. Molise's failure to accord Tebo and I the Sesotho-TK informed assistance would have been tantamount to contradiction of the value of *botho*? Findings from this inquiry showed that it could have. But he did not. Instead, Tebo and I left Mr. Molise's desk more functionally knowledgeable in the English for organised shelving of books in the library. I doubt even today as I write this auto-ethnography that *Ntate* Molise was consciously aware that by explaining "DDCS" and "cataloguing in Sesotho to us he was living the oral style (*vide* 2.4), Africanisation (*vide* 5.2.2.1) and living (*vide* 5.2.2.4) theories and thus, according Sesotho TK its rightful role as a fundamental basis for construction of all forms of knowledge. Neither was Tebo nor I aware that by appealing to Sesotho for clarification, we were impelling communication practice in the library and other contexts to render NUL an African university which in the interest of respect and recognition of African integrity and its role in HE, had to take root amidst African traditions and culture (Nkrumah, 1965:45).

What insights did I derive from my accounted experience and its relevance to scholarship? A number of lessons resulted from my interrogation of my accounted experience. Commitment to learning and incompetence in academic English puts pressure on the learner and in such circumstances one's ethno-language becomes one of the authorities to courageously and confidently appeal to for clarity of the English as a non-mother-tongue medium of learning. With this experiential evidence, this part of the inquiry renders questionable Kohl's (1994:15-16) contention about students' choice "to not learn" if they do not understand what is being taught. Evidence of this is in the courage which Abie and myself garnered to successfully solicit a Sesotho clarification of some of the challenges posed by our initial incompetence in some of the English jargon of the library.

Another understanding is ethno-value-related. What for instance, did *Ntate* Molise's manner of intervention mean other than a parental touch that is typical of the value of *botho* in Basotho's way of life? Recall how I story my experience as "...*the child of the Ha Tsoeute community*" where every adult was perceived as every child's parent. *Ntate*

Molise became a living symbol of this. The fatherly choice of the word "...*barali*..." (my daughters) amplified by the the physical touch of holding our hands in his made us – new entrants feel welcome in the library. As earlier stated, we consequently, left his desk and the libray reassured with a functional knowledge of effectiveness of the Sesotho-TK-sensitive approach to understanding of some of the library jargon. It is my experience-appraised contention therefore that if appropriately and relevantly applied in specific situations, aspects of the Sesotho value of *botho* in the form of constructive parenting, generosity and hospitality, can positively service acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs in HE? If so as substantiated in my personal experience then situation-specific strategic utilisation of Sesotho TK can have a reassuring effect. That is – one that makes such students feel wanted and less estranged in an English-medium HE institution such as the NUL. I had yet another pre-classroom experience during registration week at the NUL.

What academic programme are you enrolling in? I mean the programme you are going to read in"

"The year was 1974. Personnel were mostly international, and therefore rendering English an unavoidable medium of communication on campus. New students were being issued with student identity cards. My turn came and the English lady sought my particulars. "What academic programme are you enrolling in? She asked. I knew the meaning of the word *programme* as some list of items or activities at a particular occasion such as a graduation ceremony. I looked around in the room for some kind of list. Immediately I thought that somewhere there was a name list which would indicate some activity I was to do or participate in. I could not identify any list on any of the walls in Room 90. Also, the term 'academic' was unfamiliar. I thought to myself "an academic programme? Just what kind is it? I could not see my face but I could feel its blankness as the lady stirred at me for an answer. She must have read the loss on my face. She rephrased "*I mean the programme you are going to read in*". The re-articulation did not help either. I knew the meaning of the word 'read', but not in that context. Luckily for me, there was Ntate (Sesotho word for father/Dad) Ntho - a Mosotho staff-member attending to other students from a nearby desk. He immediately interjected in Sesotho for my sake in the words "*U tlilo' ithutela lengolo le bitsoang eng?*"(What is the name of the qualification you have been admitted into?). He must have read my face for emptiness of responses. I gave a sigh of relief and responded "B.A. plus CCE".

What findings were disclosed by my story? An interpretive engagement with my storied personal experience with English in the context of academic registration brought to light several observations. Firstly, the story indicates how unawareness of context-boundness of language - English in my case, can be related to linguistic incompetence and can be associated with embarrassment and low self-esteem in SSBSs students enrolling in English-medium HE institutions. Lack of proficiency in the jargon of the academic registration left me doubting whether I was university material after all. At the time I did not know as I do now that because the meaning of language varies lexically, structurally, and in terms of text organisation (Snow, Met & Genesse 1989, cited in Matsoso 1995: 156) (*vide* 4.3.2(a)), one's knowledge of meanings of some English words cannot be overgeneralised to all contexts in which such known words are used. Had I been privy in this regard, I would not have assumed the meanings of the words "*programme*" and "*read*" as I did much to my embarrassment.

Another revelation from my story was the power of the value of *botho* in facilitating acquisition of situation-specific English by non-English-speaking background students such as my self at the time of my entry into the NUL. The Sesotho interjection by Mr. Ntho a Mosotho gentleman was evidence of this power of humaneness. It actually brought about my *Aha* moment during the impasse with the English of academic registration and utilisation of the library. In retrospect, and as experienced in the library incidence, I realise that I needed to be academically socialised, understood and accepted as someone attending the registration session with knowledge and a clear understanding of Sesotho words equivalent to "*academic programme*" and "*read*" as technically understood in that particular context.

Some of the experiences in my text indicate also that *botho* as a value is embracive of other values. For instance, by volunteering a Sesotho translation for my sake at academic registration, *Ntate* Ntho as did *Ntate* Molise generously lived and radiated to

me the value of *botho* in the form of hospitality, sympathy and empathy, as well as respect of my identity as a student from a Sesotho-speaking background. Through Mr. Ntho's *botho* I overcame the communication barrier created by my lack of proficiency in the English of registration and access to library sources.

How did *Ntate* Ntho's application of *botho/ubuntu* benefit my problem with academic English? By the end of registration I was a better entrant than I was prior to entering Room 90 that morning. As in my library experience with *Ntate* Molise, from Mr. Ntho's generous intervention in Sesotho I gained new knowledge pertinent to academic English. In academe programmes are areas of study in which we acquire qualifications; while reading and studying are synonyms. Academic is about collegiateness, scholarliness, and professorialness.

What is the significance of the findings to documented wisdom? So English can assume additional meanings in different contexts of use? Webb (2002:52) provides an answer by asserting after his case study of academic English needs of second language students at the University of Pretoria that each academic context is a science with unique arduous linguistic demands on students who are second language speakers of the medium of instruction in HE institution they enrol into (*vide* 4.3.1). Regarding execution of the value of *botho*, I experientially lived this in the form of the sympathy and hospitality extended to me by Messers Ntho and Molise in my stories on registration and library orientation weeks. Through findings from these experiences the inquiry concretises and contextualises the meaning of the value of being as advanced in the living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) (*vide* 5.2.2.4).

Then there is the inquiry's contribution to the socio-cultural/psychological dimension of Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework for academic English. According to Scarcella (2003:30) this refers to social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, interests, behaviours, practices and habits of a social group. Scarcella posits further that individuals who have mastered the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of academic

English fail to communicate effectively if they have not also mastered the socio-cultural dimension. Academic English is therefore, the language of the academic community. Communicative incompetence in this dimension of academic English makes one a misfit in this community. This means that one has to have linguistic and communicative competences required to correctly and appropriately use English in accordance with expectations in specific academic situations of this community. During registration and library orientation weeks of my enrolment at the NUL I knew the everyday-English meaning of the terms "programme", "read", and "catalogue" respectively. However, I lacked the communicative competence it takes to appropriately use these terms in their specific academic contexts. It is through findings such as those emerging in experiential accounts such as mine that this inquiry confirms Scarcella's (2003:30) assertion that mastery of linguistic and cognitive dimensions of academic English does not automate that of the socio-cultural dimensions of academic English. To the extent that I was able to take a decision to effectively seek clarification in Sesotho as my ethno-language for clarity of the English of the communicative academic situations I found myself in, the inquiry enhances Scarcella's assertion. Specifically, the study brought to the fore the need for the socio-cultural/psychological dimension to be prefixed with "ethno" to read [ethno]-cultural/psychological dimension.

What overall lessons did I glean from my story? It seems to be academic sense to posit that by virtue of benefiting solution of situation-specific problems related to academic English, Sesotho TK be deemed a context-bound problem-solving strategy for SSBSs in English-medium HE institutions. Reasonable also is an assumption that Sesotho TK stands a better chance to benefit acquisition of academic English in academic situations where some of the personnel in the institution share the same ethno-cultural background with students. The library and registration week scenarios bear testimony to this position. Insights from the cited participants summed into the following lessons:

- ✚ Some of the proficiencies normally associated with modern formal education have been in existence since the beginning of societies. Bonie substantiated this with her ethno-culturally-informed reference to pre-existence of numeracy skills among Basotho and how utilisation of such primary knowledge in HE can benefit ethno-numeracy-oriented academic subjects such as Accounting. Conolly et al (2009) refer to such knowledge as pristine, original, pure, and foundational to subsequent forms of knowledge (*vide 2.2.1.3(a)*).
- ✚ Difficulty with acquisition of modern knowledge through English in some instances, benefits from appealing to, and application of already existing ethno-knowledge. As already indicated in the library experiences by Abie and myself, another insight was on how need-sensitive; therefore, circumstance-oriented the *botho/ubuntu* value can be in professional practices of those who behold them. Experiential accounts by Bonie, Abie, and myself for instance, depict how aspects of the value of *botho/ubuntu* relevantly have potential to benefit academic English proficiency of SSBSs entering the English-medium NUL. If this is what Whitehead & McNiff (2006:25) refer to in their assertion that practitioners derive satisfaction from living their values in their professions, then the inquiry has an evidence-informed place in the Living theory. I called this the ethno-culture-sensitive approach to improvement of professional practice for academic English proficiency of SSBSs at the English-medium NUL.
- ✚ Academic contexts such as the orientation period are a trajectory to actual teaching and learning through the medium of English at classroom level in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL. The activities of the period therefore are a forum for awareness of the pre-existent foundational and strategically beneficial role of Sesotho TK in the academic English proficiency of NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking background.
- ✚ It is not always that students will have the courage to self advocate in their first language as Tebo and I did. Some will have inhibitions resulting from perception of their first language as having no place in the modern Eurocentric HE. However

in instances of the positive role of Sesotho TK as in our cited experiences above, the question is what the implications are for pedagogical practice in a HE institution such as the NUL where the majority of students are from a Sesotho-speaking ethno-cultural background. The question insight led to interrogation of the theme on classroom-based personal experiences with positive applicability of Sesotho TK in academic English of NUL SSBSs. This is subject of the next section.

6.4.2.2 Academic subject-based applicability of Sesotho TK in academic English

Accounting, Counselling Psychology, Economics, English Language, Geography, History, Literature in English, Physics, Public Administration, Development studies, and Religious studies are the subjects in which participants practically lived the positive relationship between application of Sesotho TK and academic English proficiency of SSBSs at the NUL.

(a) *Sesotho TK in Accounting-English proficiency*

Richie and Bonie studied Accounting at the NUL. Bonie however dropped the subject to graduate as a double-major in Economics because Accounting was not only too abstract and removed from lived reality in the manner in which it was taught, but also too difficult with its unconventional type of English to sustain her willingness to pursue a career in it. Ironically, after years of teaching this subject in high school Bonie re-enrolled at the NUL for a Post-graduate Diploma in Accounting and Business Education. Like Richie she storied her personal experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need.

Richie

Further depicting the role of Sesotho TK in Accounting-specific English was Richie's narrative. Richie is a former NUL student who "did not encounter any problems learning

Accounting through English". However, as a lecturer in Business Education at the NUL now, Richie realises that his students encounter problems understanding the idiom of Accounting. In sharing how he lives Sesotho TK for his students' proficiency in Accounting academic English Richie had the following story to tell.

This is how I have had to go about it to address my students' need to understand the jargon of Accounting

... Believe me or not, this is how I have had to go about it to address my students' need as far as understanding the jargon of Accounting or Business education is concerned. "People listen...This account receives. *Ketso ena ea ho fa e tllilo holisa/thusa account ena.* E fumana molemo hee ka ho fua (The act of giving this account is going to help it grow. It therefore gains from being given). *Ha u bua ka ho fana, u bua ka ho amohela. U bua ka the right hand . Ha ke re lea tseba ka Sesotho hore re fana le ho amohela ka letsoho la lehoja kapa le letona?* (When you talk about giving, you are in fact talking about receiving. You are talking about the right hand. You know that even in Sesotho we give and receive in our right hand/ the hand that is used to eat, or a male hand). *Ha u amohela, ntho tsa hao lia eketseha ha ke re? Ke seo re se boelang ka Credit hee.* (When you receive your assets increase. Don't they? This is what we mean by the term Credit). *Uena ea fuoang, you are being credited (You who is being given you are being credited)".*

What was acknowledged from Richie's story? Perception of Sesotho TK as a problem-solving strategy in acquisition of Accounting-specific English surfaced in Richie's experiential account as it did in Bonie's. "...this is how *I have had to go about it to address my students' need as far as understanding the jargon of Accounting or Business education is concerned...*," Richie said. Reflecting on Richie's account of how he helps his students conceptualise the English jargon of Accounting, I came to at least two understandings of the participant's personal truths about Sesotho TK-sensitiveness to Accounting-based English proficiency. Such an approach improves not only the individual practioner's personal professional practice, but also what I called the "during-research knowledge construction by the insider-implicated researcher". During our

conversational interview Richie spontaneously gestured accordingly with his hands to illustrate how he uses body language to help his students in Business Education differentiate between the meanings of the terms "*credit*" and "*debit*" in Accounting.

Richie's use of gesture had a learning effect on me - a non-Accounting student and practitioner. From this gesture I too understood the difference between the two terms. This discovery provoked at least three questions in my mind. "Is this the positive effect of use of body language in expression and communication of knowledge?" One question was therefore on the power of body gesture in pedagogical facilitation of formation of knowledge through the medium of English. The other was on the magnitude of reflection embedded in the use of critical auto-ethnography as a research method. Specifically, is critical auto-ethnography also a self-discovery learning tool built into the inquiry for the insider-implicated practitioner-researcher such as my self to realise what the participants' personal experiences imply for appraisal of the researcher's knowledge in turn?

The power of ethno-metaphor in facilitation of understanding – therefore generation of knowledge, resurfaced in Richie's experiential account. I noted further from Richie's conception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need that use of ethno-cultural metaphor has potential to facilitate understanding of concept-specific English in academic subjects such as Accounting. This was substantiated in Richie's use of the Sesotho metaphor of *letsoho le jang* (the hand that in Sesotho is culturally believed to be the appropriate one for use in eating – i.e. the right hand), or *letsoho le letona* (a male hand) to effect conceptualisation of the terms *credit* and *debit* as the lexicon of Accounting. Of course in the present era of world-wide sensitivity to gender Richie's ethno-culture-sensitive approach to Accounting-based English proficiency may be censured for gender biasness. In this inquiry the focus was more on personal experiences which have a positive impact on academic English proficiency than reconceptualisation of gender as one of the critical emerging issues of the postmodernist era. In this inquiry the focus was on Richie's use of the Sesotho

metaphor of belief on how the male hand like the male figure in a Sesotho family, provides livelihood needs. Richie's approach brought to the fore the reassuring question "So ethno-cultural belief-systems can assume a metaphorical function in understanding Sesotho TK as an academic English need?" Also emerging in Richie's account was creativity which can result from the practitioner's knowledge of Basotho's beliefs about the role of the right or *male* hand to benefit clarification of some of the problematic jargon in Accounting.

How does Richie's story contextualise in current knowledge? Some authors on need for mainstreaming of African traditional knowledges into AHE assert as Ntsoane (2005: 93) does that effective learning in HE depends on among other ethno-cultural experiences the values, spontaneity, and creativity in use a people's beliefs, language, and other behaviours (*vide* 3.3). It is therefore sensible academic reasoning to argue that use of Sesotho TK provides creativity that enhances understanding of the English of some concepts in Accounting. This is if we go by Richie's metaphorical reference to the right and left hands as male and female to clarify the concepts "*credit and debit*."

The questions I raised took me back to the oral-style theory as expounded on in Chapter 2. Within this theory Jousse (2000) in the law of expression argues that *geste* which involves use of the whole body is one of the effective knowledge construction modes among oralate societies (*vide* 2.4). Richie is an adult Mosotho lecturer with a rural ethno-cultural Sesotho upbringing. He therefore understands the gender-oriented cultural connotations behind the functions of the right and left hands and the implications of this in students' understanding of the terms *credit and debit* as the English of Accounting.

Bonie

This participant storied her experience-appraised perception of Sesotho TK in the English of Accounting as follows.

This is accounting that is recorded in memory and lives as knowledge.

...Neither did I understand what the things called business transactions were. I therefore found it too abstract and so complicated. Even worse was the fact that its English was very strange – following no grammatical rules that had been emphasised so much in my high school education. For instance, expressions such as “bought goods for...”and my question was always “who bought goods? So the word **good**” has a plural here at university?” Often I say I could have majored in Accounting if it was introduced to me from a real-life or cultural perspective. I think it was the way it was taught that divorced it from life as lived by real people. Because let me give you an example, at a typical Sesotho home there is often no formal pen and paper recording, but the number of say the family’s flock of sheep - it is known and every evening the flock gets counted...This is accounting that is recorded in **memory** and lives as knowledge. It will be knowledge that there are so many bags of millet and maize. Even as such harvest gets used and or borrowed by neighbours, it remains kept knowledge that the family can use as evidence in cases of need for legal action against those failing to pay back. So recording of family wealth is/was done; except orally in our case. This is **Accounting** as I say. This is why I say that the teaching of Accounting at the NUL was not related to our daily life. If it was, I would have realised as I did when I had to teach it at high school that it is just a way of **balancing** to enable one to see that his wealth is as perceived to be”.

What does the account reveal? Firstly, an interesting observation about Bonie’s account was recurrence of the finding pointing to documented wisdom about context-boundness of language behaviour (*vide* 4.2.2, and 4.3.1).The finding was a recurrence in Bonie’s Accounting-based experience because it surfaced in Abie’s and my storied experiences with uniqueness of some English terminology to the library, and registration contexts. According to Bonie, Accounting as an academic subject is a

learning context with its unique and acceptable grammatical unconventionality. Bonie wondered about the English of Accounting, questioning among others, its pluralisation of the word "good". This finding on context-boundedness of academic English as noted by Bonie confirmed current wisdom which points to academic subjects as language contexts in their own right, and therefore, implicit of need for subject-specific linguistic and communicative competence of the learner (*vide* 4.2.2, and 4.3.1).

Bonie's text communicates discontentment with NUL's practice of teaching Accounting in an abstract manner. On this basis Bonie blames some SSBSs students' disinterest in Accounting on failure of teaching at the NUL to utilise real-life experiences for clarification of subject-based concepts. This view surfaced in her regret that she would have majored in Accounting at undergraduate level if "*I could have majored in Accounting if it was introduced to me from a real-life or cultural perspective. I think it was the way it was taught that divorced it from life as lived by real people... This is why I say that the teaching of Accounting at the NUL was not related to our daily life. If it was, I would have realised that it is just a way of **balancing** to enable one to see that his wealth is as perceived to be*".

Two additional disclosures were noted from this statement. One is a belief that ethno-experience-informed pedagogical practice can demystify and therefore facilitate acquisition of academic English in the context of academic subjects such as Accounting for SSBSs such as Bonie. Another is the regretted experience-informed knowledge about non-recognition of Sesotho TK in the teaching of the English for acquisition of literacy in Accounting-specific English. Bonie's experience-appraised rebuke of the NUL for its marginalisation of ethno-cultures such as Sesotho TK for academic literacy in Accounting contributes subject-based concreteness to documented concern about exclusion of African IKSs as needs for academic achievement in Africa-based HE institutions such as the NUL.

Appreciation of the memory-oriented ethno-cultural knowledge of Basotho with its oralateness and functionality as ethno-numeracy emerged as another feature of Bonie's text. "...at a typical Sesotho home there is often no formal pen and paper recording, but the number of say the family's flock of sheep it is known and every evening the flock gets counted...This is ACCOUNTING that is recorded in **memory** and lives as knowledge...So recording of family wealth is/was done, except orally in our case...", she opined.

Revealed in Bonie's perception was therefore, the value of memory as a store for TK to be retrieved upon need. This participant drew from her lived knowledge and practice of Accounting in Basotho's livelihoods. She utilised this ethno-cultural knowledge to highlight pre-university existence of Basotho's knowledge of Accounting. Bonie regretted and opined from personal experience of a daughter of a Mosotho live-stock and crop farmer that as a student entering the English-medium NUL from such a cultural background, her Accounting-requisite English could have benefited from application of the ethno-numeracy knowledge which she lived at home to account for family agricultural assets. Bonie's chastised pedagogical practice at the NUL for failure to capitalise on such pre-existing knowledge of Accounting in Sesotho to demystify the English of print-oriented Western Accounting.

The narrator's memory-oriented perception of Basotho's non-print knowledge of Accounting lodges the inquiry in the law of mimism or impression as embraced in the oral-style theory (Jousse 2000) (*vide* 2.4). Bonie's memory and impression of Basotho's knowledge of Accounting was found to be also consistent with documented perception of TK as originally non-literate knowledge stored in memory and retrieved for meaningful use in situations where [re]construction of knowledge becomes necessary (Sienaert 1990; 2008; and Conolly *et al.* 2009).

Bonie's text brought additional realisations to light. One was what I choose to term lecturer-induced linguistic limbo in the student. For instance, because seemingly the

Accounting lecturer did not assume it his/her responsibility to ensure students' mastery of the English of the subject, Bonie's language-related questions in Accounting remained unattended to. "...*Even worse was the fact that its English was very strange – following no grammatical rules that had been emphasised so much in my high school education.*

A further disclosure was the relationship between practical teaching experience and improvement of subject-based knowledge of the education-practitioner. It was for instance, after field-based professional experience and growth as a high school teacher of Accounting that Bonie gained a basic and real life understanding of the subject as "*just a way of balancing to enable one to see that his wealth is as perceived to be.*" In this inquiry I term this the teaching-experience-appraised conception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. In fact, coupled with the finding in which Richie's application of Sesotho TK facilitated conceptualisation of the terms "*credit and debit*" by his Business education students (*vide* Richie's story in this section - "*This is how I have had to go about to address my students' needs...*"), Bonie's wish to have been taught Accounting from a culture-sensitive perspective becomes a living reality. This position contributes a personal experience or the "I Perspective" to documented literature as amassed in Chapter 3 on displeasure with characteristic sidelining of African IKs in HE pedagogical practice (*vide* 3.2.1.1).

So what lessons emerged from the interpretation? In sum, Bonie's story about Sesotho TK in the English of learning Accounting brought to light the following insights:

- ✚ Utilisation of real-life-Sesotho TK experiences of SSBSs for clarification of Accounting English could have a de-absracting effect on the English therein.
- ✚ By continuing to marginalise Sesotho TK in the English of academic contexts particularly academic-subjects such as Accounting, NUL still lurks behind a few African universities such as Universidade Pedagogica in

Mozambique which have already forged ahead with policies and curriculum procedures for mainstreaming African IKS via academic subjects such as Physics. This, as Afonso indicated in her presentation at UFS and CUT in March and November 2010 respectively is an educationally decolonising transformative move towards giving academic subjects an ethno-sensitive outlook and talking of ethno-Physics for instance.

- ↓ Ethno-cultural insensitiveness in HE pedagogical practice might militate against subject-based academic English proficiency of students from non-English-speaking- ethno-cultural backgrounds.
- ↓ Professional teaching experience may lead to discovery of the positive role of Sesotho TK in the English for learning subjects such as Accounting.

Revisited, Bonie's story "*Accounting that was practiced at home*" (vide 6.4.2.2) applies to the within-course perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. The story continues,

We were ashamed to express our understanding of Accounting via our lived knowledge

[However]...We could not share this knowledge which could easily demistify concept-based English of the subject – Accounting because we felt and feared that we understood the subject in a language that was not appreciated by the Western culture at the NUL. We were ashamed to express our understanding of Accounting via our lived knowledge from Sesotho and Basotho's way of life. We needed English to be regarded as belonging to Western-oriented life at the NUL.

As suggested under out-of course experiences, the knowledge of oralate numeracy among ethno-cultural Basotho is deemed applicable to solving problems – thus, “*demistifying*” concept-based English in Accounting. Yet on the contrary, the Eurocentric mentality of conception of knowledge-construction in power relations-oriented terms seems to militate against perception of Sesotho TK as an authority for NUL SSBSs to appeal to for solution of problems threatening acquisition of requisite academic literacy in the English for learning Accounting.

Bonie’s story captured also prevalence of an attitude that abases Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. Such an attitude according to Bonie, threatens confidence to utilise the already existing Sesotho TK to understand the English of Accounting - thus, leaving them with a sense of exclusion from the Western-oriented culture of the NUL. Bonie’s narrative revealed the marginalising pedagogical practice at the institution – at least during her time as a student.

Contextualised into current documented wisdom, the narrator’s perspective seemed consistent with criticisms advanced by researchers and authors who debate the place of IKSs in HE. In particular, was criticism of African HE for its Western character which leads to marginalisation of policy, curriculum and pedagogical African values and knowledge systems in general (*vide 3.2.1.1*).

Rigidity and predominance of the hegemony of colonisation was seen as another of the documented criticisms with which Bonie’s perspective seemed consonant with. Bold-typed expressions in Bonie’s narrative concretise shame, fear, inadequacy, and embarrassment normally associated with utilisation of ethno-culturally-lived and informed knowledge of Accounting for understanding the English for concept formation.

Could Bonie’s Accounting-based perception be suggestive of what Afonso in Afonso & Taylor (2009) and Cupane (2007) call calculated perpetuation of the colonial hegemony in HE teaching? The cited authors levelled the criticism against teaching and learning in

African HE institutions after their ethno-culture-sensitive auto-ethnographic inquiries into learning needs of Science education students in Mozambique (*vide* 3.4.1). In sum, Bonie's experience with exclusion of Sesotho TK as a self-advocacy strategy in the English for learning Accounting brought to surface the question of the extent to which the academic playing field for the Eurocentric knowledge at the English-medium NUL and the Sesotho TK of the majority of the student-population therein can be said to be levelled. In-as-far as apprehension still suppresses need for application of Sesotho TK for solution of problems posed by incompetence in subject-concept academic English, as evidenced in Bonie's account, then NUL's practice of educating for professionalism in Accounting may be liable to criticism for failure to adopt an ethno-culture-sensitive philosophy and approach to levelling the pedagogical playing field for learning English to learn academic subjects such as Accounting. In as far as apprehension still suppresses recognition of subject-based English proficiency as a beneficiary of application of Sesotho TK, the playing field could not be perceived as levelled (*vide* 2.2.1.2). Therefore, educational practice - at least in the case of Accounting was seen as contravening documented recommendation on need for educational practice in African HE to embed lived recognition and implementation of equality of cultural knowledges and their complementary contribution to creation of knowledge (Afful 2006; 2006; Conolly *et al.* 2009; Nel 2008;).

In this inquiry Bonie's interpretation of Sesotho TK in terms of its relationship to Accounting-specific English added a subject-specific insight to the Africanisation frame of reference. In particular I situated Bonie's perspective in the notion of need for the world to accord as much respect to the integrity and knowledge of Africans as it does to those of Western people because whether we like it or not African people belong to the two worlds – namely the African and the Western (*Vide* 5.2.2).

Taken in sum, Richie's and Bonie's perceptions brought to surface insights with implications for personal transformative professional development regarding Sesotho TK as a need for Accounting-based academic English proficiency. One lesson is how

previous experience with pedagogical marginalisation of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need later has potential to transform professional practice of those whose acquisition of academic English suffered was constrained by exclusion of their ethno-cultural knowledge. For instance, both participants lament how institutional marginalisation of Sesotho TK at the NUL led to loss of opportunity for them as students to benefit from its use for acquisition of Accounting English. Interestingly, now as education-practitioners in the same institution both are able to turn their unpleasant experience into an opportunity and rationale for adoption of a Sesotho-TK-informed approach to integrating Accounting-based English proficiency in their teaching of concepts in the subject. Does this suggest therefore that some experiences with pedagogical marginalisation of one's ethno-cultural knowledge in one's acquisition of subject-based English proficiency may impact positively on personal professional practice? Also, does Bonie's and Richie's experience concretise the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis about the intrinsic relationship between one's culture, language and knowledge creation? Counselling Psychology was one of the academic subjects in which Sesotho TK has been experienced as an academic English proficiency need. In the case of personal experiences of individuals in individual courses of some academic subjects such as Accounting taught and learned in HE institutions located in countries such as Lesotho and populated predominantly by SSBs, yes. Bonie with a double major in Economics and Accounting storied also her personal experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in the subject.

(b) *Sesotho TK in the English of Economics*

Bonie

Asked for her personal experience with Sesotho TK as a condition for acquisition of Economics-based English, Bonie situated her confirming experiential truth in stories on the English of concepts which include the concepts *bartering*, *production*, *opportunity cost* and *paid labour* in Economics as one of her subjects of specialisation at the NUL.

(i) *Bartering*

A sack of sorghum for a sheep

"... Economics was so...I'll tell you one of the things which made me like and choose Economics - a lecturer like Ntate K teaching us and giving an example of **Bartering system**. To conceptualise this, I drew from my Sesotho cultural knowledge the practice of exchanging among us (Basotho) back home at Ha Sehlabo. I **recalled** an incidence when my mother and Ntate Sehloho engaged in an exchange of when Mr. Sehloho who had sheep but wanted sorghum and so bartered one of his sheep for a sack of sorghum from my mother. Immediately that brought to my mind a lived experience of when my mother and Mr. Sehloho engaged in an exchange agreement – therefore **Bartering**".

Emerging from Bonie's account were TK-oriented, research-method and theory-related findings. Regarding Sesotho TK, the participant is a Mosotho who grew up in an agricultural home environment where livestock and crop-farming were lived for socio-economic purposes as dictated by day-to-day needs of her society. The narrator's application of already existing knowledge of "*ho lumellana ho rekisetsana ka mokhoa oa ho fapanyetsana ka lithepa* (exchange agreement /bartering) as lived indigenously by Basotho in their ethno-agricultural and other practices of the value of *botho* facilitated her understanding of the English term *bartering* in the context of the subject Economics. "...I understood the concept with its Economics term better...", she said to confirm the positive role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of Economics-based proficiency in academic English. Observable relevance to and immediate applicability of Economics concepts to Sesotho TK enhanced Bonie's love for and interest in Economics as her major.

A research-method-related finding was disclosed in Bonie's text. Strategic timing of, and appropriate appeal to memory according to some authors and researchers (Muncey 2005:1; Trahar 2009:8) (*vide* 5.6.1.2) recommending its adoption in reflexive research

is powerful in enlivening reflections necessary in critical auto-ethnographic inquiries. Evidence of use of memory in this manner emerged in Bonie's "...I **recalled** an incidence when my mother and Ntate Sehloho engaged in an exchange of when Mr. Sehloho who had sheep but wanted sorghum and so bartered one of his sheep for a sack of sorghum from my mother".

Bonie's use of the expression "...I **recalled** an incidence..." made also the theory-related feature of personal experience with applicability of Sesotho TK in the English of Economics. A specific theory in this regard is Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory via its law of mimism/impression which emphasises the importance of memory in retrieval and replay of already existing knowledge for purposes of solving problems or creating knowledge in different life experiences (*vide* 2.4.1). "Ntate K" - Bonie's Economics lecturer, challenged by the concept "bartering" in his teaching of Economics adopted an ethno-culture-sensitive pedagogical approach by challenging his students to appeal to their Sesotho TK reserve for memories of cultural experiences with practices and values that would benefit their understanding of the meaning of the term. The literature on understanding and addressing second language learners' interlanguage would refer to Bonie's success as teacher-induced (Brown 1980:140).

What lessons emanated from my interpretive engagement with Bonie's experiential account? Firstly, if acknowledged, commonalities in intercultural knowledge coupled with ethno-culture-sensitiveness of instructional approaches employed by education-practitioner's can lead to learners' enthusiasm in, and an understanding of concept-based English required for effective learning of particular academic subjects such as Economics. Viability of this position surfaced in Bonie's "...I'll tell you one of the things which made me like and choose Economics - a lecturer like Ntate K teaching us and giving an example of Bartering system..."

Secondly, knowledge construction in academic subjects is not necessarily new in that it is part of pre-university knowledge which is embedded in some ethno-practices of

Basotho. The question is whether this therefore implies that application of Sesotho TK can in some academic subjects such as Economics lead to reconstruction instead of creation of knowledge. This remains food for thought for future research aimed at generalisability of the finding to other NESBSs in AHE institutions with more or less similar characteristics such as the English-medium NUL in Lesotho.

Lastly, it seems from Bonie's account that memory and retrieval of experiences with some specific cultural practices forming pristine Sesotho TK and strategic application of such might be some of the conditions for acquisition of some concept-specific academic English by some SSBSs. This position was informed by Bonie's "...*To conceptualise this, I drew from my Sesotho cultural knowledge the practice of exchanging among us (Basotho) back home at Ha Sehlabo. I recalled an incidence when my mother and Ntate Sehloho engaged in an exchange of when Mr. Sehloho who had sheep but wanted sorghum and so bartered one of his sheep for a sack of sorghum from my mother...*"

(ii) *Production*

Being at home with "Production" as a concept in Economics

This I experienced in a number of concepts which ntate K. taught – Like when he said when there is a glut in the market the prices of goods will go down. Immediately this reminded me of Sesotho expression such as "*ho uoa fantising ha Makhakhe* (People are going for a sale at Makhakhe's).. For instance at home we go to work in the fields to produce. Specifically I could relate Economics to life in my own family. My mother was a seamist. She therefore used to sew garments for my sister and I. This I realised as I studied the concept - production in Economics, meant that we did not pay for sewing, and so the money which my father brought home – since he was employed, went to the bank. We produced a lot of things in the home which made me realise as I reflected during my studies that in my family we lived the subject Economics. So that is why I decided I'd rather major in Economics. It had a lot of what I lived and so its English was much easier for me to understand than that of Accounting.

Bonie's concept-based response above, interpreted into several findings. One was the power of memory and ethno-cultural personal experience both of which seemed to enable Bonie to retrieve pre-university Sesotho TK for her understanding of the English of Economics. This recurred in Bonie's use of memory-related expressions such as *"I recalled..."* in the story about *"Bartering"*; and *"...this reminded me of..."* in the present story on *"production"*.

Another finding was not only the cross-cultural nature of the academic concept *"production"*, but also the role of Sesotho TK in pragmatizing the same. This surfaced in Bonie's interpretation of *production* in practical terms which point to it as an experience embedded in Basotho's daily ethno-agricultural and other livelihoods. This participant unpacked the meaning of the concept in her perception of Economics as *"life experienced at home on a daily basis... For, at home we go to work in the fields to produce... We produced a lot of things in the home... which made me realise as I reflected during my studies that in my family we lived the subject Economics"*. With such closeness to livelihoods of Basotho, Economics, according to Bonie, lands itself easily in the reflections of some learners such as Bonie during studies. If reflecting during one's studies includes among others, figuring out what English terms such as *"production"* mean, then Bonie's lived experience with incidences of *production* in the context of Sesotho traditions became a logical academic English proficiency need.

Bonie's awareness of the cross-cultural nature of the concept *"production"* interpreted into yet another finding – namely, that such intercultural connectedness of some concepts not only influences some students' choice of academic specialisations but also motivates them to learn in such choices. *"...It had a lot of what I lived and so its English was much easier for me to understand than that of Accounting..."*, said Bonie in her justification for preference of Economics over Accounting.

There was yet another finding from the above account. Bonie's *"...I found Economics as life experienced at home on a daily basis...When it came to topics such as*

production, I found myself at home..." interpreted into perception of Sesotho TK as base and foundation providing the confidence and security needed by SSBSs having to use English to understand Economics via its concepts such "*production*".

How does the story of concept "*production*" situate itself into documented knowledge? Bonie's choice of words pointing to Sesotho TK as a positive factor in Economics English immediately situates her conception in the Africanisation theory. At least two principles make this theory. One is that the African culture and its pristine knowledge should be understood as forming an intrinsically intertwined connectivity for recognition and acceptance of the identity of an ethno-African person. Another is the perception of African knowledge as foundational to other forms of knowledge to which students from an African background get exposed. As an ethno-Mosotho, Bonie is an African who has lived the concept of "*production*" or *kotulo* (harvest) in different livelihoods of Basotho. Depiction of Sesotho, therefore, African life experience with concept *production* lay in "...For instance, at home we go to work in the fields to produce. Specifically I could relate Economics to life in my own family...It had a lot of what I lived and so its English was much easier for me to understand than that of Accounting... I found Economics as life experienced at home on a daily basis..." Not surprisingly therefore, this cultural experience with how *production* comes about in different areas of Basotho's cultural livelihoods served as a knowledge base for Bonie's ease of conceptualisation of the English term *production*.

So what insights did the interpretation of the story of *production* bring to surface in turn? Interpretation of Bonie's story about Sesotho TK in conceptualisation of concept "*production*" summed into two insights. First was the impression that intercultural closeness in meanings of some concepts, coupled with memory of ethno-cultural experiences and knowledge embedded therein, can guide some of NUL students' conception of and effective application Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in the context of academic subjects such as Economics. Furthermore, it seems from this part of the inquiry that in subjects such as Economics, some students'

awareness of interculturally cross-cutting concepts like "*production*" may be related to both preference of some subjects over others, and motivation to enthusiastically learn preferred choices. Taken in sum, Bonie's experiences with Sesotho TK in academic English point to how teacher-induced ethno-culture-sensitiveness has potential to be a factor in acquisition of subject-based English.

(iii) Opportunity cost

Opportunity cost was one of the concepts in Economics as Bonie's major subject at the NUL.

... I remember the concept of Opportunity cost in Economics

"...For example, I remember the concept of Opportunity cost in Economics and the lecturer was trying to emphasise that Opportunity cost is expressing the foregone alternative in terms of what you will buy. In this case he said as a buyer you say "with the money I have I'd rather buy this". The lecturer said so the Opportunity cost for the buyer will normally be "what then do I forego then?" Now what I remember myself doing as a student then is that when we as students in the course did not understand and were giving up saying it was too difficult, one of my course-mates said it in Sesotho using one of the Sesotho proverbs...It was some proverb like *Li ea ha Mahlatsi li ea ka bohlale* (Those embarking on a challenge need to do so with wit). But *ka utloa ho re qiii!* (But I felt it sink in such a relieving manner) (Bonie smilingly gestured her satisfaction with her circular movements of her right hand over her chest). The lecturer was saying you express the cost of what you cannot acquire in terms of what you can acquire. The fellow student who clarified it all so well in a Sesotho proverb was one of those classmates who for some strange reason were always ever so handy in their strategic use of Sesotho".

What were the revelations from Bonie's account? First was recurrence of the confidence in which she appealed to memory to construct her perception of Sesotho TK as a subject-based academic English proficiency need for herself and other SSBs studying Economics at the NUL. Note for instance her "*I remember...we did not understand... one of my course-mates said it in Sesotho using one of the Sesotho*

proverbs... These words revealed as they did in her foregoing accounts, the power of memory in reflective approach to construction of knowledge.

Also disclosed from the narration by Bonie was the power of use of visible gesture in conveying absolute satisfaction or what I call the Ahaa moment derived from positive effect of application of Sesotho TK for clarification of concept-based English in the context of subjects such as Economics. "...*But ka utloa ho re qiii!*..." (But I felt it sink in such a relieving and fulfilling manner). As she said these words she generously smiled to gesture her satisfaction with circular movements of her right hand across her chest.

Another revelation was perception of academic English as difficult and therefore, a barrier and threat to both concept formation and students' willingness to learn. Such a conception emerged in Bonie's "...*Now what I remember... is that when we as students in the course did not understand and were giving up saying it was too difficult...*" Academic English is indeed difficult if we consider that Abie, in giving her general impression about it perceived it in similar terms and took me on board her viewpoint by reminding me that as her former lecturer at the NUL I introduced it as so.

The above account also brought to surface the specific role of Sesotho proverbial knowledge in concept-oriented English. Illustrative of this was Bonie's reference to a classmate's proverbial advice that "*Li-ea ha Mahlatsi li ea ka bohlale...*" (people should be smart in their search for treasure). Interrogated further, the word *bohlale* (wisdom) in Bonie's story revealed a dual meaning which in my interpretation served to emphasise the power of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. One straightforward meaning of the word is plainly "intelligence" or "wisdom" as understood in the interpretation of the proverb in which it is used. Yet on the other end, and for purposes of this inquiry, the entire proverb in which the word *bohlale* has been used is intelligence or wisdom itself but in the form of Bonie's experience-informed discovery of Sesotho TK in general as a problem-solving strategy for understanding concept-specific jargon of Economics. This showed in Bonie's..." *The fellow student who clarified it all so*

well in a Sesotho proverb was one of those classmates who for some strange reason were always ever so handy in their strategic use of Sesotho.

Yet another finding emerged from the above storied experience. According to Bonie it was "strange" that one of her classmates "was ever so handy in their strategic use of Sesotho". The question for me was why the participant conceived it strange.

How did Bonie's concept-based storied perspective above relate to aspects of documented scholarship as amassed for this investigation? As in the story of *bartering*, Bonie's memory-informed interpretation seemed consistent with understandings embedded in the oral-style theory (Jousse's 2000) (*vide* 2.4.1) - particularly the law of mimism/impression with its emphasis on the importance of memory Jousse's law of expression was another theoretical aspect benefiting from this inquiry via Bonie's beaming face and repeated circular massaging movement of her right hand across her chest as an indication of the satisfaction which she derived from effective use of Sesotho TK for the English of the concept - *opportunity cost*. Does the delight observed in Bonie's physical gestures suggest that successful use of Sesotho TK for clarification of some concept-based English is capable of bringing about an overwhelming sense of satisfaction and self-fulfilment in some SSBSs? Also, can memory of successful experiences with positive application of Sesotho TK in academic English in the case of individual students be associated with delight and satisfaction that may be expressed through among other channels the entire body? The findings of the inquiry then legitimise a contention that application of traditional knowledge of SSBSs for clarity of academic English brings about an observable sense of self-fulfilment which gets expressed in terms that concretise theories such as Jousse's oral-style theory.

Bonie's experience-informed awareness of applicability of Sesotho proverbial language in the English of Economics also augmented scholarship on African folklore which singularises among other knowledge forms, Sesotho proverbs as not only sources of, but knowledge itself (Mokitimi 2004:376). So knowledge of Sesotho TK in the form of

proverbs can where appropriate, be an academic English proficiency need in the context of the subject Economics.

The finding pointing to how frustration with lexical and other linguistic complexities experienced in subjects such as Accounting and Economics can lead to learners' decision to withdraw from learning presents the need to interrogate documented wisdom on how learners' values can impact on choice to either learn or not to learn. About this Kohl (1994:15-16) observes that,

...Learners' value systems frequently come into conflict with values associated with academic communities. To participate in these communities effectively, learners need to comply with values that might conflict with their home values. If they conflict too greatly, they may decide not to participate. ...learners choose not-to learn" what is inconsistent with their values and beliefs.

Failure by Bonie's Accounting lecturer to acknowledge her/his students' ethno-cultural knowledge resulted in failure by students such as Bonie to see not only the relationship between the English of university-based Accounting and ethno-literacy and numeracy, but also how such a relationship can facilitate acquisition of the subject-based literacy in English. Having the same effect was the Economics lecturer's unawareness of the role of Sesotho TK in students' understanding of the lexical terms such as opportunity cost. Bonie's accounts point to pedagogical exclusion of learners' value of learning and belonging with the academic community of accountants and economists as if they (learners' learning values) conflicted with those of academia. It would not be surprising therefore, that students such as Bonie with a strong respect for and pride in wealth of knowledge from own ethno-cultural backgrounds chose to not-learn. This concretised Kohl's (1994:5-16) perspective that

Not-learning tends to take place when someone has to deal with unavoidable challenges to her or his personal and family loyalties, integrity, and identity. In such situations, there are forced choices and no apparent middle ground. To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not-to learn and reject the stranger's world (*vide* 4.4.4).

Rigidity in giving students' ethno-knowledge an opportunity to benefit Economics and Accounting-based academic English proficiency could be equated to Kohl's notion of "...forced choices and no apparent middle ground..." Bonie's decision to not-learn Accounting and some Economics concepts could be reasoned as having been driven by a subconscious realisation of pedagogical contradiction (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) of the fundamental *botho/ubuntu* value of living in harmony with learners in the academic context of learning through the medium of English (*vide 5.2.2.4*).

Through Bonie's foregoing accounts the inquiry suggests the need to interpret what the notion of "...no apparent middle ground..." implies for ethno-knowledges. If one considers recurrence of the finding on the positive effect of participants' decisions to use Sesotho TK for better understanding of situation-based English, it is reasonable to assume that students' cultural knowledges can be "an apparent middle ground" for acquisition of requisite proficiency in academic English.

Taken in sum, Bonie's Sesotho TK informed perception of academic English needs of SSBSs studying Economics at the NUL in my view add not only experience-informed, but an academic-subject specificity to documented scholarship on advocacy for mainstreaming of African IKSs in AHE institutions in general, but particularly those teaching through English as a non-mother tongue medium for the majority of its students. This way Bonie's interpretation fortified scholarship on the nature of English for academic purposes (EAP) needs of students studying Economics at university level.

So far, Bonie's storied perceptions point to dependence of Economics-based English on commonalities of knowledge in students' ethno and Western cultures. However, in another breath and in the context of another concept the perception implied that even dissimilarities between cultural knowledges are capable of enhancing subject-specific academic English. In the following text Bonie storied this perception through her experience with application of Sesotho TK for understanding the concept - *Paid labour* still in Economics.

(iv) Paid labour

Awareness of these contrasts facilitated my understanding of relevant English in such cases.

"Oh let me tell you another example... I realised that it was not just similarities between Sesotho and English that helped my academic English. It took me time to understand what the concept of paid labour meant because in our Sesotho context the notion of there is a person ea hiriloeng (employed) to work for us at home was. It is true that there would be herdboys paid with a cow after 12 months of service to a family, but payment, because it was not in money terms and on a monthly basis, and also because you were not supposed to regard them as employees/ hired labour, but as members of your family, made me struggle with understanding the concept Paid Labour, particularly for me to understand what Labour is. Also I realised that even when villagers went to work as a group in the fields it is in Sesotho called Letsema (collective engagement/work) and all they are offered by the owner of the field is food not payment money. I then realised that this was in contrast with the western culture where such labour is paid for in monetary terms. Awareness of these contrasts facilitated my understanding of relevant English in such cases".

The above text singularised one finding – namely, that awareness of even dissimilarities in cultural knowledges can succour understanding of concept-based English in subjects such as Economics. Embedded in the same finding however, was an implied revelation that unlike in the case of commonalities, it may take time to realise the value of cultural differences in academic English. Bonie substantiated this in her experience that

"...It took me time to understand what the concept of paid labour because in our Sesotho context the notion of there is a person ea hiriloeng (employed) to work for us at home was. It is true that there would be herdboys paid with a cow after 12 months of service to a family, but payment, because it was not in money terms and on a monthly basis, and also because you were not supposed to regard them as employees/ hired labour, but as members of your family, made me struggle with understanding the concept paid labour, particularly for me to understand what Labour is...I then realised that this was in contrast with the western culture where such labour is paid for in

monitory terms. Awareness of these contrasts facilitated my understanding of relevant English in such cases”.

A further finding was emerged in Bonie’s “...*I then realised that this was in contrast with the western culture where such labour is paid for in monitory terms. Awareness of these contrasts facilitated my understanding of relevant English in such cases*”. Bonie’s realisation implies that it is sometimes necessary to apply localised interpretations of concepts in academia to better understand their Westernised meanings which are often expressed in English.

The question for me was why it took Bonie time to understand the concept “*Paid labour*”. Could the reason be attitudinal and colonially hegemonic? If my suspicion holds, then there is justification for concern with the anti-African mentality that knowledge is not worthwhile if it does not tally with Western thought. Most findings from this inquiry dispel the Eurocentric mentality by providing experiential awareness as articulated in Bonie’s “...*Awareness of these contrasts facilitated my understanding of relevant English in such cases*”.

Implications of the finding for documented knowledge? Opinion and research-oriented literature on the role of African IKSs in HE in general and on AHE in particular, spotlights authors’ and researchers’ concern with predominance of Eurocentric thought and pedagogical practices. Such scholarship as discussed in Chapter 3 amply documents mainstreaming of African IKSs/TKSs as a recommendation (*vide* 3.2.1) Other authors such as Afonso (2007), Cupane (2007) and Afonso & Taylor (2009) argue from evidence of ethno-culture-sensitive inquiries they undertook in Africa-based universities that such mainstreaming should be informed by among others, research that is both academic subject-based and experiential (*vide*.3.4.1.3). Thus, findings from experiential accounts such as this particular one on Sesotho TK as a need for academic English of all academic areas add practicality to current wisdom on envisioned emancipatory AHE.

The living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) and the African value of *botho/ubuntu* (Nel 2008) stand to benefit pragmatically from the contrastive analysis-oriented approach (Brown 1980: 145) in Bonie's perception of the relationship between application of Sesotho TK and acquisition of English proficiency requisite for understanding of the English of the concept "Paid labour". Bonie for instance, drew from her ethno-cultural values of humaneness (*Ubuntu/botho*) and collective responsibility (*letsema*) as lived and practiced by Basotho to realise how these values are lived differently in the Western culture. This realisation benefitted her understanding of the English of the concept *Paid labour* as applied in Economics. In Sesotho it is *botho/ubuntu* not to relegate people such as those whose services we employ for domestic purposes. In Sesotho it is also *botho/ubuntu* in the form of living harmoniously with others to engage collectively (*ka matsema*) in communal challenges or responsibilities. Contrarily, in the Western culture there are no emotional strings attached to how people relate to those they pay monitorily. Bonie was therefore better able to understand the Economics-based jargon by adopting a contrastive interpretation of *Paid labour* in the Western-oriented academic setting of Economics and Basotho's value of *botho/ubuntu* around the concepts of labourer and collective practice. The sum of Bonie's experiential perception is that Sesotho TK in the form of not only knowledge of some proverbs, and socio-cultural practices, but also awareness of differences between it and the Western cultural practices can be facilitative of understanding of concept-specific English in subjects such as Economics.

(c) Sesotho TK in Counselling Psychology-specific English

Agie

Agie is a former student of the NUL. Counselling Psychology is one the subjects she studied at the NUL and at the Universities of Western Cape and Porchefstroom. At the time of this inquiry she was a lecturer in Counselling Psychology in the Faculty of Education of the NUL. Asked of her personal experiences with applicability of Sesotho TK in the subject, the participant storied her exposure as follows.

...I pictured all these things as the qualities of thokolosi

I will specifically refer to Counselling using the concept of thokolosi as an example. There were sort of attributes that defined thokolosi being something that strangles people's neck, that takes you anywhere at night, but something that is invisible. Having grown up in a rural village, I had the concept of thokolosi in mind even though I had not seen it. When we were taught about **mental health** there was a mention that a person hears strange voices, hallucinates and so on, I pictured all these things as the qualities of thokolosi... I have never seen thokolosi in my entire life but all these mentally-ill people, some of them were said to have thokolosi and they portrayed the symptoms that were mentioned earlier whereby a person can maintain a certain posture for extended period of time up to a day long period of time e.g. extending a hand or touching a wall. Thokolosi can do that thinking it is holding you. I guess it was this thing of *motho u itletse mona* (You are here on your own) and so you had to do whatever it takes to understand and succeed".

What is the message from Agie's expose'? According to the foregoing excerpt, Agie is an ethno-cultural being – one situated in and aware of among others, the mythology-characterised livelihoods of ethno-Basotho. Concept *thokolosi* is one of Basotho's myths and beliefs. Agie having been raised in a Sesotho village understood the concept despite having not seen a *thokolosi* herself. Her academic assertiveness driven by her commitment to her academic success pressured her to tap on this pristine understanding of *thokolosi* to conceptualise the technical term "*schizophrenia*". Agie said "*...so I understood during discussions in Mental health that it is true because I had that picture in mind more than when other illnesses were discussed in the technical terminologies such as schizophrenia...*"

Asked why she on her own decided to apply her knowledge of Sesotho mythology to understand the English terminology in Mental health, Agie replied "*...I guess it was this thing of motho u itletse mona (You are here on your own) and so you had to do whatever it takes to understand and succeed*". According to Agie, course-based

application of Sesotho TK in the form of some myths and beliefs helps one's understanding of the English jargon of concepts making such courses. "*So application of this knowledge helped me understand what happens in the mind of a mentally ill person...*", Agie confirmed from personal experience in the course Mental health.

Another finding from Agie's story was that Sesotho TK has potential to be concept-specific in those academic courses with concepts that have some equivalents in Sesotho. Agie noted for instance that the concept *thokolosi* is one of the myths in Basotho's live experiences. In Agie's experience and knowledge as an ethno-Mosotho, people labelled as *schizophrenic* in Counselling Psychology display symptoms similar to those normally observed in people said to be attacked by *thokolosi* in Basotho's diagnosis or interpretations of some illnesses. Agie's experience-informed personal truth about the relationship between concept *thokolosi* and *schizophrenia* points to Sesotho mythology as positively factorial in acquisition of academic English proficiency in the context of topics such as mental health in Counselling Psychology.

What value does Agie's perception add to documented academic lore on the role of IKSs in AHE? In the literature on traditional knowledge/IKSs and their role in HE, the concept - traditional knowledge/IKS is explained as inclusive of myths and beliefs among other components. Aspects of Sesotho TK likewise include myths and beliefs. *Thokolosi* is one example of the myths and beliefs that constitute knowledge in traditional Sesotho. As repeatedly stated in the preceding sub-sections of this chapter, the literature amassed in this regard points to need for research to explore how traditional knowledges can be meaningfully utilised for the benefit of provision and acquisition of learning in HE. However, the outstanding challenge in this documented wisdom is dearth of personal experience-informed research on the extent to and contexts in which different componential elements of TK//IKSs benefit teaching and learning in HE. This inquiry, with revelations such Agie's successful application of her knowledge about the myth *thokolosi* in Sesotho enhances current knowledge with

research-appraised applicability of aspects of traditional knowledges to acquisition of subject-based linguistic and communicative competence in academic English.

So what is the essence of Agie's narrative? In my judgement the essence of Agie's account is two-fold. Knowledge of Sesotho myths and beliefs such as *thokolosi* for instance can, if relevantly applied, enhance understanding of concept-based English in courses such as Mental health. Another disclosure seems to be a sense of self-reliance and independence brought about by pressure to succeed academically.

(d) *Sesotho TK in the English of English Language*

The subject English Language at the NUL involves studying English grammar, phonetics and linguistics. This sub-section examined interpretations of personal experiences with applicability of Sesotho TK in acquisition of the English of learning English Language. Not all participants studied English Language at the NUL. Thus the process of winnowing for storied experiences included narratives storying personal experiences by only Abie, Tlhorie, Monie and myself in the context of English grammar; while Pitsos' and Relebo's experiences made the data for Phonetics. Some of us shared even those experiences we have in our professional capacities in different educational institutions.

(i) *Sesotho TK in English grammar*

Abie

Abie's narrative included her personal experience as a teacher of English grammar in a local high school. She storied one of her experiences as captioned below.

I was teaching the Adjective

"This reminds me of an experience I had in one of my lessons in this high school recently. I was teaching Adjectives. My ground rule as a teacher of English is "No Sesotho-speaking

in my lessons". As the lesson progressed, one of my students raised his hand and asked in Sesotho "*M'e Abie! e leng hore Adjective ke Sehlakisi?* (Does this mean that Adjective is Sehlakisi? (Adjective). You realise 'M'e that according to the school policy, and mine in class, this learner had a nerve and was some kind of reptile non-water (sefelekoane) in the proverb *sefelekoane* gather absolute bravery and dive into the crocodile habitat) or he was testing the waters)... I became a bit offended, but for some strange reason I said in Sesotho "*E ke sona*" (Yes it is a Sehlakisi). You should have seen the relief and delight on the learner's face. He said Ooooh! Yes! I guess I had given him this thing which you call Ahaaa! Moment. I think all throughout the lesson this learner was thinking as I wrote the examples and he was probably saying "in Sesotho this thing means this...This 'M'e has to tell me what this thing of hers is".

What does Abie's text bring to surface? After majoring in English Language at the NUL, Abie is now a senior teacher of English Language and head of the Department of Languages in one local high school. Abie's storied experience educed a number of revelations. Firstly, rigidity of school-based language policy in the form of marginalisation of use of Sesotho TK emerged in her "*....that according to the school policy as well as mine in class... My ground rule as a teacher of English is "No Sesotho-speaking in my lessons"*". Another disclosure which seemed a result of such marginalisation was the issue of power relations which demean use of Sesotho TK for clarification of the English jargon of English Language – namely the *Adjective* in the case of Abie's student. This brought to surface another finding from her text – namely, that it takes courage for SSBSs to brave the rigid English-medium system and seek clarification in their ethno-language. This finding surfaced in Abie's perception of her student as having had the nerve to speak Sesotho in her English Language lesson.

Also debouching from Abie's account was the courage and confidence with which Sesotho TK can empower learners for self-advocacy in encounters with problematicity of academic English. The text further revealed that such power of Sesotho TK can melt the rigidity of the ethno-culture-insensitive institutional policy practices such as those in Abie's school. If this was not the case, Abie would not "*for some strange reason...*" and despite her displeasure with the learner's use of Sesotho, have positively responded to

the clarification-seeking question. Embodied in Abie's text was also a finding pointing to the relationship between teacher ethno-culture-sensitiveness to learners English language needs and improvement of subject-based personal professional practice. If Abie maintained adherence to the policy of her school she would not have made her teaching of the *Adjective* better by clarifying it in the learner's mother tongue.

Furthermore, Abie's story points to a somewhat negative relationship between marginalisation of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need and learner's sense of ownership of the English-medium learning situation in the context of subjects such as English Language. Put in another way, strict adherence to policy on exclusion of Sesotho TK in teaching through the medium of English can not only hamper conceptualisation, but can also distance an understanding of some concepts from the learners. Abie's text best represents this viewpoint in "...*This 'M'e has to tell me what this thing of hers is*". Abie's uncompromising rejection of use of Sesotho in her English Language lessons made the concept *Adjective* the thing of the teacher as far as the particular learner was concerned.

Further emerging from Abie's storied experience was recurrence of her conception of academic English as difficult English. This time however, Abie used the Sesotho metaphor of a small reptile – *sefelekoane* to make vivid her perception of academic English as not only difficult but unavoidable for academic achievement. *Sefelekoane* is one of the small non-aquarious reptiles which under normal circumstances would not dare jump into a crocodile habitat except under highly trying circumstances.

Knowledge of Sesotho grammar became the learner's assuring corner and resource or *sekhutloana* from which to *khoatha* (tap on) for understanding the meaning of the concept *Adjective* as earlier stated by Abie in her general impression about academic English. The learner's self advocacy via his existing knowledge of Sesotho grammar helped him realise the interface between the grammar of Sesotho and that of academic English in the context of the subject called English Language. By using the metaphor of

this reptile Abie created a vivid image of the anxiety resulting from unrelenting quest for requisite proficiency in academic English. The need to understand academic English is so stressful on learners it can challenge them to risks that include venturing into policy-decreed exclusion of use of Sesotho TK as long as its end-result is requisite proficiency in academic English.

I also noted from Abie's text as I did in storied experiences of others in Accounting, Economics, and Counselling Psychology that recognition and provision of free opportunity for utilisation of students' Sesotho TK for understanding of academic subject-related English brings about a sense of self-fulfilment in the learning of particular subjects. Abie's text communicated this in "...*You should have seen the relief and delight on the learner's face. He said Ooooh! Yes! I guess I had given him this thing which you call Ahaaa! Moment...*" I called this feeling an ethno-culturally empowering sense of academic achievement in an English-medium learning setting.

Lastly the value-oriented perspective surfaced as another feature of Abie's narrative about conceptualisation of the term "*Adjective*" via application of knowledge of "*Sehlakisi*" in Sesotho grammar. To me, Abie's storied experience pointed to applicability of at least three Sesotho values in academic English proficiency. These are assertiveness, commitment to, even if sub-conscious confidence in, and respect of the contribution of one's ethno-cultural knowledge in construction of knowledge of the English of the qualificative which the "*Adjective*" is an aspect of.

The finding was a recurrence if I take into account my own and Tebo's valor in seeking clarity of the terms "Dewey Decimal Clarification System" and "cataloguing" in my library orientation story. Abie's story coupled with mine on the library orientation, brought to surface a concept I chose to term "*a two-way avoidance of self-inflicted violation of personal values in acquisition of academic English*". If for instance, we as students (Abie's learner, Tebo and I) did not marshal courage to self-advocate in our ethno-language for clarification of situation-based English, we would have put our

learning value – namely, academic success, at stake. Similarly if Abie as a teacher in that English Language lesson, and Ntate Molise the NUL Library desk assistant did not relent to our request for a Sesotho clarification, they both would have contradicted their professional values of ensuring construction and acquisition of requisite knowledge in an English-medium academic setting such as the NUL.

How then does Abie's expose' above relate to documented literature?

Documented wisdom on different aspects of literature amassed for this inquiry stands to benefit from Abie's personal experience with Sesotho TK in an aspect of the English of English language as an academic subject. First is scholarship on language learners' interlanguage and self-advocacy strategies. The learners' interlanguage is a process of learning/acquiring the second language. It involves commitment of errors and utilisation of a multitude of strategies for acquiring competence in the target language. One of these strategies is appeal to authority which can among others, be the learners' ethno-cultural knowledge and language (Brown 1980:142) (*vide* 4.2). According to ASCCC (2002:2) HE students' confidence and ability to seek clarification of academic English through their ethno-cultural language is termed a self-advocacy strategy (*vide* 4.2).

This inquiry, in the form of Abie's experience with a student who did not withdraw from learning the *Adjective* but garnered the valor by effectively self-advocating in Sesotho, contradicts the socio-cultural dimension of Scarcella's frame of reference through which the author (Scarcella) (*vide* 4.4.4) cautions that second language users of academic English have a tendency to choose not to learn if they do not understand the English for learning. Instead the study suggests that sometimes when empowered by their ethno-cultural knowledge, students may not dissociate themselves from learning academic English, but can bravely appeal to their existing knowledge such as Sesotho proverbs and idiom as a capital and problem-solving strategy for construction of functional knowledge in concept-based English.

The finding from Abie's account augments one finding from Bonie's accounted experience with the role of Sesotho proverbial knowledge in the English of Economics. Bonie's narrative brought to surface the relevance of the meaning of the Sesotho proverb "*Li ea ha mahlatsi li ea ka bohlale* (Those embarking on a challenge need to do so with wit) to understanding the meaning of the concept - *opportunity cost* (*vide 6.4.2.2b (iii)*). The confidence seemingly driven by students' awareness of how metaphorical application of their knowledge of Sesotho proverbs can benefit their functional understanding of academic concept-based English makes reasonable a conclusion that knowledge of Sesotho TK proverbial metaphor and the confidence it affords students in self-advocating for clarity of academic English is cross-curricular. Similarly cross-curricular as per findings from Bonie's and Abie's accounts, is the power of Sesotho proverbial metaphor in dispelling reluctance to learn, but instead building the confidence to seek clarification for acquisition of functional knowledge of the medium of learning. The study therefore brings forth a finding that cautions the readership, particularly education-practitioners and non-English-speaking background students in English-medium universities such as the NUL to take with a pinch (carefully) Kohl's (1994, cited in Scarcella 2003: 23) association of students' decision not to learn with incompetence in the medium of learning (*vide 4.4.4*). Instead, the study points to the need for future research to look into the extent to which such reluctance may be resulting from unawareness of the problem-solving role of traditional knowledges such as Sesotho TK in such educational circumstances.

Furthermore, the findings about effective use of Sesotho proverbs for academic English proficiency as deduced from Abie's and Bonie's narratives confirm documented research evidence which points to how auto-ethnographic reflection brings about realisation of the power of use of metaphor in one's reflexive interpretation and solution of some problems encountered in one's life experiences. For instance, Muncey (2005:9) (*vide 5.4.1.2*) in her self-study of teenage pregnancy used metaphors of blooming and perishing garden and pot plants to understand teenage pregnancy and its effects.

Concern with Westnocentrism in teaching practices of AHE (*vide* 3.2.1) benefits from Abie's story as much as it did from accounted experiences in earlier stories by Richie (*vide* 6.4.2.2a), Bonie (*vide* 6.4.2.2b) and Agie (*vide* 6.4.2.2c). For instance, the bravery with which Abie's student used his knowledge of Sesotho grammar to seek clarification adds to scholarship not only academic-subject-based understanding of the role of Sesotho TK in teaching and learning in English, but specifically how a foreign medium of learning such as academic English can benefit from application of the same (SesothoTK). Theory too stands to benefit from findings in Abie's storied experience. For example, my coinage of the term - "*a two-way avoidance of self-inflicted violation of personal values in acquisition of academic English*" adds context-based specificity to the value-contradiction aspect of the living theory Whitehead & McNiff 2006) (*vide* 5.2.2.4).

The finding on applicability of knowledge of some Sesotho parts of speech to construction of knowledge related to some parts of speech in English Language has implications also for some documented frames of reference about academic English. I particularise here the grammatical and metalinguistic awareness components of the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework for academic English (4.4.1). According to Scarcella (2003: 15), the grammatical component of academic English involves equally, knowledge of everyday English and that of additional complex grammatical structures which include parts of speech (*vide* Figure 4.1).

The metalinguistic awareness component as the ability to think about language stresses mastery of language. Such mastery dictates among others that students "...rely on their prior knowledge of words, grammar and pragmatic conventions to understand and interpret academic English..." (Scarcella 2003: 27-28) (*vide* 4.4.2). I have a problem with Scarcella's position when he associates acquisition of this prior knowledge with students' previous reading only. Scarcella seemingly perceives stored background knowledge only in print-oriented terms as if orally acquired and memory-oriented

knowledge cannot be stored for retrieval in construction of knowledge in academic contexts such as academic English. Implicitly therefore, Scarcella's concept of metalinguistic awareness suggests that knowledge of "words, grammar, and pragmatic conventions" acquired and stored as background knowledge by students from oral ethno-cultures such as Sesotho has no place in academic English.

Abie's account has a contribution to conceptual frameworks such as Scarcella's conceptual framework for academic English. Through findings such as that on application of knowledge of the Sesotho concept "*Sehlakisi*" for understanding the "*Adjective*" in English the inquiry adds an ethno-knowledge perspective to the grammatical and metalinguistic components of Scarcella's linguistic and cognitive dimensions. In fact the finding from Abie's narrative makes reasonable a recommendation that the socio-cultural dimension of Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework for academic English should not be discussed in isolation from the linguistic and cognitive dimensions but as a component of these (dimensions).

Abie's account has a methodological contribution to scholarship. In particular it augments auto-ethnographic research with additional research evidenced knowledge. For instance, during her narratives, Abie used several metaphorical interpretations to highlight Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. One was comparison of Sesotho TK with *sekhutloana* (security corner) from which to *khoatha* (tap on) for understanding academic English. The other depicts academic English as a threat requiring bravery on the part of the learner to understand it. It was for this reason that Abie compared the learner to the reptile - *sefelekoane* braving into dangerous habitat of the crocodile. This finding on the metaphorical explanation of Sesotho TK in the grammatical terminology of English Language underscores research-evidenced knowledge pointing to the power of metaphor in writing auto-ethnographic research. For instance, as she interpretively wrote the auto-ethnographic experience of her teenage pregnancy Muncey (2005:9-11) discovered the power of metaphor in

explaining personal truths and seeking connections between personal life experiences and academic experiences.

So what was my summative perspective about Abie's narrative? The story summed up into the following insights:

- ✚ Rigidity of institutional policy on marginalisation of Sesotho TK could have a constraining effect on students' self-advocacy in their own language.
- ✚ Recurrence of experience of the Ahaa moment as a result of use of students' Sesotho TK in different academic subjects makes it reasonable to assume that there is a positive relationship between application of Sesotho TK and better understanding of concept-based English.
- ✚ The values of assertiveness, commitment and responsibility to personal academic achievement provoke ethno-culture-driven valour to self-advocate for clarification of requisite academic English for subject-based concept-formation.

Tlhorie

Tlhorie was on teaching practice and teaching the qualifying role of the "Verb". Below is an account of a personal experience in which her knowledge of functions of Sesotho verbs not only benefitted her teaching of the verb as a qualifier in a sentence, but also earned her professional admiration by her lecturer.

The Verb as a qualifier

"I was on teaching practice. I was teaching a comprehension passage that was rather problematic. I had to deal with a verb that was used to qualify in a sentence, and unfortunately on this particular day I was being observed for assessment by Dr. Matooane. Then there came up this argument among my students, Dr. Matooane and myself about this "-ing- ending verb" as in "teaching staff". My point was that the "-ing" described the type of staff the writer was referring to in the passage – not just any other staff. My class and Dr. Matooane were opposed to my explanation. Then I remembered that even in Sesotho there is such as in "Tsa mo lata likhomo tse lemang" (Go and get the **ploughing** oxen). I pointed out that in this sentence "lemang" (ploughing) is a typical -ing-ending Sesotho verb performing exactly the same function of describing which oxen should be brought..."

A number of insights surfaced in Tlhorie's storied account of her experience with Sesotho TK in the English of English Grammar. In the first instance is the teacher's confidence in and knowledge of content being taught. This surfaced in the manner in which Tlhorie explained the function of the "-ing ending verb" as used in the sentence. "...My point was that the "-ing" described the type of staff the writer was referring to in the passage – not just any other staff..." she asserted.

The other finding was the spontaneity in which the narrator resorted to her knowledge of sentence construction in Sesotho to resolve an opposing view from her students and her lecturer. She for instance then "...remembered that even in Sesotho there is such as in "Tsa mo lata likhomo tse lemang (Go and get the **ploughing** oxen). I pointed out that in this sentence "lemang" (ploughing) is a typical -ing-ending Sesotho verb performing exactly the same function of describing which oxen should be brought..."

Also noted in Tlhorie's story was recurrence of perception of Sesotho TK as a problem-solving academic strategy in students' acquisition English need. The concept *Verb* is generally known to be referring to *doing*. Hence reference to it as a *doing word*. Yes, as

Tlhorie rightly noted, the comprehension passage presented a challenge to general knowledge when *a verb* assumed a qualifying role in a sentence.

Another but related insight from Tlhorie's account, was awareness of how knowledge from one's ethno-culture, given a chance, as an authority to appeal to in challenging situations, may be related to reduction of ethno-stress. For instance, in this particular lesson Tlhorie's apprehension was also brought about by among others, the fact that on this particular day she was being assessed as a student-teacher on Teaching Practice. I have been ethno-stressed by incompetence in the English of an academic situation myself - if the reader recalls my storied experience on registration day at the NUL way back in 1974. I therefore can relate very well to how Tlhorie felt. One cannot afford to break the rules in such a situation – particularly taking the risk of using Sesotho in the teaching of English among all subjects. Tlhorie's situation in this particular event was full of what in this inquiry I termed *academic English-induced ethno-stress* for not only the Sesotho-speaking-background learners and Tlhorie, but even for the particular Mosotho lecturer who did not specialise in English Language but had come to assess the student-teacher in the subject. The responsibility was therefore on Tlhorie to attenuate the challenging situation. Her story "*...My knowledge of Sesotho became my redeemer...*" clarified how she effectively appealed to her knowledge of Sesotho grammar to effectively address the challenge posed by academic English as a "third language" for her Sesotho-speaking-background students.

...My knowledge of Sesotho became my redeemer...

...My students, together with my lecturer Dr. Matooane were dumbfounded and couldn't help it but just say "Oooo? Yes! Now we see it!"... My knowledge of Sesotho became my redeemer – if I can put it that way. I felt proud of myself to have gathered the courage, or assertiveness to boldly want to apply my knowledge of my language to bail me out. The icing on the cake was when Dr. Matooane, during our post-lesson conference shook my hand and said "I am proud to have taught you! You did a commendable job in your

explanation of that qualifying verb thing. I have come out of your class a more educated person!"

Another of the findings in this account was the *Aha!* Moment created by the manner in which Tlhorie ably compared verbal behaviour in Sesotho and English grammars. This way Tlhorie debased the stressful scenario in which her students, herself, and the teaching – practice supervisor were struggling to situate the concept "Verb" in a qualifying function. Consequently, all were so relieved and delighted with the Sesotho clarification that they "...couldnt help it but just say "Oooo? Yes! Now we see it..."

Tlhorie's story brought forth the fourth insight about applicability of Sesotho TK in concept-based academic English. This was the educationally enlightening and rewarding value of the confidence and authority with which individual practitioners can resort to ethno-cultural knowledge for solution of learning problems related to concept-based academic English. The finding was substantiated in "...*The icing on the cake was when Dr. Matooane, during our post-lesson conference shook my hand and said "I am proud to have taught you! You did a commendable job in your explanation of that qualifying verb thing. I have come out of your class a more educated person"*

Tlhorie's personal experience has implications for current knowledge.

Creativity and spontaneous nature of African traditional knowledges (Ntsoane 2005:93) is adopted as another of the rationale for amply documented advocacy for integration of IKs in HE. As earlier noted, still lacking in the literature amassed for purposes of this inquiry is specificity about contexts and manner of execution of such creativity and spontaneity. It was creativity and spontaneity on Tlhorie's part to have readily thought of and applied knowledge of her Sesotho grammar to resolve an academic English related problem in her teaching of the verb in the context of Reading comprehension.

Another aspect of documented scholarship on IKS is the question of who has the authority to apply traditional knowledge in formal education. Conolly *et al.* (2009) provide an answer in their argument that a people's ethno-cultural knowledge is a basis for reasoning and behaving authoritatively in knowledge creation in different learning situations (*vide* 2.2.2.2). Tlhorie's knowledge of functions of a Sesotho *verb* in sentence-construction therefore served as a basis and so empowered her to use it for her creation of knowledge about and understanding of the qualifying function of an English *verb*. Thus findings from Tlhorie's story coupled with earlier stories pointing to the same, add specificity to documented knowledge.

Also, Tlhorie's confidence in adoption of an ethno-culture-sensitive clarification of the *verb* as a describing word enhanced knowledge about auto-ethnographic research. Justification for auto-ethnographic research lies in its recognition of the authority and freedom of the researcher and the researched to creatively and evocatively engage in critical reflection on the phenomenon and its implications for improvement of their life-worlds (Afonso & Taylor 2009:273) (*vide* .5.4.1.2). In the context of Tlhorie's story the phenomenon to critically reflect on was the unusual function of the *verb as a qualificative* vs its normal role of *a doing word*. The decision by Tlhorie to apply her Sesotho knowledge of functions of a *verb* for her students' and the Teaching Practice supervisor's understanding of the concept in English Grammar was an enactment of authority on her part. Such authority served also as an indication of creativeness and evocativeness resulting from of her critical reflection.

Tlhorie's ethno-culture-sensitive approach to teaching functions of the *Verb* in in English Grammar tendered a subject-area-specific strength to recommendations such as that in which authors such as Taylor (2007), Afonso & Taylor (2009), Joseph (2005) recommend adoption of intercultural approaches in teaching and learning individual academic subjects in HE (*vide* 3.4.1.3).

Tlhorie's experiential account fortifies current knowledge about the learner's interlanguage hypothesis as an aspect of second language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, the process of acquiring competence in the second language involves among others, strategic positive transferability of knowledge from the learner's first language to understanding of some of the concepts in the target language. Brown (1980:110) terms this positive interlingual transfer. Taken together, Tlhorie's and Abie's experiential success stories about transferability of Sesotho-based knowledge of the *verb as a qualifier* and the *adjective* to students' understanding of the same concepts in English grammar are examples of how some findings from this study contribute to some of the theories of second language acquisition.

What therefore was the essence of Tlhorie's story? The main insight from Tlhorie's account was that Sesotho TK, when and where appropriately applied, may be associated with reduction of ethno-stress which among others is known to be typical of learning experiences of some students who have to access and acquire learning through a foreign medium. The culture-sensitive manner in which Tlhorie effectively utilised hers, her lecturer's and her students' knowledge of Sesotho to facilitate understanding of the English *verb* depicted her commitment and sensitiveness to learning needs of her students. Through Tlhorie's experiential account the inquiry could be said to have revealed enactment of living the values of *ubuntu/botho/humaneness*.

Myself the insider-implicated researcher

As another of the former students who majored in English Language at the NUL I too had a story to share about my experience with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in the context of English Grammar.

"I can very well relate to your problem having had it myself"

"Even Sesotho was taught in English. We however benefited from code-switching as a characteristic mode of lecturing in the subject. Most of the Basotho lecturers whose majors were Sesotho and English language more readily and generously cross-referenced to clarify the requisite English for meeting the knowledge demands in the context of Sesotho. For example, in English Language I took the course "Advanced English Grammar". The lecturer was English. The English sentence was one of the topics in the course. In sentence analysis I had a challenge identifying the subject in sentences where a noun-phrase was the subject. My concept of subject was not yet beyond the single-word noun. I decided to seek help with a lecturer who taught me Sesotho grammar. Coincidentally, the lecturer had majored in African Languages and English Language. "I can very well relate to your problem having had it myself as a student in the same courses. Since we are going to class and I suspect you are not the only victim in this regard, why don't you wait until our lesson which is in the next few minutes so that I can help you as a group?", she assured me. The lecturer gave us a Sesotho sentence which literally translated and analysed as follows.

Subject Verb Object

[The fat man sitting under the willow tree] [stole] [the sheep].

The lecturer drew our attention to how we should note comparing and contrasting areas between English and Sesotho grammar and take advantage of these to meet challenges of academic English in different contexts of the two subject areas. With this intervention, came the *Aha!* moment which sustained my learning practice in English and Sesotho grammar throughout my programme".

What findings emerged from my account? My story brought to light several findings. First was the finding pointing to power relations between Sesotho and English Language in an academic situation seemingly so predominantly Eurocentric that English was conceived as better qualified to explain Sesotho, for "*Even Sesotho was taught in English*". Undoubtedly, pedagogical practice at the NUL relegated Sesotho to such an extent that it was found incapable of facilitating knowledge construction even in its own context as an academic subject.

My account pointed also to recurrence of the problem-solving nature of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency. It through my appeal to my Sesotho lecturer's knowledge of Sesotho grammar that I overcame my problem with the *Noun-Phrase* as a subject in an English sentence – thus, understanding that the concept was just a noun in the form of a phrase.

Another finding was the confidence and authority I gained from subconscious knowledge that better knowledge of Sesotho could facilitate my understanding of the concept in English grammar. This is substantiated in the promptness of my **decision** to appeal to the knowledge of my Sesotho grammar lecturer for clarification.

Sesotho cultural values as a need for improvement of personal learning practice (IPLP) and that of personal teaching practice (IPTP) in academic English were another feature of my narrative above. As a student, I enrolled into the NUL with academic success as my primary goal. Thus I had to fulfil the Sesotho value embedded in the proverb *Sentle ke ho boea le marumo* (It is good to bring victory home after the war). I had gone to university to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. I therefore had to execute all assertiveness and diligence to explore all possible avenues for improvement of my personal learning practice. This is why I decided to appeal to among other avenues, to the authority of my Sesotho grammar lecturer for the benefit of my understanding of the English grammar concept *noun-phrase*. Similarly it makes sense to perceive it a value-laden finding that my Sesotho grammar lecturer improved his personal teaching practice by living the value of *botho/ubuntu* for the benefit of our English grammar-based literacy. If it were not for her living the value of *botho/ubuntu* in the form of empathy, generosity and unconditional academic responsibility my Sesotho grammar lecturer would not have regarded it her room to go as far as "...*Since we are going to class and I suspect you are not the only victim in this regard, why don't you wait until our lesson which is in the next few minutes so that I can help you as a group?...*"

How do findings from my narrative inform current wisdom? Literature on: concerns with exclusion of African IKSs in academic practices of Africa universities, (*vide* 3.3), transmission of oral traditional knowledge (*vide* 2.3.4), the concept of second language learners' interlanguage (Brown 1980), ontological values (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) and transformative professional development (Taylor 2007) were identified as examples of scholarship benefitted by the inquiry via my experience with Sesotho TK as a need for understanding English grammar.

The NUL pedagogical practice of teaching Sesotho grammar through the medium of English still continues. This practice adds NUL to those AHE institutions yet to adopt the "rising sun" perspective (Tisani 2004:177) and critically scrutinise paradigms and policies of existing academic practices with the aim of identifying limitations imposed by colonial and neo-colonial traditions that still dominate African university education (*vide* 3.3). Unfortunately the "rising sun" concept still remains silent about academic contexts and related modalities for effecting change. By revealing findings on marginalisation of Sesotho TK as a need for understanding of the English of academic subject-based concepts, the inquiry, through storied experiential accounts such as mine above, adds clarity to grounds on which the "rising sun" concept may be pursued and implemented.

What does the personal decision to appeal to the knowledge of my Sesotho Grammar lecturer imply for documented literature on traditional knowledge and its transmission? On the one end it could be argued that my ethno-culturally lived personal experience with belief in the power and authority that knowledge gives the elderly drove me to seek clarification with the lecturer concerned. Thus, I was in line with the literature on traditional knowledge according to which knowledge is traditionally transmitted by the elderly from one generation to the next. Yet on the other end in this inquiry stories of personal experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need pointed to need for academisation of the notion of "elderly". In an oral traditional sense the term "elderly" is age-related. It seems from the inquiry that the term may be more about academic credentials of the lecturers in relation to those of their students. This is

so if we consider that it was more for their academic knowledge that Messrs Ntho and Molise, as well as my Sesotho grammar lecturer, were appealed to for my understanding of the English of registration and book classification during orientation at the NUL. It therefore makes academic reasoning that in the practice of teaching and learning in HE, the professional-practitioners assume the responsibility of the academically knowledgeable elderly.

Although at the time I was academically not yet exposed to it, the second language learners' interlanguage hypothesis (Brown 1980:112) was at play in the form of my appeal to the Sesotho Grammar lecturer for help (*vide* 4.2). As referred to earlier in this section, the hypothesis refers to the process of learners' adoption of different learning strategies for acquisition of the target language. It includes among others, appeal to different forms of authority for clarification of new concepts in the target language. The learners' ethno-cultural languages can, depending on the type of learning need, assume this position of authority to appeal to. The additional light shed to the hypothesis by my narrated experience is that previous experience with challenging encounters with academic English and positive role of one's ethno-knowledge therein, can lead to deliberate and experience-informed appeal to it (ethno-knowledge) for clarification.

Then there is the ontological values aspect of the living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) (*vide* 5.2.2.4) to benefit from the academic context-specificity of my foregoing story. One of the multiple stipulations of this theory is that

"...We understand the universe, and ourselves and others as part of it, as involved in constantly unfolding processes of creation...This means that we understand our life commitments, including our pedagogical commitments... Our ontological values transform into our educational commitments..." (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:86).

As referred to earlier in this section of the analysis, the living theory is also about discomfort practitioners normally feel when their personal values are contradicted (*vide* 5.2.2.4). I was at university to academically achieve – thus, fulfil the value in the

Sesotho proverbial saying *Sentle ke ho boea le marumo* (It is good to bring victory home after a war). My inability to understand the *Noun-phrase* as a subject in an English sentence contradicted this aim and value of academic achievement. I therefore lived in violation of the value in my practice of learning. By independently taking the initiative to seek a Sesotho clarification of the concept, I lived the values of commitment and responsibility to my learning. The values were knowledge of, and respect for my Bosothis as my capital to source from to meet the demands of the English requisite for English grammar. My story therefore, augments the living theory by adding to it specificity on not only examples of *botho/ubuntu* values, but more importantly, on how these can be practically lived for acquisition of academic English by some SSBSs pursuing knowledge in African English-medium universities such as the NUL.

In relating Whitehead & McNiff's (2006) above citation to my story, I view the subject - English Language as the academic universe which I chose and had to understand as my major. Within this subject I also understood myself as having to do all it took to succeed; while my lecturer had to facilitate such achievement by among others, ensuring my acquisition of requisite English proficiency for concept-formation therein. Both my lecturer and I needed to understand this academic English in this universe as a responsibility to which we needed to be jointly committed for improvement of our personal learning and teaching practices. At the time I understood my commitment as academic success and transformed this academic value into the the values of responsibility and assertiveness by appealing to the Sesotho grammar lecturer who in turn lived her own values of responsibility, generosity, and empathy by effectively offering a Sesotho explanation of the English concept - *noun-phrase*. In sum, I as a student adopted the ethno-value-appraised strategy for improvement of personal learning practice. My Sesotho grammar lecturer on the other end exercised her pedagogical commitment through what I term academic generosity and empathy. The foregoing story contributes to the ontological values aspect of the living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) what I call the two-way nature of the value-appraised application of Sesotho TK in academic English.

So what summative perspectives emerge from the story? They are the following:

- (i) In predominantly Eurocentric HE institutions such the English-medium NUL, Western paradigms tend to become the pedagogical frames of reference – often at the expense of the value of students’ ethno-cultural knowledges.
- (ii) Yet concept-formation and ethno-cultural knowledge seem so intertwined that it may be inconceivable to imagine that internalisation and interpretation of knowledge would effect without subconscious and spontaneous application of one’s first language and knowledge from its cultural background. Thus, because knowledge of one’s language is part of one’s being, assertiveness and confidence in one’s already existing ethno-linguistic competence therefore, empowers one’s self-advocacy for clarity of academic English.
- (iii) Sesotho as pre-existing knowledge is therefore, a capital giving SSBSs such as myself authority and confidence to appeal to for solution of problems resulting from incompetence academic English.
- (iv) The extent to which education-practitioners in Africa-based English-medium universities such as the NUL, can appreciate academic English proficiency needs of SSBSs depends among others, on whether or not they themselves have had similar experiences. This came out clearly in my Sesotho lecturer’s *"I can very well relate to your problem having experienced it myself"*.
- (v) In some subject-based concepts, individual lecturers’ and students’ application of knowledge of personal and ethno-cultural values can enhance understanding of concept-based English.

Monie

Affirmation of the positive role of Sesotho TK the English of English grammar was revealed also in the narratives by Monie. Asked to share classroom events in which his

understanding of academic English benefitted from application of Sesotho TK, Monie recalled an incidence not at the NUL, but at another university in South Africa where his British professor who lectured in second language acquisition drew his students' attention to the fact that there are overlaps in some concepts between the learners' first and second languages and other cultural aspects. Monie reflected on his discovery of the relationship between prepositional behaviour in Sesotho and English grammar in the experiential account below.

This helped me realise that in Sesotho there are prepositions...

"Hm! *'Me Lifelile!* This helped me realise that in Sesotho there are prepositions. Of course I am not sure of the term they use in teaching Sesotho grammar, but I can think of Sesotho expressions such as "*ka hara'* (inside), "*Ka mo otle ka'* (I hit him with), "*pela*" "(It is next to/near ...), etc. -even demonstrative pronouns, adjectives and passive voice. The only problem is that at university you people – lecturers I mean - are too westernised to realise the overlaps".

At least two insights were stimulated by Monie's experience. It was ironic that Monie's realisation of existence of overlaps between the second and first languages was initiated by an English-speaking background professor who was a non-native speaker of Sesotho or any African language for that matter. This explains perhaps why Monie associated failure by African lecturers with obsession with Westnocentrism.

Also emerging from Monie's story was the *Aha!* Moment brought about about by his discovery of equivalents between Sesotho and English grammatical concepts. Monie's personal experience account like those by Abie with the *adjective*, Tlhorie with *Verbal behaviour*, as well as mine with the concept *Noun-phrase*, had a theoretical significance. These discoveries gave the inquiry a theoretical standing. In particular, they situated the inquiry in the inter-language hypothesis. According to this theory,

second language learners, in their process of acquiring the target language, are known to master faster, those second language concepts which have equivalents in their first languages (*vide 6.4.2.2d(i)*).

The beneficial role of Sesotho TK was experienced not only in acquisition of the English of English grammar but also in studying the English sound system in the course Phonetics. Participants' personal experiences in this regard are presented in the next sub-section.

(ii) Sesotho TK in Phonetics

Relebo and Pitsos experienced the beneficial role of Sesotho TK in Phonetics as one of their courses in English Language as a major at the NUL. Asked to comment on the extent to which her TK facilitated her acquisition of the English of English Language Pitsos shared her experience within Phonetics in the following words:

...he was a Mosotho and he used to pronounce the word exactly as it was written...

"...I did it [Phonetics] but I didn't like it but what was always surprising about me was I was very precise with spelling and that in a way helped in my pronunciation because if you write a word correctly you'd be able to pronounce it correctly but my spelling was very much influenced by my teacher who used to teach me while I was in standard 7, he was a Mosotho and he used to pronounce the word exactly as it was written, and usually it would have some local sound in it, if it was 'education' he would say it just like it is written and finally you would write it as it was said".

It emerges from Pitsos' narrative that knowledge of the sound-system of Sesotho language can play an enhancing role in mastery of sound-oriented course offerings such as Phonetics. Knowledge of the Sesotho sound system for instance, enabled Pitsos to realise and capitalise on commonalities between the Sesotho sound-system and that of

the English language in some instances. This benefitted particularly her ability to spell in English. Knowledge of commonalities between Sesotho and English sound- systems in some instances can be said to be having a cross-curricular role in ensuring precision in spelling.

Pitsos experience-informed text above pointed also to positive transferability of Sesotho TK to new learning contexts. Pitsos for instance appreciated the influence of her primary school teacher's Sesotho flavoured pronunciation on her management of spelling-related demands of her Phonetics course at the NUL. Contextualised in the understanding of the interlanguage hypothesis in acquisition of English as a second language, Pitsos' recollection and application of knowledge from her Standard 7 teacher's phonic-approach to English spelling reinforced the argument that academic success is and should be mainly teacher-induced. Also explicit about the benefit of Sesotho TK in Phonetics, was Relebo's personal experience.

Yes ... and there my knowledge of Sesotho came in handy

"...application of my knowledge of Sesotho only came in when we started doing phonetics. Yes ... and there my Sesotho knowledge came in handy, the sounds themselves – because even when I first came here, I used to like it so much that I wanted it to be part of the curriculum of the Lerotholi Polytechnic so that I'd be able to tell my students that pronunciation is not that difficult just think of the Sesotho sounds you used to be introduced to when growing up, back in class one, words like a, e, i, o, u, and when I mentioned it, they would not understand and laughed at me but I told them that yes the a, e, i, o, u, is done so in English and that's how you manage phonetics

Relebo's account of her experience with aspects of Phonetics as beneficiaries of application of Sesotho TK provoked a number of insights. It seems application of Sesotho TK in some instances; helps simplify some aspects of academic English such as pronunciation. "...I'd be able to tell my students that pronunciation is not that difficult", Relebo said in this regard.

Secondly, the notion of positive transferability of previously acquired Sesotho TK for construction of knowledge in new learning situations resurfaced in Relebo's account. In my opinion this recurrence of Pitsos' perception signified the importance of memory as conceptualised and advocated in Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory as adopted in this inquiry. Also emerging from Relebo's account was my awareness of the positive relationship between improvement of professional practice and some HE education-practitioners' personal experience with, and appreciation of the positive role of Sesotho TK in academic English of SSBSs. For instance, Relebo's understanding of the behaviour of the sounds of English language benefitted from application of knowledge of the behaviour of sound-system in Sesotho language. As an education-practitioner lecturing in English and effective communication skills at the Lerotholi Polytechnic in Lesotho, Relebo saw the need for her professional practice to adopt the ethno-culture-sensitive approach to effecting acquisition of phonetic proficiency in her students. In her own words Relebo said even when she first joined the Lerotholi Polytechnic she used to like Phonetics so much that she wanted it to be part of the curriculum.

What understanding influenced Relebo to want to adopt an ethno-culture-sensitive approach to teaching Phonetics as part of the curriculum of the Polytechnic? This be suggesting that she subconsciously lived the transformative professional development theory (Taylor 2010:5) or transformative learning theory (Crafton 1994; Brookfield 1995, cited in Taylor 2010:5) and so premised her teaching on culture-sensitive transformation questions such as the following:

- ⚡ What are they key social, cultural and political challenges facing my rapidly changing society?
- ⚡ Whose cultural interests are not being well served by traditional educational policy and practice?
- ⚡ Who are these students whom I greet every day?
- ⚡ What are their languages and life-long learning needs?

- ↓ Who is the cultural self who teaches?
- ↓ What key life-world experiences and values underpin my own [her own] professional practice and aspirations?

In sum, even if subconsciously Relebo seemed to understand the role of Sesotho TK in the English of Phonetics also from a transformative perspective. This therefore, revealed Relebo's ethno-culture-sensitive understanding of what Taylor (2010:5) would call her own personal standing in the world of professional educators.

To conclude, the cases of Pitsos and Relebo intrigued one insight about the nature of the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English proficiency of SSBSs in HE. The discernment was the relationship between the Sesotho-speaking-background learner's attitude towards an academic course of study and applicability of Sesotho TK in academic English. Phonetics was for instance not one of Pitsos' favourite course offerings in English Language as her major. On the contrary, Relebo liked the course. Surprisingly however, both as students of NUL realised and utilised applicability of Sesotho TK for their effective learning of the behaviour of the English sound system in the context of the course Phonetics.

What intelligence did the experiential truths of the two participants bring forth about the nature of the relationship between Sesotho TK and academic English proficiency? Could this insight be attitude immunity of the positive contributory role of some aspects of ethno-cultural knowledge in acquisition of certain areas of English requisite for academic achievement in HE? Perhaps it was. Literature in English was another of the subject offerings in which Sesotho as an academic English proficiency need was experienced. This formed the subject of the next sub-section.

(e) Sesotho TK in the English of Literature in English

Of the 13 participants in the inquiry, Abie, Tlhorie, and my self majored in Literature in English at the NUL. Our narratives were used for their storied nature and representativeness of literary genres of poetry, prose and drama.

(i) *Sesotho TK in Poetry*

Abie

In commenting on how she positively lived Sesotho TK for the English of Literature in English Abie was not hesitant in her appreciation of her ethno-cultural knowledge in this regard.

I used values and beliefs of Basotho

"In my experience, my knowledge from Sesotho and Basotho enhanced my understanding of the medium of learning much better than use of English alone could have done. I for instance, resorted to values and beliefs of Basotho such as good morals, respect, assertiveness, etc. to interpret characters in literature – especially in assignments and exam questions in which we were to do character analysis".

The narrator's perception of the place of Sesotho TK in the English of Literature in English seems to be grounded in her knowledge of values of Basotho which she used to facilitate her ability to interpret characters she read about in her literary works of study. For example, in Sesotho as a socio-culture, it is *botho/ubuntu* to display not only a sense of assertiveness, but also good morals and respect for others with whom one shares a livelihood. Abie therefore, utilised knowledge of these ethno-values to enhance her English of character-analysis in Literature in English. To illustratively contextualise her experience-appraised perspective, she shared her encounter with the poem "*The woman with whom I share my husband*".

"The woman with whom I share my husband"

"Take the woman in the poem "The woman with whom I share my husband" for instance. Ba ba ngata hakaakang Lesotho Mme Matsoso basali ba hlorisang ba bang ka ho nka banna ba bona 'me ka ho etsa joalo ba tloa the Christian and cultural values against infidelity and adultery? (Aren't there so many women in Lesotho Mme Mamatsoso, who frustrate other women by taking their husbands – thus violating Christian and cultural values that are against infidelity and adultery?)...By sourcing from our Sesotho knowledge and experiences we were even able to nickname each other some of the women in the poems... At some point the poem says "Its like she swallowed a poker." I could now picture and draw from my lived experiences of some of the morally dirty women in my village community, and used this to better conceptualise the same character traits as portrayed in English".

Abie's perspective has a place in the living theory. As explained in the previous chapter, the theory is about living realities of people's lives and related values (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:85-92). The theory is also about "an explanation by an individual, of their educational influences in their own learning and that of others" (Whitehead 1999:2) (*vide 5.2.2.4*). In this inquiry Abie sourced from her knowledge of Sesotho cultural values as specified in the account of how she constructed her knowledge of the English of Literature in English. This way she showed how her personal life with the realities of the lives of some of the real people she knew had a positive impacted on her management of academic English in the context of a particular subject.

Also notable in Abie's account was its consistence with the concept of making contact with literary text. The argument as in the explorations of techniques for effective teaching of Literature in English is that use of real life experiences of students enhances their understanding of the English for making contact with the literary text, remains too currently relevant and important to discard as outdated scholarship. By drawing my

attention to how she used live cases of socio-culturally unacceptable behaviours of some women, Abie shared with me how she made contact with the poem in question.

(ii) *Sesotho TK in Drama*

Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in drama as a literary genre featured in the narratives by Tlhorie and my self. Upon being requested for her experiences in the context of Literature, Tlhorie had the following story to share with me.

My conceptualisation of the downfall of Lady Macbeth benefited from my knowledge of Sesotho...

"Hmm! Now that you are saying it Macbeth was one of my set books too at the NUL. I remember how my English for characterisation of Lady Macbeth benefited from my knowledge of the Sesotho proverb and book title "*Pelo e ja serati*" (One gets heartbreak from loving). As I listened to Lady Macbeth I remembered a character called 'Malonya dreaming in a book called *Pelo e ja Serati*. My conceptualisation of the downfall of Lady Macbeth and her husband benefited also from my knowledge of the Sesotho and biblical expression "*Liketso tsa motho lia mo latela*." (A person's actions live after him/her). I also recalled this expression from a character I read about in a Sesotho novel Makotulo. Indeed I drew from knowledge of people in real life for my English of character analysis as you put it 'M'e Lifelile."

What did I decipher from Tlhorie's perspective? Recurrence of the notion of transferability of ethno-cultural knowledge to construction of knowledge in new learning contexts was one of the insights gained from Tlhorie's personal account. The narrator had as her capital, or alate (Conolly *et al.* 2009) (*vide* 2.2) knowledge of Sesotho traditional literature. This featured as knowledge of proverbs and Sesotho folklore. The Sesotho proverbial knowledge in the form the expression - *Pelo e ja serati* was for example tapped on as transferable capital for Tlhorie's effective management of the

English for character interpretation in literary criticism. Consequently, the narrator was able to perceive Lady Macbeth as deserving no sympathy from the readers.

(iii) *Sesotho TK in the English of Short story*

Sesotho folklore as oral traditional literature positively serviced Tlhorie's understanding of the concept *morale* and text organisation in short story texts such as *Aesop's fables*. Tlhorie shared her experience in this regard in the words,

"I used to apply my knowledge of *LitsĀmo tsa Sesotho* (Sesotho folktales) to understand the English and morale of works such as Fables of Aesop. We had to derive the morale from each fable. I had no problem understanding this quickly because I grew up listening to Sesotho fairy tales as we sat around the fire in the evenings".

Is this what Bitzer & Menkveld (2004:228) in their argument for adoption of IKSs-oriented approaches to teaching and learning in HE means by the significance of *the grandma's-around the hearth* knowledge in formal HE? (*vide 3.4.2.2*). Perhaps it is. Yet another insight was revealed in Tlhorie's experience-informed perception. It was the indiscriminate nature of transferability of ethno-cultural knowledge in enhancement of concept-specific academic English. Transferability of knowledge for [re] creation of further knowledge in new learning contexts can embrace not only orally-acquired ethno-knowledge, but even that stored in memory via print. Evidence of this position on my part lay in Tlhorie's mention of how knowledge from her interpretive reading of Sesotho novels such as *'Makotulo* and *Pelo e ja serati* benefitted her communicative competence in the English for interpreting characters such as Lady Macbeth.

Further interpretive engagement with Tlhorie's subject-area-related perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency brought to surface an additional discernment in the form of a question. Is it possible that awareness of the value of, and

confidence to apply Sesotho TK in academic English might be associated with professional experience and maturity? This question was impelled by Thorie's response to my comment on the confidence she had on Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. She put it as follows.

"Certainly... I wish I had as early as then a developed the present confidence and pride in my Bosotho and its knowledge. I would have been very loud about the value and contribution of Bosotho in clarification of the so-called modern knowledge. You see at the time what mattered was how English-seasoned one was. So most of the time I could not even whisper it to a closest friend that I was busy tapping on Bosochoana (derogatory reference to display of one's identity as being a Mosotho) for my survival in theme and academic subject-based English".

Thorie's confidence seemingly drew from her awareness of the contribution of Sesotho TK in clarification of knowledge in modern education. She blamed her initial lack of confidence to self-advocate via knowledge from her Sesotho TK. She blamed her lack of courage on the ego-demeaning Western mentality which characterised educational practice at the NUL during her time as a student. Thorie's concern with predominance of Western mentality at the NUL concretised documented literature on displeasure with relegation of African knowledge systems in the educational practice of Africa-based HE institutions (Tisani 2004; Roodt 2004; Ntsoane 2005; Nel 2008) (*vide* 3.2.3).

(iv) *Sesotho TK in Literary Criticism*

Lifelile (the researcher)

As I indicated earlier, application of Sesotho TK benefited my understanding of the English of my course *Literary Criticism* at the NUL. At the time of my enrolment Western

and African poetry, drama, and prose made the course *Literary Criticism* which I took in 3rd year of my studies. Shakespeare's literary works was part of the course. I chose *Macbeth* as one of the plays in which my knowledge of Sesotho value systems benefited my understanding of the English that is requisite for mastery of the concept *characterisation and character analysis*. The event was an assignment on the redeeming features of one of the main characters – Lady Macbeth.

"What would be your illustrative comment on the position that there were redeeming features in Lady Macbeth's character?"

"One of the knowledge assessment tasks was "What would be your illustrative comment on the position that there were redeeming features in Lady Macbeth's character?" The task challenged both my critical thinking ability and its requisite English. In my initial contact very little held in favour of Lady Macbeth in terms of what she did, and what others said about her. Even her own words are a living testimony of how evil she is. She angrily yells at Macbeth "Infirm of purpose! Unsex me here...and give me the daggers!" How on earth could a wife be so demeaning of her husband? I reflect to myself and decide that the assignment task is simple, requiring me to merely support my position with incidences pointing to villainousness of Lady Macbeth. I got started on the task, but in the process of developing the draft, surprisingly got a feeling that my text was portraying Lady Macbeth as a monotonously one-sided character. Suddenly a subconscious thought struck in the form of Sesotho idiomatic expression – "*Ha ho tjaka tlhoka koli*", (Even the most righteous still have limitations). I then thought to myself, "if nothing is as good as the word good", then there is a point in Basotho's wisdom that "*Ha ho ntho'e mpe e se nang molemo*" (there is nothing as bad as the word bad). Even the English are right in their proverbial wisdom that "there is a silver lining in every cloud". I proceeded to apply these traditional sayings to real life, and visualised real people who despite our perception of them as condemnable still display acceptable qualities by ethno-cultural standards. My writing of the assignment then took a different turn. The question of why, became important. I began to perceive Lady Macbeth from another perspective. She was determined, loving of her husband, could not tolerate passiveness and indecisiveness, and was therefore, assertive, brave, and pro-active".

Which aspects of Sesotho TK enhanced my use of the English for character analysis? I subconsciously applied empathy – the feeling of "*how would I feel if*

nobody saw anything positive in my practice of life?" In Sesotho it is *botho* to strife to see goodness in others in order to live harmoniously with them. By relating Lady Macbeth to characters of people as I have experienced life with them in my culture, I situated myself in an opportune position to appeal to my pre-existing store of knowledge of descriptive Sesotho vocabulary appropriate for situations more or less similar to that of the character under scrutiny.

For confirmation of appropriateness of vocabulary which was translated into English for purposes of the assignment, I also appealed to the wisdom of the elderly professor of Sesotho who taught me Sesotho Literature courses. This experience was for me an act of living Sesotho TK as non-scribal knowledge which according to literature on African folklore (*vide 2.3.1.2*) and orality of pristine knowledge is normally passed from generation to generation by the elderly. My proficiency in the English of character-analysis effectively benefited from this oral knowledge of Sesotho as generously offered to me by an elderly Mosotho academic who was then in his 70s and already engaged beyond retirement age by NUL. Without knowing it then, I utilised critical ethno-culture-sensitive reflection and self advocacy to meet the linguistic demands of my task – therefore for improvement of my learning practice (*vide 5.2.2.4*). But for all these success experiences, the initiative was mine. I successfully self-advocated through use of my cultural knowledge to benefit my personal academic success.

What was it about writing auto-ethnography which prompted my positive perception of Lady Macbeth? The physical act of writing was not independent of thought, but an active process of critical thinking which brought to surface new realisations (Lawrence, 1996) about the character. Thus, my writing of the character of Lady Macbeth was inquiry itself (Richardson, & St. Pierre, 2005) (*vide 5.4.1.2*).

Learning in the course - *Literary Criticism* was a different experience in the tutelage of one Ghanaian lecturer who was also an anti-colonial novelist. The ethno-culture-sensitive manner in which this lecturer introduced his part of the course still lives vividly in my memory.

Submit your profiles

"The course introduction read "Submit to me half a page to a page in which you furnish me with the following information about yourself. Your name and gender, your home village and its location, typical socio-cultural ways of your people and what you think of yourself in relation to where you come from". Because the lecturer was a writer some of us concluded that he was going to use our profiles in some of his literary works. But we were wrong. The lecturer's literary works were pre- and post-independence-oriented and critical of the colonial hegemony. I marvel how he vividly depicts post-independence corruption in his country in the one of his novels –The beautiful ones are not yet born. I recall how his use of the summaries of our profiles benefited my understanding of the term "predator" in one of the literary works".

In retrospect what insights were embedded in the introduction of my Ghanaian lecturer's course? The instruction "*Submit...Your name and gender, your home village and its location, typical socio-cultural ways of your people and what you think of yourself in relation to where you come from*" portrayed the lecturer's sensitiveness to our ethno-cultural being and the knowledge we enrolled in his course with from those backgrounds. He did not regard our brains as *tabula rasa*. In this inquiry appreciation of non-emptiness of our brains upon enrolment surfaced in Abie's

"Indeed we enrolled into NUL with our Sesotho TK as capital to resort to when need would arise. I think this means that as students from different cultural backgrounds we do not enter university empty-headed. Our Sesotho knowledge lives in us just as we live in it, and so must be used to our advantage and achievement".

The story points to effective application of Sesotho TK for understanding the English of literary criticism. Substantiation of this lay in the Ghanaian lecturer's successful utilisation of our profiles as capital for improvement of both his own professional practice and our English-medium learning practice in the context of the course *Literary criticism*. It then made sense why from the onset of his course the lecturer challenged us to reflect on, appreciate and accept ourselves as having a cultural knowledge-base from which to understand ourselves and the new course in turn. That way the education practitioner pedagogically lived what I in this inquiry conceive as localised *botho/ubuntu* for course-specific academic English. Implementation of the value of *botho* was in the form of respect of our ethno-Sesotho cultural identity for its role in our understanding of the English of literary critical analysis. In retrospect now, I relate the ease with which I understood the concept "*predators*" in my study of the novel *Two Thousand seasons* to the lecturer's strategic utilisation of my personal profile submitted to him in compliance with the instruction in the introduction of his course.

The predators

"We were critiquing the novel *Two thousand seasons* by Aikwei Amah. It was happenstance for us to be examining the text with its author. The issue was the concept predator as used in the book. To clarify the predatory manner in which colonialists exploited the resources in pre-independence Africa, the author- lecturer coincidentally used my personal profile. He directed to me the question - "Mpho (my middle name) you are from Ha Ts'oeute right? In your profile you refer to anthills that adorn the plateaus on which your village sits. Visualise and describe how ants chain up to frantically collect tiny bits of grass to build their storage hills while sun shines. How would you transfer such an experience to your understanding of the concept predator?"

Contextualised to documented literature, my Ghanaian lecturer's pedagogical approach seemed to pragmatise Taylor's (2010:5) recommendation that mainstreaming of TK/IK in HE should be underpinned by awareness of respect and provisioning for students freedom to live their ethno-identities for the benefit of acquisition of new knowledge in HE institutions such as the NUL (6.4.2.2d -"*Yes...and my knowledge of*

Sesotho came in handy" .by Relebo). The same observation was made in interpretation of Relebo's personal experience with relevance of Sesotho TK in acquisition of literacy in phonetics by SSBSs in a HE institution.

I have been a sheep-herder. It is therefore my experience-appraised knowledge that sheep do not graze actively under hot sunny conditions. They look for the nearest available shady place or crowd to shade each other. I killed time by exploring the environment in which I herded. Indeed one of my many discoveries was the ants as they chained to collect hay while sun shone. Reflecting on the physical features of my home-environment provoked other experiences which further clarified the meaning of the term "*predator*" – namely that of locusts attacking crops to bareness of stalk in the fields. The lecturer's pedagogical practice was in line with the oral-style theory about the relationship between people's cosmos and generation of knowledge (Jousse, 2000) (*vide* 2.4). From this cosmos-informed experience I visualised the voraciousness with which colonialists entered and exploited Africa.

These experiences were the Sesotho IKS I had lived as a rural village girl. They had been so intertwined with my normal life that I took them for granted without imagining that given a chance, they could profit my English for knowledge formation in literary criticism. It was rewardingly strange that the herding experience, arduous as it had been for me, benefited my understanding of the term "*predator*" in a university cultural context. So given a chance, Sesotho values such as reflection on and appreciation of one's local environment can be positively factorial in acquisition of proficiency in the English for effective learning of academic subjects/courses such as Literary Criticism in my case.

But what value(s) did the Ghanaian lecturer live for the benefit of my English for learning the course - *Literary Criticism*? In my view *botho* in the form of respect was

one of the values characterising the lecturer's practice of teaching. The lecturer respected our ethno-cultural identities for their potential contribution to our understanding of the English of his course. I in turn developed respect of my cultural being for its benefit to acquisition of the English of African literature. The particular lecturer used the discovery method in a manner that made me appreciate my *Bosotho* for its worth in my academic English. Yes, all cultures and the knowledge they embed are equal (Ntsoane, 2005) in knowledge construction. The lecturer took us on board his intercultural pedagogical practice for the benefit of our English for *Literary criticism*. Did pedagogical practice at the NUL espouse Sesotho cultural values in academic English? Considering that in most courses pedagogical practice was too intermittent to afford my academic English the benefit of my knowledge of Sesotho values, I would not hesitate to posit that formerly it did not. As Whitehead & MacNiff (2006) would criticise in their living theory, pedagogical practice at the NUL was in contradiction of the *botho* value of respect for others' pristine knowledge and its potential contribution to knowledge creation. In sum, I adopted what I termed an *ethno-culturally-lived-value-oriented interpretation* of my personal experience with the role of Sesotho TK in my management of the English of the course *Literary Criticism*.

I exit this part of my analysis with this thought-provoking reflective question. So adoption of the theory of being (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) (*vide 5.2.2.4*) in HE teaching may have potential to benefit acquisition of academic English? If knowledge of one's cultural values is knowledge of one's being as a cultural entity, teaching in the manner which shows recognition and respect of one's students' cultural knowledge for the positive difference it may make in their construction of knowledge requisite academic English proficiency, then my Ghanaian lecturer pedagogically lived and in turn, facilitated our ability to live ontological value of respect in quest for subject-specific English proficiency. As would be argued by Whitehead & MacNiff (2006), my Ghanaian lecturer's pedagogical approach did not contradict but fulfilled his African students' ontological value of being. The next sub-section focused on narratives of

personal experiences with the role of Sesotho TK in the English for learning Geography at the NUL.

In sum, the Sesotho-culture-sensitive manner in which Relebo and my Ghanaian lecturer facilitated literacy in the English of courses such as Phonetics and Literary Criticism respectively, suggests that an education-practitioner need not necessarily share an ethno-cultural background with his/her students to be able appreciate and facilitate enactment of students' ethno-cultural knowledge as an academic English proficiency need. In state, it is the practitioner's awareness of the nature of students' academic English needs, their ethno-cultural background and how the latter can be explored for its role in acquisition of the English for academic success in specific course offerings. Three of the participants shared personal experiences with Sesotho TK as a need for acquisition of Geography-based English literacy.

(f) Sesotho TK in Geography English

Abie, Pitsos, and Relebo took Geography as a specialisation at the NUL. The three participants' narratives had one common feature. All pointed to the role played by knowledge of the physical features of their environment in their understanding of the English of Geography.

Abie had this to share.

***I benefited from my knowledge geographic features of my home district
Mokhotlong***

"...But because I came from Mokhotlong, I always immediately benefited from application of my knowledge of the geographical features of the place for concepts such as vegetation, behaviours of snow, ice glaciations, *likhohlo* (contours), etc".

At least two issues seemed to have been behind Abie's initiative to utilise knowledge of the physical features of her home district to benefit her understanding of the terminology of specific concepts in Geography. These were environmental awareness and self-motivation. On the contrary, **Relebo's** TK-influenced understanding of *rocks* as one of the topics she studied in Geography was more teacher-induced than self-motivated. She substantiated this as follows.

"I got from high school, Mrs Ts'ehlo would be saying, "girls, geography students are very observant, you have to be very observant, look around when you go home on out weekends look around you where you're walking". I used to do that so much that one day on my way to T.Y at home these stones that are manufactured these days; that's why I say my dream has come true, I haven't done anything but I used to say to myself "These stones could be mined and then a living settlement can be accumulated" now its happening and it's the influence of Mrs Ts'ehlo's geography when she used to say "be observant ..."

Like Abie's, Relebo's account pointed to a relationship between awareness of the environmental and understanding of the jargon of concepts in courses/topic such as Physical Geography. The teacher/lecturer originated ethno-cultural-sensitivity was as in the case of my Ghanaian lecturer in my English proficiency for character-analysis in *Literary Criticism*; Bonie's learning of Economics and teaching of Accounting at the NUL; as well as Richie's, Abie's, Tlhorie's, and Relebo's teaching of Accounting, the Adjective, the verb, and phonetics respectively. About experiences in the same subject **Pitsos** storied as follows.

My village is near Qabane River

"Geography helped me in that maybe in comparison with people living in Maseru i.e. urban areas, given that I grew up in the rural areas. When we were taught about rivers, youthful stage, middle stage; you'll find that I was able to express them because in the rural areas there were/are rivers that were different in size and stage. So I knew them because I saw and the flow direction, where they started and I saw other tributaries joining. So I was able to **visualise** the concepts. My village is near the Qabane River, in fact when you go to Qabane you walk by the Qabane River. So these features were there everyday...It helped me a lot because it aroused my interest in geography. Maybe it helped a lot because I did not do geography at High School, but I did it when I came to NUL. I was able to understand it because of this experience if the topic that was discussed was on mountains, and landforms, I would visualise the characteristics of a mountain, e.g. cone-shaped ones and waterfalls, I would easily classify such".

One finding from this text is the relationship between lived knowledge of physical features of one's environment and improved ability to compare, construct and express knowledge of the English of Physical Geography. For Pitsos, familiarity with the Qabane River in her home village, mountains and landforms in Qabane as some of the geographical features of her village area facilitated her visualisation, imagination and understanding of the jargon of different parts of a river, shapes of mountains and landforms. This came out in her experience

"...My village is near the Qabane River, in fact when you go to Qabane you walk by the Qabane River...When we were taught about rivers, youthful stage, middle stage; ...I was able to express them...because...these features were there everyday...So I knew them because ...I saw other tributaries joining...if the topic that was discussed was on mountains, and landforms, I would visualise the characteristics of a mountain, e.g. cone-shaped ones and waterfalls, I would easily classify such. So I was able to **visualise** the concepts..."

The finding on how application of Sesotho TK provokes visualisation and imagination leading to better understanding of concept-based English is consistent with that

gleaned earlier from Agie's story on how her visualisation and imagination of people attacked by *thokolosi* facilitated her understanding of the topic *schizophrenia* in the Mental Health course. It made research-informed sense from this finding to conclude that knowledge of one's physical environment and awareness of ethno-cultural myths are some of the aspects of Sesotho TK that can be positively factorial in acquisition of functional knowledge of concept-based English in some academic subjects.

Pitsos' narrative contributed to theory and generally documented scholarship about knowledge creation and the implications for teaching and learning in HE.

In relation to theory, and as repeatedly noted in preceding analyses Pitsos' narrative enhances the Oral-style theory (Jousse 2000) with its notion of the intertwined relationship between humans' cosmos and knowledge creation. One of the postulations of the Oral-style theory is that geographical features of any particular area are constitutive parts of the cosmos that human beings live in and with (*vide* 2.4). Having grown up in Qabane with its many rivers, Pitso's has a lived experience with not only rivers and their different stages and patterns of flow, but also that of the mountainous terrain forming part of her home environment. This experience therefore, constituted her orate Sesotho knowledge. It was application of this lived indigenous knowledge that benefited Pitsos' conceptualisation of geography-specific jargon such as *tributary, youthful and middle stages, mountains and landforms* in studying river water-flow and mountains in the context of the topic *Rivers* in Geography as one of her major-subjects at the NUL. Regarding general scholarship on teaching and learning in HE, the finding is consistent with the amply documented argument for research and scrutiny of paradigms and policies of HE with intention to explore strategies for research-appraised and therefore meaningful integration of AIKS therein.

(g) Sesotho TK in the English of History

Agie

Besides Counselling Psychology, Agie majored in History. Her storied experience with Sesotho TK as positively factorial in the English for learning the subject went as follows.

"It helped me a lot because when I was learning economic history, political history and history in general, I realised that what was happening was to put the knowledge that I already had as a Mosotho in context. To give an example, if we talk about **Economic history** where it was mentioned that Lesotho was the South African bread basket, I had that vision in mind because as a Mosotho child who grew up in the rural areas, I knew all the activities in agriculture such as hoeing, harvesting and many more so I could conceptualise the bread basket concept. I could visualise the seroto (round-basin-like basket) which is much like the basket even though it does not have handles, and is often round. This traditional knowledge helped me understand the meaning in context of the above terminology – in my understanding, the English vocabulary of Economic History. You see we would be doing the history of Lesotho for instance. Oh! I love Basotho songs and praise poetry for their educational value!! (Her face beams). At home I grew up listening to bo-ntate ba baholo (Elderly men) recite or narrate praise-poems about Moshoeshoe. This immediately benefited my understanding of what was said about Moshoeshoe because I related it to the praise poetry I grew up hearing, especially that recited during celebrations on Moshoeshoe's Day. The same was the case with topics such as the two World Wars which Basotho left Lesotho to fight on Britain's side. As a child growing up in Lesotho I had often heard praise-poems in which expressions such as "*Banna ba thothometsa lirope ha thunya li khabola* (men's thighs shook with fright at the sound of gun shots by Hitler's army from, oa Mahitli (Basotho's nick-name for Hitler) *a halefile a batla mali a ngoana monyesemane* (Men's thighs shaking with fright at the frightening sounds of guns-indicating Hitler's warriors rage in his quest for the blood of an Englishman's child)".

What did Agie's story reveal? Embraciveness of Agie's perception of Sesotho TK as a History-specific academic English need was the main feature of the narrative. It included how her knowledge of Sesotho handicrafts/artefacts, Basotho's agricultural practices, history of Moshoeshoe I, history of the first and second World Wars, as well as song and heroic poetry of the Basotho benefited her understanding of different aspects of History as her subject of specialisation at the NUL. Her understanding of the

concept "South African bread basket" benefited from "...as a Mosotho child... I knew all the activities in agriculture such as hoeing, harvesting... This traditional knowledge helped me understand the meaning in context of... the English vocabulary of Economic History..."

Agie's better understanding of English requisite for understanding Moshoeshoe I was best articulated in "...At home I grew up listening to bo-ntate ba baholo (elderly men) recite or narrate praise-poems about Moshoeshoe. This immediately benefited my understanding of what was said about Moshoeshoe because I related it to the praise poetry I grew up hearing heroic poetry recited during celebrations on Moshoeshoe's Day." She also attributes her understanding of lectures on the first and second World Wars to her experience with localised heroic poetry of Basotho in the words, "...As a child growing up in Lesotho I had often heroic poems in which expressions such as "Banna ba thothometsa lirope ha thunya li khabola Oa Mahitli (Hitler) a batla ho busa lefatse... Oh! I love Basotho songs and praise poetry for their educational value!!" (men's thighs shook with fright at the sound of gun-shots by Hitler's armies, her face beams.

Another feature of Agie's account was consistency of at least two of its findings with those from earlier narratives. One such finding from Agie's History-based narration is the value of her compounded perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need which according to her enhances vision and imagination which result in better conceptualisation of topic and concept-based English. Supporting this were her recollections "...I could visualise the seroto... I had that vision in mind... I could conceptualise the bread basket concept". This revelation is consistent with that noted in Pitsos', Relebo's and Agie's in Geography and Mental Health respectively. This consistency strengthens the insight about the intertwined relationship between acts of visualising and imagining in application of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

Another disclosure was the *Aha* moment resulting from students' discovery of the positive impact of Sesotho TK on clarity of academic English. This finding has tended to characterise all preceding storied personal experiences. It therefore seemed academically reasonable to assume on the basis of recurrence of the disclosure that depending on the nature of the challenge posed by incompetence in the English of a particular academic context, application of ethno-cultural knowledge of students may be an academically redeeming problem-solving strategy.

What renders Agie's text relevant to documented wisdom? Agie's narrative amplifies the educational value of heroic poetry, dance and song of the Basotho in promoting History-based academic English. This feature of the text places it in the literature on orality of African folklore wherein heroic poetry, dance, song, as well as handicrafts, are amply documented and discussed as some of the typically indigenous oral traditions of different African societies (Conolly *et al.* 2009) (*vide* 2.2.1.3). This was substantiated in Agie's explanation of how her History-specific English proficiency benefitted from her childhood experience of listening to grandfathers reciting praise-poetry. In this manner Agie's experience, concretised IKS/TK literature which points to among others, the elderly as custodians of knowledge which is traditionally generated and passed on orally from one generation to the next via among others, song, poetry, dance etc. Furthermore, the oral tradition-grounded nature of Agie's perception of Sesotho TK in History English adds practicality to theory. An example of the theories is the oral-style theory (Jousse 2000) on forms of oral expression of knowledge, namely, the laryngo-buccal and corporeal-manual which Agie substantiates in her reference to Sesotho song, heroic poetry and handicrafts such as *seroto*, as experiential ethno-knowledge which she retrieved to solve problems she encountered understanding some aspects of History as one of the subjects she studied as a student at the English-medium NUL. Another is the systematic theory of oral tradition which Vansina (1960) initiated and used as a basis for construction of knowledge in history as an academic subject. Through this theory, Vansina gives more status and credibility to oral traditions by perceiving them as "testimonies" of the past

which are equal in status with print-oriented traditions of the Western emporium, but only different in that they are transmitted orally (Vansina 1985). Agie's experiential account adds explicitness and practicality in [re]creation of knowledge about how use of Sesotho ethno-knowledge can be applied in demystification of the English of some concepts in History as an academic subject.

(h) Sesotho TK in the English of Public Administration

Richie

This sub-section presents findings on Richie's personal experiences with the role of Sesotho TK in the English of studying Public Administration. The excerpt below formed the relevant data.

"Oh! So concepts such as... fit very well into Basotho's concept of organisational structure"

"Let me share with you those in Public Administration. I used to struggle understanding the vocabulary of this subject. For example, interpretations of words such as **"Democracy"** puzzled me a lot until I decided to subject it my interpretation in Sesotho. Some documented literature and lectures referred to Russians as democratic when I regarded them as oppressors. In the end I arrived at a decision that Democracy is not just one aspect. Other aspects I struggled with in the context of this subject were **"Administration", and "Management"**. Then I dialogued with these using my knowledge of organisational structure from the perspective of Basotho. I told myself "if you want to understand the organisational structure chart go to the Sesotho one". For instance as a *Morena oa Sehlooho oa Matelile* (Paramount Chief of Matelile) you know all the ward chiefs and village headmen under you. This means that you know who reports to who – the idea of the last man. Application of this knowledge enabled me to say "Oh! So concepts such as administration, management, etc.' fit very well into Basotho's concept of organisational structure. I was able to say Oh! *Ehlile puso e joalo le ka Sesotho* (Yes! Even in Sesotho this is how traditional government structure is)".

What Findings were discernable from the foregoing narrative? First noted was Richie's awareness of problematicity of subject-based jargon. In Richie's case it was failure to interpret the vocabulary of Public Administration as a subject. Initially Richie

was not aware of how deeply involved in meaning the term "Democracy" was. Richie's other plight was with the terms "administration and management". This challenge impelled him to reflect critically for a problem-solving learning strategy until his decision to resort to his ethno-culturally lived knowledge of a Sesotho organisational structure redeemed his situation of a fix. *"I told myself "if you want to understand the organisational structure chart go to the Sesotho one"*, Richie said. The decision to resort to Sesotho TK benefitted his understanding of the technical terminology in the subject Public Administration terms. This experience suggests therefore that problematicity of subject-based English can itself become positive pressure and motivation to source from one's TK for better understanding. The narrator illustrated this in *"...For instance, as the Paramount Chief of Matelile you know all the ward chiefs and village headmen under you. This means that you know who reports to who – the idea of the last man"*. This substantiated concretely how one's existing knowledge of equivalences in cultural knowledges can benefit subject-specific English proficiency. This brings to mind the question - Is this what Afonso (Afonso & Taylor 2009:273) means by critical culture-sensitive reflexivity for interrogation of some of the complexities of learning? Perhaps it is; particularly in a situation where the medium of learning is a foreign language to students such as Richie.

The *Aha!* moment brought about by application of Sesotho TK to solve problems related to interpretation of the vocabulary of Public Administration emerged as another of the findings from an interpretive engagement with Richie's narrative. This finding, coupled with similar disclosures in most of the preceding stories could render reasonable the assumption that where relevantly resorted to in particular academic subjects, Sesotho TK as an academic English need is problem-solving and in this capacity brings about a sense of relief and academic fulfilment on the part of the student.

(i) Sesotho TK in Physics-based English

Newi

Newi majored in Physics and Mathematics at the NUL. He did not recall associating his problems in Physics with linguistic inability. Problematicity of English in the context of Physics came to his notice when he started working as a high school teacher and now Physics teacher-educator at the NUL. First Newi regretted that teaching at the NUL during his time as a student barely explored traditional knowledges of students for how they could enhance proficiency in subject-based English. It was not until he became an education-practitioner and realised problems his students encountered with the English of learning Science that he discovered by trial-and-error the extent to which traditional knowledges can be a learning need in that regard. Newi's personal experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in Science were therefore, more from an education-practitioner's perspective than they were learner-experience-based.

Newi storied how he applies Sesotho TK for his students' Physics-specific proficiency in English. Creation of convection current, lightening, infiltration, pressure, and electron are the topics forming his experiential narrative.

(i) Creation of Convection current

We...call out the wind

"In the fields during grain-thrashing, when we winnow *mmoko* from grain, and there is no wind blowing, we have to build a fire. We say we are summoning the wind, and actually call out the wind "*Maelaaaanaaaa!* (Wind may you please come!) As the fire makes, we watch the direction in which the smoke flows, then we know that and feel the wind actually blowing. You know what this process of creating wind is called in scientific terms and the academic English of science? It is called **creation of Convection current** that causes the wind to blow as a result of the connection between cool air in the atmosphere and warm air from the fire. If this theory is applied students understand **convection** better. They normally say "*oooh! Athe o bua ka maelana ha ho olosoa?* (Oooh! So you are talking about the process of summoning wind as we know it from our experience of winnowing during grain thrashing?) Now we understand".

(ii) *Lightening*

Oh! So in Sesotho we are to take precautions during lightening?

"...Talking about applicability of Sesotho TK in science brings to mind topics such as precautions against lightening. You know that in Sesotho you are not supposed to be near water or spill it in a splashing manner during a thunderous rain. How often have you been warned...No my child stop handling water, and stop splashing it. There is lightening. This is an understanding in modern Science as well. This therefore means that students from our Sesotho-speaking cultural background if made aware of these comparable cultural understandings, can draw from their cultural experience to be able to say "Oh! So in Sesotho we are to take precautions with water during lightening. Even in Science the understanding is the same?" This is because **water is a lightening conductor**. It is well known in Sesotho that one is not supposed to stand or sit under a tree, especially willow (*moluoane*) during a thunder-storm / when there is lightning. Or else *le tla u nyeka* (It (lightening) will leak you out).The same knowledge is there in modern science".

(iii) *Infiltration*

In training teachers for Chemistry I use such experiences a lot and it works

"There is connection in other aspects such as mixing drugs or medicine, infiltration during brewing and many others. *Re le Basotho rea ritela, rea tsoaka. Ke ntho tseo ba li phelang* (As Basotho we brew and mix. These are things they live). So in training teachers for Chemistry I use such experiences a lot and it works...

(iv) *Pressure*

Blood pressure as a common ailment among Basotho came to mind

"Yes. Application of this kind of knowledge is beneficial in students' understanding of some terminology in Physics. Let me give you a living and very recent experiential example. Today I was teaching people who did not do Physics at O'Level, but are taking it as a teaching subject at university. We were looking at how they can teach the topic Pressure. I had to think hard to figure out what it is I could tap from their experience and use to help them understand the concept. In the end, the concept of Blood pressure as a common ailment among Basotho came to mind. I explained that BP comes about as a result of too much blood flow into the nerve system and puts stress on the brain. They understood very easily. It worked".

(v) *Electron concept*

"We were discussing how the topic Electron can be taught. Call terms such as this the vocabulary of Physics for argument's sake. I had to think deep about how I would connect this to what my student teachers already know from their experiences as Basotho. *Ka qala ka bua le bona ka ntho ena e bitsoang thokolosi ke Basotho* (I started

talking to them about this thing which Basotho call thokolosi). I asked them whether they have ever seen one, what it eats, what size it is, and what it is known for doing. Answers included that they have never seen it, it eats moroko (refuse from filtered local brew), but not salt; it is abnormally short, very muscular, and known to strangle those it has been sent by witches/evil-spirited people to torture. I then make my students realise that much as they have never seen a thokolosi they know all its properties –including its dangers and advantages. On the basis of reflection on what they know from Basotho's beliefs and mythological perception of *thokolosi*, I **normally** proceed to introduce the concept "Electron" – telling them that even though scientists themselves have never seen it, they know its properties. These students **understand** the concept better and assure themselves by saying things like "Oh! So in the context of science an equivalent of the thokolosi is electron?"

What do Newi's storied experiences tell? Some revelations are specific to individual stories, while others cut across the accounts. At least three findings emerged from the story on Sesotho TK as a problem-solving strategy for understanding English to learn *Creation of convection current*. It is the role of some of Basotho's indigenous science for agricultural livelihoods such as harvesting in facilitation of students' understanding of the English for learning concepts like creation of *Convection current* in Physics. Thrashing grain out of dry harvest such as wheat, maize, to name but a few, is one of the agricultural practices of Basotho. The process involves as one of its stages, the wind-dependent process of separating grain from refuse. In Sesotho such a stage is called *ho olosa* (winnowing). Newi's account points to effectiveness of application of this knowledge in students' understanding of the English jargon for physics topics such as Creation of Convection current. Practically, Newi said to help his Physics education students understand the terminology for this concept he normally asks them to reflect on their experience with winnowing. He says he specifically reminds them that,

"...we have to build a fire. We say we are summoning the wind, and actually call out the wind "*Maelaaaaaaaa!* As the fire makes, we watch the direction in which the smoke flows...You know what this process of creating wind is called in scientific terms and the academic English of science? It is called **creation of convection current** that causes the wind to blow as a result of the connection between cool air in the atmosphere and warm air from the fire...If this theory is applied students understand convection better...They normally say *ooooh! Athe u bua ka ho olosa* (ooooh! So you are talking about winnowing during grain-thrashing?)"

Also eminent in the same text is how if professionally and relevantly probed, memory of students' ethno-knowledge can benefit literacy in the English of academic subjects such as Physics.

Knowledge about lightening as an aspect of Basotho's concept of conditions and different forms of natural phenomena such as rain emerges as an academic English proficiency need. Authenticating this finding is Newi's reported reference to it for clarification of the English for understanding the topic on precautionary measures against lightening. To this effect Newi's practice is reportedly characterised by ethno-culture-sensitising statements such as "...*You know that in Sesotho you are not supposed to be near water or spill it in a splashing manner during a thunderous rain... This is an understanding in modern Science as well. This therefore, means that students from our Sesotho-speaking cultural background if made aware of these comparable cultural understandings, can draw from their cultural experience...*"

Eminent from Newi's personal experience account is applicability of Knowledge of Basotho's medicinal and brewing practices in student's understanding of the process of *Infiltration*. "...*Re le Basotho rea ritela, rea tsoaka (As Basotho we brew and mix). These are things we live...in teacher training for Chemistry I use such experiences a lot...*", the narrator substantiated.

The story on *thokolosi* points to effectiveness of use of this myth of Basotho for clarifying abstract concepts such as *Electron* in Physics. Newi highlights how he introduces the concept via students' knowledge of *thokolosi* in the following story.

Thokolosi

"I started talking to them about this thing which Basotho call *thokolosi*... whether they have ever seen one... what it is known for doing... Answers included that they have never seen it... it is short, very muscular... known to strangle those it has been sent...to torture. I then make my students realise that much as they have never seen a *thokolosi* they know all its properties –including its dangers. On the basis of reflection on what they

know from Basotho's...mythological perception of *thokolosi*, I...proceed to introduce the concept "Electron" – telling them that even though scientists themselves have never seen it, they know its properties. These students **understand** the concept better..."

Some findings emerged as cross-cutting not only between Newi's narratives and those of other participants, but also within his own accounts. In this study findings cross-cutting between Newi's and other participants' experiential narratives were termed *inter-narrative* revelations, while *intra-narrative* revelations were those cross-cutting within Newi's personal experience accounts.

⚡ *Inter-narrative revelations*

Newi's self-initiated culture-sensitive approach to the English of Physics as depicted in all his stories shows how experience with pedagogical marginalisation of one's ethno-knowledge for one's academic English proficiency can impact positively on development of one's personal theory and improvement of professional practice later in life. For instance, while as an education-practitioner now Newi regrets that Sesotho TK which he lived as part and parcel of ethno-Bosotho was never explored for its educational value when he studied Physics at the NUL, he however prides himself for his awareness and application of the resource and the benefit that this knowledge is for acquisition of his students' concept-based English. This finding is consistent with one in the storied experiences of Bonie, Richie and Tsums who individually decided to include ethno-culture-sensitive pedagogical approaches to subject-based English proficiency of their students after suffering such exclusion as former students of the NUL themselves. Recurrence of this finding makes reasonable the researcher's assumption that the ethno-sensitivity of pedagogical approach to academic English proficiency depends on among others, the nature of pre-profession experiences of individual education-practitioners.

The Ahaa moment-effect of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in the context of Physics is an inter-story revelation. For instance, the following excerpts by topic depict how students' discovery of commonalities between cultural knowledges results in what I call "*the sigh of relief*" at discovery of the role of Sesotho TK in students' understanding of the English for learning some concepts in Physics.

- ✚ "...ooooh! *Athe u bua ka ho olosa* (So you are talking about winnowing during grain-thrashing?) Now we understand" (Creation of convection current).
- ✚ "...Oh! *so in Sesotho we are to take precautions with water during lightening. Even in Science the understanding is the same!...*" (Lightening).
- ✚ "...So in teacher training for Chemistry I use such experiences a lot and it works" (Infiltration).
- ✚ "...It worked" (Pressure).
- ✚ "Oh! *So in the context of science an equivalent of the thokolosi is electron?*" (Thokolosi for Electron).

Repeated mention of "*...It works/ed*" and "*students understand...better*" in the stories, is another of the cross-cutting findings from Newi's storied experiences. I perceive this within-narrative recurrence as pointing to reasonableness of the assumption about effectiveness of application of Sesotho TK for improved understanding of English for learning academic subjects such as Physics. This intra-narrative recurrence is also suggestive of the positive impact of application of Sesotho TK on improvement of professional practice of individual education practitioners such as Newi in Physics education. Further augmenting reasonableness of this assumption is recurrence of the finding on the *Ahaa moment* in all the narratives preceding Newi's.

⚡ *Intra-narrative revelation*

Critical reflexivity and its positive impact on one's professional practice recurred in at least two of Newi's concept-specific experiential stories. Embedded in this critical reflexivity is another finding which points to need for Sesotho TK to be perceived and applied as a non-haphazard problem-solving strategy that challenges the educational practitioner to engage in deep and careful thought on how it can benefit academic English. This importance of critical thought is substantiated as follows by concept around which an experiential story was told.

⚡ "...I had **to think hard to figure out** what it is I could tap from their experience and use to help them understand the concept..." (Pressure).

⚡ "...I had **to think deep** about how I would connect this to what my student teachers already know from their experiences as Basotho..."

What contribution do Newi's positive personal experiences make on documented wisdom? Beyond the inquiry, Newi's narratives add practicality to theory and documented rationale for mainstreaming students' indigenous knowledges in HE. **The Oral-style theory** (Jousse 2000) points to the mutual relationship between humans and their physical environment in creation of knowledge and meaning to life. Newi's narrative reveals that wind is not only a natural weather condition, but an intrinsic feature of Basotho's agricultural cosmos. Because Basotho have, since time immemorial, lived with wind as part of their natural environment, they are functionally knowledgeable about how it impacts on the different aspects of their life. Substantiating this is their ability to create *convection current* for winnowing purposes during grain thrashing in their agricultural livelihood.

Rain accompanied by bouts of lightening in summer and autumn is another cosmological feature of livelihoods of ethno-Basotho. It is therefore, reasonably arguable that lightening and creation of convection current in the context of ethno-

Basotho form their agricultural and geographical cosmos. Evidence from Newi's narrative shows that this cosmos can be a knowledge resource to exploit for the benefit of among other forms of modern knowledge, acquisition of the English for learning some concepts in Physics. Revelations such as these which point to the positive impact of weather, agriculture, and climate-related ethno-beliefs and practices on understanding of Physics-based English are, in this inquiry, deemed to subscribe practicality to the law of mimism/knowledge impression in Jousse's (2000) oral-style theory (*vide* 2.4).

The living theory (*vide* 5.2.2.4) too stands to benefit practicality from Newi's storied personal experiences with positive effect of application of some aspects of Sesotho TK in understanding the English of some concepts in the subject Physics. The theory is about need for recognition, respect, understanding and appreciation of personal and cultural identities as lived by people engaged with intensively and extensively in life. In translating this theory to educational practice its promoters (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:86) (*vide* 5.2.2.4) posit that whether as practitioners or recipients of the practice in any particular situation, people get frustrated when their values related to attainment of their personal goals are contradicted.

Newi's reference to students' ethno-cultural knowledge in clarification of the English of Physics could be seen as a successful attempt ensuring that his educational practice "lives" pristine knowledge for the benefit of [re] creation of the knowledge through the English-medium at the NUL. Based on this understanding, it could be argued that it was in the name of non-violation of his SSBSs' value of ethno-identity that Newi's professional practice was guided by "*On the basis of reflection on what they know from Basotho's believes and mythological perception of thokolosi, I normally proceed to introduce the concept "Electron" ...These are things we live in our daily lives. So in teacher training for Chemistry I use such experiences a lot and it works.*"

The transformative professional development theory (Taylor 2007) is another of the theories gaining practical amplification from Newi's narrative. It is about the importance of the education-practitioners' ability to engage in critical reflection as a basis for improvement of their professional practice (Afonso & Taylor 2009). Such reflection should focus on among others, students' intercultural needs and place of these needs for learning (Taylor 2007). Newi in this inquiry engaged in critical reflection for effective teaching of the English-for learning Physics. "*I had to think deep...*" If we go by his narratives, the ethno-Sesotho-sensitive approach which Newi adopts to demystify the English of Physics in training Physics teachers is in line with Luitel & Taylor's (2006) Cupane's (2007), and Afonso & Taylor's (2009) recommendation after their Nepal and Mozambique-based critical auto-ethnographic inquiries for culture-sensitive professional development in science and mathematics education. Moreover, the inquiry, through Newi's experiential accounts, amplifies knowledge from previous physics-based ethno-culture-sensitive auto-ethnographic studies such as those by Cuapane (2007) and Afonso (2002; 2007) by adding knowledge about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for effective learning of physics.

Literature amassed in Chapter 3 on the role of and rationalisation of IKSs in HE spotlights myths and beliefs as among aspects of traditional knowledges that may contribute positively in creation and or recreation of knowledge in modern education. Beliefs about the power of the invisible *thokolosi* make the ethno-cultural knowledge of Basotho. Newi's pedagogical approach to Physics and physics education suggests therefore that for one to meaningfully teach through English to SSBSs, one should first permeate their cultural way of understanding. This inquiry therefore adds to such literature evidence-based knowledge and confirmation through Newi's experiential story about how the use of knowledge about Basotho myth - *thokolosi* enhanced student-teachers' understanding of the physics concept "electron".

The finding also adds to scholarship knowledge in the form of the argument that most of the knowledge offered in HE may therefore not be necessarily new. This way the

inquiry confirms Ntsoane's (2005:93) (*vide* 3.2.1) assertion that knowledge in HE only gets mystified by too much adherence to Eurocentric ways of accessing and imparting it. The insights from Newi's narratives, coupled with consistent ones from other participants' accounts, all point to criticalness of reflexivity of thought, sensitivity to academic English proficiency needs of students, as well as commitment to improvement of one's professional practice as conditions for the extent to which Sesotho TK can positively impact on acquisition of the English for learning individual academic subjects.

(j) Sesotho OTK in Religious studies-English

Tsums, now a practitioner in Religious studies at the NUL, majored in Theology as a student at this institution. She regretted that during her studentship there was no evidence of pedagogical recognition of the role of Sesotho-TK in acquisition of the English for learning her major subject. She registered the concern in the following words:

***When we grew up we were told folk tales about Moshanyana'
Sankatana***

"Since it was my first time to do Theology at this level, I really thought lectures should have explained it more in Sesotho especially on issues pertaining to how Jesus was born, he was now called a Saviour yet when we grew up we were told fairy tales about 'Moshanyana Sankatana' which compared Jesus to him, so now that I know that comparison I always ask my students to refer to it".

What does Tsums' experiential concern reveal? One finding emerged from the above text by Tsums. It is awareness of African folklore as beneficial to understanding of the scriptures about the birth and preachings of Jesus Christ as communicated in through the medium of English in the context of the academic subject Theology. The text reveals as did the narratives by Bonie, Richie, and Newi how improvement of one's teaching practice benefits from one's previous experience with marginalisation of one's

ethno-cultural knowledge as a student. While Tsums regrets that as a former student of the NUL she should have been given an opportunity to understand scriptures about Jesus Christ from her knowledge of the Sesotho folktale – *Sankatana*, she however, has adopted a positive translation of this mishap to her professional practice as a lecturer in Religious education at the NUL.

Contextualised into documented wisdom, Tsums' text confirms knowledge that indigenous knowledge/traditional knowledge entails among others, aspects such as folklore. *Moshanyana' Sankatana* is one of the folklores of Basotho. He was born from abject poverty, but grew up to save the nation that had been swallowed by an alligator ethno-culturally known as *kholumolumo* among the Basotho. Members of the Christian denominations align the story of *Sankatana* with that of Jesus Christ. Applied strategically in the context of academic subjects such as Theology and Religious education, knowledge of Sesotho folklore, myths, etc. can benefit students' understanding of the requisite English therein.

(k) Sesotho TK for conceptualisation of the English of knowledge assessment

Participants were asked for personal experiences in which their Sesotho TK benefited their critical thinking-related academic English. Most recurrent in the experiential accounts were those on tasks assigned to assess knowledge in different academic subjects.

Monie

You drew my attention to equivalents of these in Sesotho

If by key English terms for assignment and exam questions you are referring to words such as "discuss, what is your opinion of...? Comment, evaluate, describe, explain". I want to say that you in your English education courses drew my attention to equivalents of these terms in Sesotho.... It is just that in Sesotho these would be covered in something like "*hlalosa ka*

botlalo maikutlo a hao" (Explain/discuss fully your opinion)... I used to first reflect on each term from a Sesotho perspective and **it worked for me**. Regarding terms for coherence and cohesion – You used to call these discourse markers or patterns. These too are there in Sesotho. For example "*Le ha ho le joalo* (Be that as it may), "*Ka mabaka ana/lebaka lena*" (For these reasons/this reason) "*Ka hoo/hona*" (Therefore), "*Ka mokhoa o tsoanang*" (In a similar manner), etc. I successfully utilised my Sesotho knowledge in this regard. I remember how after every assignment task you would come to class and clarify with us each task-focusing term.... and you explained each term in Sesotho without insisting that we think in English yet you taught English Hmm! Laughs. This helped us realise that the terms you used to formulate our tasks had equivalents in Sesotho and facilitated our understanding of these in English... In nearly all other courses that I took **at the NUL this practice was rare** – in fact non-existent. So I don't have any positive experience to share with you other than in your courses. **Probably I should say that I was able to transfer your approach into my interaction with tasks in other courses**. But I doubt that many of my colleagues realised the need to make this a cross-curricular trick".

Monie's narrative brings to surface what I term the role of auto-ethnography in transformative retrospection. For instance, by reminding me of how I used to utilise Sesotho TK for clarification of knowledge assessment English terms to my students Monie's narrative drove me to reflect back on my practice when Monie was my student in English education and realise the culture-sensitiveness of my own approach in retrospect. When I taught Monie over ten years ago my utilisation of Sesotho TK for clarification of the English for development of written text was not informed by conscious knowledge and understanding of theories such as the Africanisation and *Ubuntu* which I am aware of now. What I know is that my professional practice has, since its inception, been characteristically based on a personal philosophy of *tichere ke Mmamasianoke o khokolotsa sohle molemong oa hore katleho e fihleloe* (a teacher is a bird called a hammerhead). This means he/she adopts eclecticism-drawing the best from every possible source in the name of academic achievement - especially in educational situations where English as a medium of instruction is a non-mother tongue medium for most students. This stance on my part is appraised by challenging personal encounters which I have had learning through English at all levels of Lesotho's English-medium education system.

Embedded in Monie's experiential account seems to be an assumption that Sesotho OTK has no place in development of the English of academic courses, particularly English education. Mark this in Monie's "...and you explained each term in Sesotho without insisting that we think in English yet you taught English Hmm! Laughs. This helped us realise that the terms you used to formulate our tasks had equivalents in Sesotho and facilitated our understanding of these in English..."

Emerging from Monie's narrative also is not only the cross-cultural nature of the meanings of knowledge assessment terms, but also experience with the positive effect of utilisation of Sesotho TK on better understanding and use of academic English. Evidence of this is in Monie's "...You used to call these discourse markers or patterns. These too are there in Sesotho. For example "Le ha ho le joalo (Be that as it may), Ka mabaka ana/lebaka lena" (For these reasons/this reason) Ka hoo/hona (Therefore), "Ka mokhoa o tsoanang" (In a similar manner), etc. I successfully utilised my Sesotho knowledge in this regard. I remember how after every assignment task you would come to class and clarify with us each task-focusing term....and you explained each term in Sesotho"

Richie

I was touched...I saw them embrace the Aha! Moment

"I was touched this morning when I saw them embrace their Aha! moment. I had been complaining about their poor academic writing in their assignments. I wanted them to realise the importance of coherence and cohesion in a text. I then thought of the human body for a teaching strategy. I then asked them to tell me parts of a human body structure. Of course without any problems they told me *hlooho*, (Head) molala (neck) all the way down to *maoto* (feet/legs). Then I likened the coordination of a human body structure to that of a well developed academic written text with an introduction, body with topic sentences and linking devices, as well as the conclusion. *Ha re etlo!* (It suddenly became clear!) They were more than delighted at the discovery of the relationship. My hope is that this will enable them to develop better written texts".

The Aha! Moment-effect of Sesotho TK for clarification of academic English can also appeal to emotions of practitioners facilitating such use. Evidence of this lies in Richie's *"I was touched this morning when I saw them embrace their Aha! moment... Ha re etlo!"*

The role of knowledge of Sesotho discourse markers in facilitating functional knowledge of those for organisation of written text in English was another disclosure of Richie's narrative. Yet another revelation was use of metaphor of human body for enhancement of understanding of the English for maintenance of cohesion and coherence devices in organisation of texts written in English. The finding gives an academic-subject specific perspective which therefore concretises the literature pointing to metaphor as a powerful strategy in explanation of personal truth as experienced by the story teller (Muncey2005:9) (*vide 5.4.1.2*).

Relebo

The easy way is to compare meanings in Sesotho and English

"Yes it helped because sometimes you'd have seen these terms but do not understand what they need. You are given explanation but at the end you tell yourself that the only way I can get this is if I remember that when it is said "explain" or "discuss" the other just say "discuss" whereas the other says "discuss with examples". That is where Sesotho counts a lot. The easy way is to be able to differentiate e.g. "synthesise" "analyse" you find that you think in Sesotho before you attempt. The Sesotho word Hlalosa (Explain) embraces all the details in English and so have helped me understand the terms faster in English. It is only sad that lecturers never drew our attention to this. I guess as I said it is the colonial mentality that Sesotho cultural knowledge has no important contribution to make in western education".

At least three revelations surfaced in Relebo's narrative. The text indicates for instance that some Sesotho knowledge assessment terms are embracive and so inclusive of the meanings of some of those in English. About this, Relebo said "...*The Sesotho word Hlalosa (Explain) embraces all the details in English and so have helped me understand the terms faster in English...*" The text points also to the Eurocentric mentality characterising pedagogic practice at the NUL. Such practice is associated with exclusion of ethno-culture-sensitive strategies for promotion of English proficiency in the English jargon for knowledge assessment, at least during Monie's time of studying at the NUL. Embodying this is Monie's "...*It is only sad that lecturers never drew our attention to this. I guess as I said it is the colonial mentality that Sesotho cultural knowledge has no important contribution to make in western education*".

Bonie

They conflicted with how I was raised

"You know where these terms used to give me problems? This was how they conflicted with how I was raised as Mosotho child. My Sesotho culture stresses the need for respect - especially to senior people to us. So when an assessment question said 'Discuss', to me it called for need to articulate the flaws of something. For me such a knowledge assessment verb forced me to be disobedient. *Ka Sesotho ha u phenyaphenye motho ka ho pepesa mefokolo ea hae* (In Sesotho you do not seek and expose the weaknesses of another person). So I used to struggle with tasks of this nature.. Even terms such as 'Describe' because for some reason given how I was raised, describing something is to expose it *ho e kenyetsa mahlo a batho* (Making it attract/invite people's critical eyes to it). We in Sesotho are not supposed to stare or else we get scolded for *ho ahlamela motho* (Gapping at someone), *ho rata litaba* (Being too inquisitive/curious). I therefore struggled answering questions of this nature. It was too much of a wall to wrestle with this culture conflict. Such questions violated my cultural value of respect for other people's privacy...No because I feared that I would be snubbed by my lecturers if I told them it was violating my cultural upbringing".

Conflicting cultural values and expectations as depicted in the foregoing are not only a contradiction of personal values of learning, but also a barrier to mastery of the English of knowledge assessment jargon. This is evidenced in "...I therefore struggled answering questions of this nature. It was too much of a wall to wrestle with this culture conflict... Such questions violated my cultural value of respect for other people's privacy..." The text points also to how unawareness of differences in cultural values and related expectations constrain not only freedom and confidence to use the English of the jargon of knowledge assessment, but also academic performance of university students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

My Sesotho culture stresses the need to respect

"...My Sesotho culture stresses the need to respect - especially to senior people to us. So when an assessment question said 'Discuss', to me it called for need to articulate the flaws of something. For me such a knowledge assessment verb forced me to be disobedient.... Even terms such as 'Describe' because for some reason given how I was raised, describing something is to expose *it ho e kenyeletsa mahlo a batho* (Making it attract/invite people's critical eyes to it). We in Sesotho are not supposed to stare or else we get scolded for *ho ahlamela motho* (Gapping at someone), *ho rata litaba* (Being too inquisitive/curious). I therefore struggled answering questions of this nature. It was too much of a wall to wrestle with this cultural conflict"

More specifically, this narrative points to how differences in cultural value of respect can be a barrier to mastery of the English jargon of knowledge assessment. It is acceptable *botho/ubuntu* in the Western culture to frankly critique, describe, and maintain direct eye contact in the interest of openness and honesty in making a point about who/whatever is the subject being discussed. On the contrary such behaviours may not be acceptable *botho/ubuntu* from a Sesotho cultural perspective.

Mmusi

I normally ask them to explain in Sesotho to see the difference

"There is no emphasis on students at all, so it is very difficult for them to understand. You will first have to explain to them what you mean by "Explain" so that they can be able to write their exams. So normally I ask them before they come to **exams** to know exactly what is required of them. For instance our students have a tendency of writing a conclusion when they write a summary. So I normally ask them to explain them in Sesotho so as to see the differences so they will be in a position to say a summary *ke kakaretsa*, while a conclusion is *qetd*".

Mmusi's narrative, like those others storying their experiences, revealed personal experiences with the English of knowledge assessment. According to this participant, teaching at the NUL was indifferent to students' acquisition proficiency in the English of knowledge assessment. As did those storied experiential narratives by Bonie and Relebo, Mmusi's account points to experience with NUL's indifference to the role of Sesotho in knowledge assessment-based English proficiency of SSBSs. Mmusi's adoption of an ethno-culture-sensitive teaching approach to improvement of knowledge-assessment-based English adds value to an assumption about how previous unpleasant experience with marginalisation of Sesotho TK impacts positively on improvement of one's professional practice later in life. The finding is a recurrence, and so adds value to similar ones resulting from interpretation of narratives by Bonie, Newi and Tsums earlier in this report.

Agie

My knowledge of these critical thinking-related terms in Sesotho

"...I remember one question which asked if interpretation was the same thing as evaluating. So I would think hard and for some reason...it used to be psychologically

challenging, coupled with the medium of learning which is English. So I would say "evaluate" is similar to "describe". For example if someone says "I have seen a fat, light-in-complexion woman, I would start from that description and spend a lot of time struggling to understand the question before attempting to answer. So much of the time was consumed there and little time for writing. For me it was in situations such as this that I would be a Mosotho and say "to describe her, I am actually evaluating her appearance" In my knowledge of these critical thinking terms from a Sesotho perspective, their meanings overlap. I then effectively applied this understanding from Sesotho to understand the questions as asked in my other subjects in English".

Hard thinking results in decision to use Sesotho TK for acquisition of academic English proficiency. Such deep thought benefited Agie's proficiency in academic English as per this excerpt from her narrative. *"I would be a Mosotho and say... In my knowledge of these critical thinking terms from a Sesotho perspective, their meanings overlap. I then effectively applied this understanding from Sesotho to understand the questions as asked in my other subjects in English."* This finding is consistent with that in Newi's reflective narrative on Sesotho TK in the English for learning Physics. The finding underscores the value, power and necessary of application of Sesotho TK in solving learning problems caused by academic English as an academic barrier and challenge to SSBSs in English-medium universities such as the NUL.

Lifelile –the insider-implicated researcher

I draw from real-life examples of oral presentations in Sesotho

"About this one I will combine experience as a student at the NUL with that of myself as an English education lecturer. As a student I learned knowledge assessment terms the hard way. There was no formal teaching of the terms "evaluate, comment, what's our opinion about, assess the personality of, do a critique of... etc". in any of my courses. Yet interestingly feedback from lectures included comments like "You have not been clear on what your position is," "expound", "There is no coherence in your text", "your paragraphs are too loaded with ideas that could make more paragraphs..." I guess lecturers assumed that we enrolled into university with this knowledge from high school, and they were

wrong and too assuming...As a lecturer, I often recall how frustrated I used to be fearing to consult lecturers for clarification. I try hard not to subject my students to the same situation. I therefore spend time ensuring they understand not only what the knowledge assessment terms mean, but also how to critique written texts bearing in mind how language has been used for different purposes in such texts. I draw a lot from actual real life examples of oral text presentation in Sesotho e.g speech delivery as in political rallies, news broadcasts, etc. It does the trick for me. I have found that a compilation of task-focusing terms from previous exam papers and engaging students in a discussion of these – even if in Sesotho helps my students a lot. I guess that's why I ended up with a publication on "critical thinking lexical competencies in higher education programmes..."

What is the essence of this account? My experiential narrative, like those of Richie, Monie, Agie and Mmusi reveals NUL's marginalisation of Sesotho TK as a need for understanding of knowledge assessment jargon. Also disclosed by the text is a finding pointing to assumed pre-enrolment proficiency in academic English. This finding is revealed in comments such as the following from lecturers who according to the narrator wrongly assumed that SSBSs enrolled into the NUL with requisite proficiency in academic English.

- ✚ *"You have not been clear on what your position is...expound"*
- ✚ *"There is no coherence in your text".*
- ✚ *"Your paragraphs are too loaded with ideas that could make more paragraphs."*

Current scholarship on EAP (English for academic purposes) points to a positive relationship between proficiency in academic English and academic achievement. This inquiry through experiential accounts such as mine reveals implicitly that academic English for academic achievement must be understood as dependent on among other abilities, ethno-culture-informed mastery of the English terminology for knowledge assessment.

My account above recaptures also the already reported finding which points to how experience with exclusion of Sesotho TK can inform improvement of personal professional practice regarding academic English proficiency. Embedded in this, is the

finding on how experience with such marginalisation sparks in the practitioner the *botho/ubuntu* value of empathy urging him/her to relate to the learners' situation of wrestle with understanding of the English of knowledge assessment. The experiential perception above suggests also that application of knowledge from real life experiences with use of language for demonstration of knowledge in actual Sesotho contexts enhances an understanding of the English of knowledge assessment jargon in academia. This disclosure is in my expression - "... *I draw a lot from actual real life examples of oral text presentation in Sesotho, e.g. speech delivery as in political rallies, news broadcasts, etc. It does the trick for me...*"

How do the findings from the foregoing experiential accounts relate to documented wisdom? The findings add specificity and practicality to the Africanisation, *botho/ubuntu*, the living theories as explained under the different narratives analysed earlier. I must however highlight how the findings also enhance the knowledge component of the cognitive dimension of Scarcella's (2003) frame of reference for academic English (*vide* 4.4.3).

According to Scarcella (2003:22) (*vide* 4.4.3) the Schema theory explains how the students' background knowledge and personal experiences of the world as captured mentally in their schemata can positively contribute to their reading and writing ability. The theory depicts comprehension as a process involving interaction of learners' background knowledge and the text. The theory states that "Students cannot comprehend anything for which they do not have some existing knowledge structure or schema" because comprehension includes integration of new knowledge into existing schemata and accommodation of existing schemata to such new knowledge.

While I associate with Scarcella's position, my problem with it however, is that the author seems to understand learners' existing schemata or background knowledge only from a print-oriented perspective. I note in this regard, Scarcella's "students who have acquired academic literacy have extensive knowledge of the world that is primarily built

upon their previous reading" (Scarcella 2003:23). Such a perspective in my view, overlooks at least one ground on which TKs must be mainstreamed into teaching and learning in HE. One such rationale is an argument that all forms of knowledge are primarily oral until introduction of print (Conolly *et al.* 2009; Sienaert 1990). The interest of the study was on how this orally acquired ethno-knowledge can benefit the secondary print-oriented academic knowledge which is not only Westncentric, but also still dependent on proficiency in academic English in English-medium universities.

Knowledge acquisition in academia depends on the learners' ability to think critically. Critical thinking involves linguistic ability to demonstrate higher order thinking in interacting with among others, what I elsewhere call knowledge assessment task-focusing verbs or critical thinking lexical competences (Matsoso 2007:156). Scarcella (2003:23) in the cognitive dimension of his conceptual framework for academic English highlights this interrelationship between thought development and linguistic ability in the words

"...higher order thinking plays an even more important role in academic English... [it] is involved in interpreting, evaluating, and synthesising... [in reading and writing academically literate students] must be able to relate their readings to the realities of specific disciplines – whether political, social, or scientific. Strong proficiency in academic English, coupled with higher order thinking, enables learners to read academic texts critically..."

For this understanding Scarcella adopts Spark's (1984) assertion that "Without strong proficiency in academic English, their ability to interpret and analyse their reading is compromised."

In my view the implication of Scarcella's perspective is that efficiency and effectiveness of construction and demonstration of knowledge depend on the extent to which the learner has requisite critical literacy/proficiency in the language of learning. According to Scarcella (2003:25) the learner should demonstrate metalinguistic awareness or ability to think about and appropriately use language for a variety of purposes which

include persuading, connecting paragraphs and sentences, analysing, evaluating, etc. (*vide* 4.4.3). Matsoso (2007:159) in her proposed framework for understanding critical thinking terms for knowledge assessment and construction augments Scarcella's position in the framework for matching cognitive critical thinking skills with verbs which those whose knowledge is being assessed should demonstrate linguistic and communicative competence in for demonstration of subject-based knowledge. The two authors however, barely address the role of students' ethno-cultural knowledge in students' mastery of critical thinking-oriented English. This narrative inquiry not only de-abstracts the assertions made by Scarcella (2003) and Matsoso (2007) in their frameworks by contextualising them in specific academic experiences, but also signifies Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in these contexts.

6.4.3 The *Aha/O-o-o-o!* moment effect Sesotho TK in academic-context-specific English proficiency

Of the many findings derived from interrogation of narratives (*vide* 6.4.2), the *Aha* moment-effect of application of knowledge from different aspects of Sesotho TK for understanding of the English of studying in different academic contexts emerged as overarching. In this study I adopt from Sesotho to call this the *Oooo!* or the "*Khele! Hoa re etlo!!* (Wow! How very enlightening!) impact of effective application of Sesotho TK in academic-context-based English. Given that analyses of narratives for each academic context were followed by elaborative summative perspectives, below is a summative reiteration of only the main deductions as concluding remarks about the Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs students of English-medium universities such as the NUL.

- ✚ It both an academic subject/course-specific, and a cross-curricular academic English proficiency need.
- ✚ As foundational knowledge, it empowers students with confidence and assertiveness to self advocate for clarification leading to knowledge of the English

for gaining access to, and creating knowledge in general and specific academic contexts.

- ✚ It is not a haphazard, but an engaging problem-solving strategy requiring critical thinking ability for decision on aspects of it deemed utilisable for enhancement of proficiency in English as a medium of learning.
- ✚ Its cross-curricular applicability lies in its non-static nature.
- ✚ Its tangible, intangible, non-verbal, gestural and other abstract forms facilitate understanding of academic-context-specific English if appropriately and strategically used.
- ✚ The value of *botho/ubuntu* and its aspects is an aspect of Sesotho TK which has an enhancing effect of acquisition of academic context-specific English.

In the next section experiential narratives on the role of Sesotho values in academic English proficiency of SSBSs are analysed.

6.4.4 How application of Sesotho values enhances academic English proficiency

6.4.4.1 Rationale for inclusion of the issue of values in the inquiry

The reader might be curious to know why the issue of values was important in an inquiry on how Sesotho TK is/can be a need in acquisition of academic English proficiency Postulations advanced by Whitehead & McNiff (2006:86) (*vide 5.2.2.4*) under the ontological values aspect of the living theory point to ontological values as an indispensable aspect in seeking to understand educational practice and improved personal professional practice therein. According to these authors, ontological values are about not only people's recognition of themselves as "belonging to an inclusive universe". These values also "involve commitment to embodied knowledge".

If I interpret the authors correctly, values-of-being are not only part of innate knowledge, but in this capacity, also impact on the thinking and behaviour involved in construction of subsequent forms of knowledge. It is my contention that such values are, in their primary form, more ethno-culture-driven than purely personal if we consider that human beings are born into and nurtured by ethno-cultural communities. It stands to reason therefore that ontological values, by virtue of belying people's knowledge, are transferrable to new learning situations. As such values inform how people develop and live their personal educational theories. I adopted this reasoning to launch my inquiry with the question on Sesotho values. This was with intention to determine participants' awareness of how fulfilment and/or violation of such values can impact on acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs in English-medium universities such as the NUL.

Furthermore, documented scholarship on transformative professional development suggests that envisaged improvement of personal professional practice needs to be premised first on the ontological or values of being of the particular education-practitioner (Whitehead & McNiff 2006:86-87) (*vide* 5.2.2.4). This inquiry is aimed at improvement of personal professional practice of myself the insider-implicated researcher and that of other practitioners working in more or less similar educational situations as mine. Awareness of the implications of Sesotho values for transformed professional practice in which students' ethno-knowledge is explored and utilised for its positive contribution to academic English proficiency, thus, became another important focus of the inquiry. While I left the narratives to take their course without my interjections, upon discovering re-emergence of reference to values in most of them (narratives), I decided to directly probe some participants for Sesotho values nurtured in them and how in their experience-informed perceptions, such values could be said to be having a role in acquisition of academic English proficiency. Findings to this end are presented and interpreted in the next sub-section by experiential narrative of participant.

6.4.4.2 Sesotho values nurtured in childhood

Narratives by eight of the thirteen participants in this study were winnowed (*vide 5.7.2.1*) into the study because they were storied accounts of lived experience with how living certain Sesotho values improved their being as humans, their practice of learning as former students of the NUL and their personal professional practice.

Abie

Abie was raised by her grandparents. Her grandfather was a priest. She says the Christian ethos was therefore basic in her life from childhood. Generosity and a sense of sharing were also paramount in Abie's upbringing. So were the values of hard work and responsibility about which her grandmother used to crudely warn "*My child, laziness can make you feed on shit I tell you*" (translated from the Sesotho version – "*Ngoana' ka, botsoa bo ka u jesa masepa*).

Bonie

Bonie immediately singles responsibility out and narrates her personal experience with it in the policies and norms of her household. She interprets it as an indication of the values of hard work, responsibility, and commitment to raising money for the economic stability of the family that her father left home to work in South Africa; while her mother in turn took over the responsibility of running the home and supplementing her father's income by self-employing as a dressmaker. Bonie herself as the first daughter assumed the responsibility of tending her younger siblings. Her two elder brothers tended the livestock and crop production issues. Bonie says she lived the value of responsibility as a collective commitment between herself, her parents and brothers. She appreciates the experience for its contribution to her maturity which she attributes to her astuteness as a parent and an unconditionally loving sister. She captures all this in the following account.

I have been raised to be responsible

"...I realize also that having been raised to be responsible so early in my life has helped me bond with my siblings...I feel protective over my siblings even now. They feel and act similarly in my case...I appreciate this more now when I am a **mother** myself... the need for me to **act responsibly** all the time...it would be against this value if I did not ensure that my children have shelter and the best education I could afford...I attribute of this value my current ability to shoulder my responsibility without feeling it too heavy a load to carry. I live it automatically...Living this value enabled me to grow up into a person who can **trust** her own thinking in many aspects of life..."

What values emerge from the summary of Bonie's text? The senses of responsibility, accountability, commitment to family obligations and love surface from this account. Bonie's account brings to light at least four perspectives about how the values can be lived. Values can be habitual, developmental, transferable, and therefore sustainable as embraced in Bonie's- "*even now... I appreciate this more now when I am a mother myself...I live it automatically.*" Also in an institution such as a family the status of some members renders them more vulnerable and therefore needier than others are. In the case of Bonie's family this virtue put the children in such a situation. Of interest to the inquiry, was what the habit-forming, developmental and transferability nature of ethno-values could imply for teaching and learning practice aimed at acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs studying in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL.

Furthermore, some of the values such as those experienced by Bonie can intertwine to sum up into the value of responsibility. Responsibility as a value can be exercised collectively by those who have a common course in life. As a cultural necessity, those who share a common course in life can engage extensively with each other on a daily basis. For instance, Bonie's family members as a cultural collective with a common

interest and goal – namely maintenance of a socio-economical stability, engaged extensively with each other in pursuance of their common goal.

A third insight from Bonie's experiential perception of childhood values is in the form of what I called "the participant's blind/unconscious, but appropriate application of knowledge of existing theory". I call it blind application because in their practice of life Bonie's family were not conscious of the assumptions and principles of Whitehead's (1999) living theory yet they lived their life around set values which were not to be violated, or else the socio-economic stability of the family would be violated. This is why in one of the texts of her experiential narratives Bonie says "*...It would be against this value [protectiveness] if I did not ensure that my children have a shelter and the best education I could afford...*"

The living theory (Whitehead 2000) (*vide 5.2.2.4*) is one of the theoretical underpinnings of my inquiry. One of its stipulations points to displeasures felt by practitioners when their values are contravened. When Bonie made a statement which to me suggested her knowledge of the ontological aspect of the living theory, I asked her if she was aware of such scholarship, and much to my surprise she was not. What did this discovery suggest about fulfilment of lived values? Could Bonie's experience be indicative of the inherent nature of people's desire for effectuation of their personal values? Translated to English-medium HE educational practice the question for the inquiry was the extent to which personal and ethno-culturally lived values of SSBSs can be effectuated in acquisition of linguistic and communicative competencies in academic English.

Monie

Values of Christianity, discipline, bravery, responsibility, formal education, achievement in life, working hard, as well as sympathy adorned Monie's life from childhood. Monie's

hard-working mother who acquired her higher education qualifications in high accolades never wanted to be associated with failure. His father was a highly disciplined man. According to Monie, both of his parents instilled these values in him and his siblings. In the extracted text below, Monie prides himself for having lived these values which like Bonie, he associates with his completeness as a parent and person.

"...Both of them [his parents] stressed these values to us... I am happy to have had [these] nurtured in me this way because in my view, they have made me a complete spouse, parent and person."

Monie's values like those of Bonie were parent-induced. That Monie like, credits his success as a person, parent and spouse to the values he lived as a child, suggests potential transferability of childhood values to unanticipated new situations in later practice of life. Whether the same can apply to teaching for acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs of English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL was the interest of this inquiry.

Relebo

Independence, responsibility, and non-procrastination emerged as key among the values nurtured in Relebo from childhood. She attributes her acquisition of these values to her mother who though over-protective in all respects, *"...made an independent and responsible woman out of me... She was trying to instil a sense of responsibility in me..."*, she says.

Tlhorie

Tlhorie's childhood was bedecked with the values of generosity, hard work, compassion, respect of the elderly, sharing, and living harmoniously with other children. Tlhorie ascribes her positive exposure to these values to her home and Catholic school environment in which she grew up. She ascribes her responsible self, hard work, generosity and sense of sharing to the nuns who taught in the Catholic schools. About

this experience she says *"...in the Catholic schools we were staying with the nuns. These are people who are very much into giving but they'll on the other hand make you work very hard..."*

As it did in the narratives of the preceding participants, the value of hard work as an aspect of responsibility resurfaces in Tlhorie's narrative. Another narrative in which the value of responsibility resurfaces as one of the many is that by Mamane.

Mamane

In her account of values cultivated in her childhood, Mamane depicts responsibility, accountability, and respect as key among those she has lived. The following extract reveals how she acquired these values.

At some stage I had to live with my father in Maseru

"I am the youngest of my siblings, and generally pampered by everyone in the family. At some stage in my life I had to leave home to live with my father in Maseru. My father was too protective. It was at this time that I stopped living most of the values which Mom had nurtured in me. One of these was the value of responsibility and related accountability...Mom took major steps to curb this behaviour... This way she resuscitated my personality – dwelling on how I should address and relate to people – sense of respect. I realised how important it was for me to adopt the same procedure to raise my own children responsibly...and I am proud to say I turned out the most responsible and accountable of her children".

Like Bonie's, Mamane's account points to an intertwined relationship between accountability and responsibility. As in the case of Bonie's, Monie's, and Relebo's experiences, Mamane's story spotlights the parent-induced nature of Sesotho values. Also emerging from an excerpt of Mamane's narrative is the possibility of a positive relationship between meaningful life in and with cultural values. Completeness of the personality, maturity in parenting skills and general commitment of those in whom the

values have cultivated are another feature of Mamane's narrative. Transferability of values to later life of the acquirer is not only another revelation from Mamane's excerpt, but also a recurrence from experiences accounted by Monie and Bonie.

However, while reinforcing those in the experiences of other participants, some of the findings from Mamane's excerpt render her experiences somewhat unique. It seems from Mamane's experience that the value of parental protectiveness needs to be nurtured cautiously if it has to be lived acceptably and for improved personality and acceptable socio-cultural behaviour. Relebo's mother was protective of her as the youngest child for safety reasons, and ensured that she grew up to be a responsible and independent woman. Contrarily, Mamane's father was so protective of her that it was at the expense of instilling the sense of responsibility and accountability in his youngest child. Were it not for her mother's unrelenting effort, Mamane would not have been a proud adult who has turned out to be the most responsible and accountable of her siblings yet she is the youngest. The positive effect of the intervention by Mamane's mother on the personality of her daughter brings to surface yet another insight. This insight is in the form of the problem-solving and practice improvement effect of ethno-cultural values. Mamane's text illustrates this in "*...This way she resuscitated my personality – dwelling on how I should address and relate to people – sense of respect. I realised how important it was for me to adopt the same procedure to raise my own children responsibly...and I am proud to say I turned out the most responsible and accountable of her children*".

In sum, transferability and sustainability of nurtured values to improved practice of life in adulthood seem to be the common lesson communicated by the experiences of Bonie, Monie and Mamane.

Richie

The value of responsibility was nurtured in Richie from childhood. The participant lived it as captured in the following excerpt:

I have done a good job living responsibility

"My mother often asked me this question "What kind of a man are you going to be?" whenever she thought she saw indicators of irresponsibility in how I did things in general. I think I have done a good job living responsibility from this perspective of being a man. Of course in the process I realise how I have failed to make my own children men. They are so dependent on me I realise I am being exploited you know! At times I think people have no idea how hard it is to earn income".

Richie like Bonie, Monie, and Relebo perceives acquired values as parent-induced. He associates his genderised perception of the value of responsibility with his mother who often asked him to reflect on what type of man he aspired to be when he grew up. According to Richie's mother living the value of responsibility is demonstration of manhood. The excerpt reveals also how the value of responsibility if not lived to the limits, can be susceptible to abuse by those with whom one extensively relates and feels culturally obliged to extent the value to. Substantiation of the finding is in Richie's honest critical reflection on how he has overprovided his responsibility as the first male child spouse, and father in his family. In the process Richie notes that he has denied his male children to assume the same sense of responsibility over their own families as spouses and parents. This way Richie feels he has contradicted the very same value which he was trying to live in fulfilment of his mother's wish for him to demonstrate manhood.

Lifelile

I too can talk to socio-cultural values cultivated in me from childhood.

I grew up as a child of a rural village community

"Biologically, I am the first of the three daughters born unto and nurtured by Ntate Molefi and 'M'e 'Malifelile Ntobane. I grew up **as a child of the village community** at Ha Ts•

o

parent, and was in this capacity, culturally entrusted with and expected to live the **responsibility** of emitting **discipline** to us as children of the community where, whenever, and anyhow they deemed appropriate and culturally acceptable. In this community, an inexhaustible list of Sesotho values was a fundamental part and parcel of our lives, and as such, nurtured into an intertwined lived experience. Celebrating together as a unity was one of the ethno-values of my community.

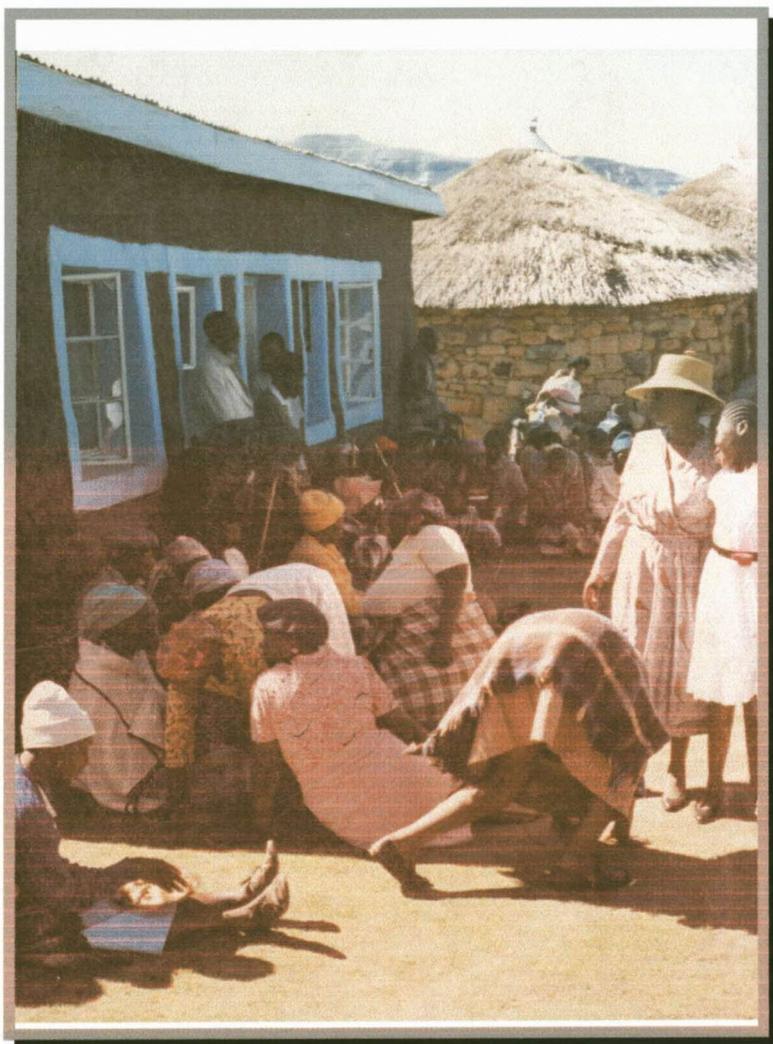


Fig. 6. 1: A picture of a celebration at my rural home-village

The foundation ground for acquisition of these values was the family. I for instance, ascribe my acquisition of the values of particularly my parents. From the day of the death of my father's elder brother's wife (She died two years after her husband's death), I had to assume the responsibility of playing a role model to my two younger sisters in accepting and adopting our orphaned cousins into our initially nucleus family of five. This turning point in my life came in my parents' pleading words "... *Rakhali!* (Aunt - I am named after my father's favourite aunt) from today onwards consider yourself no longer our first born child but a twin-sister..." This means that I very early in my life had to

adjust to not only being a twin-sister but also to accepting relegation of my first-born status to that of a second of the now six siblings. This was the hardest way for an eleven year old that I was to have to overnight live sympathy, empathy, hospitality, protectiveness, and generosity to say the least. Details of how I lived these values would form another thesis. These values I have lived in all the major aspects of my life. Characteristically, the discomfort and problems of other people make me restless. As a parent I perceive my own parents as role models to ensure prompt and best possible provision for my children's needs and those of others in more vulnerable emotional and other trying situations. I for instance, adopted a niece of mine subsequent to the death of her mother when she was at a vulnerable age of 10. Some of my relatives, particularly those I engage extensively with on a daily basis, call me "mother chicken" who responds instinctively to their problems. This makes me wonder if I am not overprotective – and so not helping them become responsible. Sometimes I pity myself and blame this overprotectiveness on having had to emotionally and materially think, and assume the responsibilities of an adult too early in my life. Here I am now writing this narrative and am feeling highly emotional. Refiloehape my youngest child is asking me why I am. I am telling him exactly that. He massages my shoulders and assuredly tells me as follows.

Mom...they go on about how motherly you are as a lecturer

"Ao! Sorry Mama... But look where you are Mom. Probably you wouldn't be ...our type of mother. Look at it positively and stop crying man...Whenever you have introduced me to some of your students, they go on and on about how motherly you are as a lecturer. Also remember most of my teachers at the College are your former students, and I always tell you how they see you as motherly and expect my English to be as good as yours..." that of their teacher-you..."

This was reassuring, and made me appreciate more the SMS message I received recently from one of my former students after her presentation of a paper at the Kappa Conference she recently attended in Uganda. The message read "...I am in Uganda and have just presented a paper. It has just crossed my mind that if it were not for your personal and professional attitude and support, I would not be where I am now. I owe it all to you. Thank you so much my dearest sister". This SMS and Refiloehape's reassuring statement set me thinking. What is it about my practice of English education that makes me professionally motherly"?

To objectively interpret my experiential account I had to step out of my voice as narrator and participant to assume the role of a "practitioner researcher who is a member of the landscape" from which knowledge has to be constructed (Clandinin & Connelly 2004:63, cited in Trahar 2009:3) (*vide 5.4.1.2*).

What did this excerpt reveal about my perception of values nurtured in me from childhood?

Revelations from the excerpt first had to do with values actually cultivated in me from the cradle. As in the experiences of my fellow participants, my account discloses the parent-induced character of values. It also reveals how the values of responsibility and acceptance of status of being a community child can be lived. A further revelation from my account is how the values of humility, hospitality, emotional generosity and sense of protectiveness can intertwine to concretise the values of sympathy and empathy for emission to vulnerable members of the socio-cultural communities people live in. This revelation is in how the death of my father's elder brother and his wife turned the life of my biological family around in terms of how we all had to adopt a more accommodating perception of ourselves.

Furthermore, my experiential story brings to surface an understanding of the implications of vulnerability as a social status. Specifically, it shows how vulnerability impels execution of different aspects of the value of *botho* (humaneness) for the benefit of those deemed susceptible. For instance, my first cousins and my adopted niece were by virtue of being orphaned at a young age vulnerable and therefore worthy of receipt of the value of *botho* for their lives to be as normal as those of other members of the society in which they lived.

The possibility of transferability of childhood values to parenting and professional life of one seems to be an additional disclosure of my text. Illustrating this is my parental decision to adopt my orphaned niece, as well as how my youngest child interprets me as their "type of mother" and prides himself for how his teachers who are my former students perceive me as "motherly". The values I acquired from the Sesotho cradle and hearth (my typical family) have therefore impacted positively on not only my parenting, but also my professional life as an education practitioner.

My experiential narrative reveals also findings that have theoretical and methodological significance. For instance, the assertions about the corporeal-manual and laryngo-buccal as aspects of the oral-style theory (Jousse 2000) (*vide* 2.4) gain actuality in the confidence-building and reassuring effect of the body-language contact and comforting verbal utterances extended to me by Refiloehape (my son) when I pitied myself for having had to assume adulthood too early in my life. The physical and verbal manner in which Refiloehape expressed his understanding of, and pride in me for my all-embracing type of motherliness as perceived by my biological and professionally adopted children made me realise and appreciate the positive effect such an experience has had on my dependability and credibility as not only a parent, but also the type of education-practitioner in English education.

On the research methodology front, one of the findings from my experiential account concretises at least two notions about narrative inquiry and/in auto-ethnography in intercultural research in HE. One is the notion of "unanticipated narrative" (Cortazzi & Jin 2006, cited in Trahar 2009:9) (*vide* 5.4.1.2). For instance, at the time of my writing of this auto-ethnography Refiloehape was not at university yet, and so could not have qualified to participate in the inquiry on academic English proficiency needs of students in HE. On this account I call him an "un-anticipated" participant who coincidentally, but unwarily contributed an unenvisioned enhancive narrative to my account as the insider-implicated researcher in this inquiry. I therefore, concluded from this un-contemplated participant's narrative of his personal and others' perception of me as his biological mother and education-practitioner in English education, that values which we live in our professional and other practices can help those with whom we engage extensively construct their own perspectives about us. Thus, from my son's *botho* which was expressed emotionally through a massage and reassuring words, my writing this auto-ethnography brought to surface my deeper understanding of myself as an English-education practitioner. The second notion is that of writing as an inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005) (*vide* 5.4.1.2). Refiloehape's short intervention and its effect on how I immediately changed from pitying myself to appreciation of myself as a mother and

professional who is held with high esteem came during the actual writing of my reflections on values nurtured in me from childhood. If this is what Richardson and St Pierre refer to by writing as inquiry in critical auto-ethnography, then this inquiry contributes specificity to auto-ethnography as a method for understanding among others, the role of lived values in people's perceptions of themselves and their behaviours.

Refiloehape's unanticipated intervention in turn provoked several unanticipated but pertinent questions to the nature of the study. If for instance, I am professionally what my children and my former students perceive me as, do I among other professional qualities of an education-practitioner in an English-medium African university have what it takes to pedagogically address academic English proficiency challenges facing students from among others, the Sesotho-speaking-background? More directly how far must I go in my practice of living the Sesotho value of *botho/humaneness* for acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs of the NUL so that I can deserve my son's interpretation of others' perception of me as a humane and motherly professional?

6.4.5. *Botho/ ubuntu* as a summative perspective

The value of *botho/ubuntu*, with its sub-values seems to be the essence of storied and unstoried values nurtured in all participants. The essence of *botho* is that human beings need to live with each other harmoniously. The narrative accounts point to *botho* as also parent-induced, developmental and transferable to new stages such as adulthood and professional practice. *Botho* as the perceptual accounts indicate, is about a people's being. It is therefore ontological as Whitehead and McNiff (2006) (*vide 5.2.2.4*) would probably assert. Based on findings from each experiential account of nurtured values, it seems that the value of *botho/ubuntu* is a totality of sub-values which include the following as depicted from each one of the narrative accounts in 6.5.2 above.

- ⚡ Responsibility
- ⚡ Discipline
- ⚡ Generosity
- ⚡ Respect
- ⚡ Compassion
- ⚡ Accountability
- ⚡ Hospitality
- ⚡ Sympathy
- ⚡ Empathy
- ⚡ Confidence, etc.

The narratives were further scrutinised for how the values impact on acquisition of academic English. This is subject of the next section.

6.4.6 Sesotho values as an academic English proficiency need

According to Afonso in Afonso and Taylor (2009:279) (*vide 5.4.1.2*) auto-ethnography as introspective reflection normally allows professionals to turn their perceptions inwards and ask themselves who they really are in their professional contexts and how the outcome of their reflections improves personal practice. The theme on the role of Sesotho values in academic English created an opportunity for us participants to turn our experience-informed perception of our cultivated values towards ourselves for how they [can] enhance acquisition of academic English. While all other participants could not substantiate their stances, they noted that values that SSBSs enrol with into the NUL impact on their understanding of English as a medium of teaching and learning in a university setting. Bonie, Agie, Mmusi, Mamane, and my self storied our experiential perspectives in this regard.

6.4.6.1 Positive impact of ethno-cultural values on academic English proficiency

Bonie

The English of learning in different academic settings is the full responsibility of all lecturers

"Hm! Now that you draw my attention to it, I think it does. You know, if my lectures regarded English as part and parcel of concept formation in their different courses but apportioned it to ... probably the E 100 we did in First Year they never bothered. But I realise now that in fact proficiency in what you call the English of learning in different academic settings is the full responsibility of all lecturers...because how can you develop proficiency in the English of economics? It is the lecturer involved who would even know better some aspects of Sesotho knowledge to relate this type of English to as a way of ensuring understanding...It has made me put myself in the position of my students and recall my pleasant and unpleasant experiences with academic English in Accounting and Economics, and how I wished I could be assisted sympathetically. I do everything within my means. Hence my use of knowledge of composition- writing skills learned at high school... I feel self-fulfilled professionally realising that I can use not only the value of responsibility as nurtured in me as a Mosotho child, but also knowledge from my language to develop my students' academic writing ability".

What values benefit academic English according to Bonie? Findings from Bonie's text point to the positive relationship between academic English proficiency and childhood values; the relationship between such values and professional satisfaction of the experienter of the same; as well as the educative power of auto-ethnography as a research method. The values of responsibility, empathy and sympathy emerged from Bonie's narrative as facilitative of understanding of academic English. Bonie argues that by virtue of their specialised knowledge in their chosen academic disciplines, individual lecturers assume a position and ability to better identify aspects of Sesotho TK that can best enhance proficiency in requisite English therein than would be the case otherwise. As such, specialists in individual academic subjects have the academic **responsibility**

to ensure acquisition of subject-based English proficiency. Implicit in Bonie's perception is an insight that the value of responsibility is as context-bound as is academic English proficiency.

Then there are the values of empathy and sympathy. Bonie's account reveals that for an education-practitioner to ensure subject-based English proficiency of his/her students, s/he should imagine what it would feel like being in the learners' position. In retrospect Bonie wishes her incompetence in the "Englishes" of Accounting and Economics had been pedagogically sympathised with when she went to university. Bonie's intro- and retrospective perception suggests therefore that given a chance, empathy and sympathy as values of *botho* can be some of the conditions for academic English proficiency.

Another discovery from Bonie's interpretive perception is the relationship between execution of the value of responsibility and improved professional practice for better understanding of subject-based English by SSBSs. Bonie lives this value of responsibility and commitment to her students' proficiency in the English of Business education by doing everything within her means. Consequently she feels professionally self-fulfilled upon discovering how her knowledge of Sesotho as a language and her application of the value of responsibility as cultivated in her from childhood benefits her own students' proficiency in the English which is requisite for effective academic writing in HE.

I discerned from the literature that auto-ethnography (*vide 5.4.1.2*) as a method is an opportunity for continual discovery of, and about the self and the implications of such self-discovery for improvement of one's practice. On this basis I contend that were it not for my auto-ethnographic approach to understanding participants' perception of the role of Sesotho values in academic English, Bonie would probably have not discovered and concretised the cross-curricular role of responsibility as a sub-value of *botho* that is critical in acquisition of proficiency in the English of doing school and profession". Substantiation of the finding is in Bonie's "*Hm! Now that you draw my attention to it...*"

Agie

With patience and keenness to achieve academically I gained confidence and gradually came to grips with academic English

"...in **respecting** because I used to attend classes even though I could not understand what was being taught. This helped me develop academically as a person and proceeded to the next level thereby acquiring more knowledge of the English language that made me survive the academic challenges demanding mastery of the required English. That is with more patience and keenness to achieve academically I gained confidence and gradually came to grips with the English...Yes, on the one end I associate my academic success with sustaining my culture of respect for the elders. I relied on my lecturers for access to new knowledge at university and so had to **respect** them by listening attentively to them during lecture delivery".

Agie's account points to how acquisition of academic English proficiency can benefit from the extent to which some individual SBSs can underpin their practice of the values of patience, commitment and trust on the value of respect for those who impart knowledge through the medium of English. This disclosure is evidenced in Agie's "*...That is, with more patience and keenness to achieve academically I gained confidence and gradually came to grips with the English... I relied on my lecturers for access to new knowledge at university and so had to respect them by listening attentively to them during lecture delivery.*" The finding could reasonably be interpreted to suggest that awareness and knowledge of one's cultural values can benefit acquisition of proficiency in academic English.

Abie

I resorted to values and beliefs of Basotho such as good morals, respect, assertiveness, etc. to interpret characters in literature

"...One of such poems was *The woman with whom I share my husband*...In my experience, my knowledge from Sesotho and Basotho enhanced my understanding of the medium of learning much better than use of English alone could have done. I for

instance, resorted to values and beliefs of Basotho such as good morals, respect, assertiveness, etc. to interpret characters in literature – especially in assignments and exam questions in which we were to do with character analysis. Take the woman in the poem ...for instance... Aren't there so many women in Lesotho Mme Mamatsoso, who frustrate other women by taking their husbands – thus violating Christian and cultural values against infidelity and adultery?...I could now picture and draw from my lived experiences of some of the **morally dirty** women in my village community, and used this to better conceptualise the same character traits as portrayed in English”.

Which of Abie's childhood values are perceived to be beneficial to academic English? It emerges from Abie's narrative that for some SSBSs, awareness, appreciation and application of lived knowledge of the value of self-respect and the Christian values and morals against adultery can, in learning contexts such as Literature in English, benefit understanding and use of the English of character interpretation. Substantiation of this insight is in Abie's "*...I could now picture and draw from my lived experiences of some of the **morally dirty** women in my village community, and used this to better conceptualise the same character traits as portrayed in English*".

Mamane

I would say the values of respect for and confidence I would say the values of respect for and confidence

"I would say the values of **respect** for and **confidence** in us as English Language students. In fact it wasn't just from lecturers that our performance earned us respect and confidence. Even our classmates with their change of attitude and approaching us for assistance bear testimony to the respect and confidence they suddenly had in us...You see how powerful knowledge of one's culture is? It can turn tables around. We entered NUL with a low profile because of belittling attitudes that the institution has towards Sesotho and Bosotho. We tended to shy away because what we thought we brought to university as our knowledge, was not **respected** and so deserved no recognition. But bravo Sesotho knowledge viva!...My **independent** decision to apply my knowledge from Sesotho and Bosotho for the benefit of my academic English proficiency gave me **confidence** to perceive and **accept myself** as a Mosotho with authentic knowledge to

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resort to for my management of my learning through English. From this experience I am able to confidently say...I know this English because I knew Sesotho and Bosotho first..."

Mamane's experiential perspective brings to surface a two-way conception of the relevance of Sesotho values in acquisition of academic English. On the one way the values confidence in, respect of, acceptance of and pride in one's identity as a Mosotho seem to underpin and empower some individual students' independent decision to appeal to Sesotho TK for linguistic and communicative competencies in academic English. On the other way, successful application of the very same values in academic English has potential to instil and reinforce in the Sesotho-speaking-background student, the confidence to perceive and respect the self whose proficiency in academic English has benefited from application of authentic knowledge from Sesotho TK. This conception surfaced in Mamane's story below:

Independent decision to apply Sesotho gave me confidence in English

"...You see how powerful knowledge of one's culture is?...bravo Sesotho knowledge viva!...My **independent** decision to apply my knowledge from Sesotho and Bosotho for the benefit of my academic English proficiency gave me **confidence** to perceive and **accept myself** as a Mosotho with authentic knowledge to resort to for management of my learning through English. From this experience I am able to confidently say...I know this English because I knew Sesotho and Bosotho first..."

This particular excerpt brings to surface yet another insight about the behaviour of ethno-cultural values in facilitation of academic English proficiency. It is the subtleness in which indispensability and the inherent nature of cultural values intertwines with and provokes one's values of respect, independence and confidence to this end.

Mamane's text points also to how violation of the value of respect for learners' ethno-culture and negating attitude inter-relate in hampering freedom to utilise Sesotho TK for the benefit of academic English. It depicts this in "*...We entered NUL with a low profile because of belittling-attitudes that the institution has towards Sesotho and Bosothe. We tended to shy away because what we thought we brought to university as our knowledge was not **respected** and so deserved no recognition...*"

How does Mamane's text benefit documented wisdom? The text adds specificity to the literature on need for recognition of African indigenous knowledges (AIKs) in HE. One of the understandings in such literature is that pedagogical practice that espouses knowledge from ethno-cultural backgrounds gives students a strong base and authority to reason and see things from an either different or confirming perspective (Conolly *et al* 2009) (*vide* 2.2.1.3). Mamane's knowledge and respectful appreciation of her cultural background gave her the senses of independence and confidence to apply some aspects of Sesotho TK to demystify academic English in different academic contexts.

The living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) (*vide* 5.2.2.4) benefits from Mamane's account. As repeatedly stated in this chapter, one of the positions in this theory is that by nature, people are displeased if their personal values get violated. Educational contexts such as teaching and learning at university are examples in which values of either education-practitioners or learners can be contradicted. Educational practice at the NUL contradicted Mamane's values of not only respect for her identity as a Mosotho, but also that of her right to freedom to openly appeal to her Sesotho TK to better understand the English of learning. Mark her words "*...We tended to shy away because what we thought we brought to university as our knowledge, was not **respected** and so deserved no recognition...*"

Newi

I put myself in my students' shoes

"I was a very attentive student in class because I believed in my lecturers a lot. I guess I had transferred to university, the values of trust, respect, and confidence I had in my mother even prior to coming to university. In fact I was not a great user of the library at the time. Hence, my attentiveness...Although frankly speaking, I may not say I use this culture-sensitive strategy knowingly about the actual positive role of Sesotho TK in science, I realise now that you are making me to reflect on it, that in my teaching, I do not overlook the value of our Sesotho culture in students' understanding of the unique jargon of Science. I kind of appreciate it in my sub-conscience. Somehow through my teaching of some Science concepts through use of Sesotho TK as a strategy for solution of...in many ways language-related problems, I may go down as relating to my students' struggle understanding the jargon and thinking involved in science. I put myself in my students' shoes".

Interrogation of Newi's experiential narrative interprets into at least six insights. Firstly, is the educative, transformative and improvement-oriented power of auto-ethnography. Newi is unconsciously using a culture-sensitive approach to the teaching of the English of Science until his participation in this critical auto-ethnographic inquiry "*...I realise now that you are making me to reflect on it, that in my teaching, I do not overlook the value of our Sesotho culture in students' understanding of the unique jargon of science...*", he admits. The educative effect of auto-ethnography on those engaged in it surfaces in Newi's reflection as it does in Bonie's "*Hm! Now that you bring my attention to it, I think it does...*" Given that Bonie is reflecting in the context of Accounting and Business education while Newi does so from the perspective of a Physics education practitioner suggests the cross-curricula applicability of Sesotho values as an academic English proficiency need.

The value of empathy as a problem-solving strategy in students' struggle with the English of Science is another revelation. The finding is substantiated in Newi's "*...Somehow through my teaching of some Science concepts through use of Sesotho TK*

as a strategy for solution of...in many ways language-related problems, I may go down as relating to my students' struggle understanding the jargon and thinking involved in science..." The expression "*...I put myself in my students' shoes.*" This brings to surface yet another insight – namely, the power of metaphor in depiction of "the value of the value" of empathy in facilitation of mastery of the English jargon of science. Also emerging from this part of Newi's account is the power of auto-ethnographic reflection in provoking the education-practitioner's empathetic awareness of the challenge that the English of Science and its related critical thinking are for science-education students from a Sesotho-speaking-background at the NUL.

Then there is the finding pointing to subtleness of some personal values such as empathy in weaving themselves in the professional practice of some education practitioners. It is seemingly on empathy as a personal trait that Newi does not overlook the value of "*...our Sesotho culture in students' understanding of the unique jargon of science...*" in his practice of training teachers of Physics.

What is my assessment of Newi's text for its contribution to documented wisdom? While literature on content-area language learning and teaching points to the positive relationship between language proficiency and thought development (Webb 2004:52) (vide 4.3.2); dearth of research confirming and or disputing this from among others, experience-appraised and ethno-culture-sensitive perspectives leaves the wisdom debatable. Through revelations such as Newi's personal truth on the perceived relationship between Sesotho TK and the jargon and thinking involved in Science, the inquiry adds practicality and specificity to the understanding about the link between language proficiency and thought development.

Specifically, Newi's experience adds subject-contextualised clarity to documented knowledge on critical literacy for management of knowledge assessment tasks (Matsoso 2007:142). After her study of critical thinking lexical competencies requisite for effective management of knowledge assessment tasks assigned to HE students, Matsoso

(2007:144) discovered, and remains concerned with lack of a linguistic perspective in education-practitioners' interpretations of problems related to students' critical thinking ability. The author argued that without functional literacy in the language that is demonstrative of critical thinking ability, internalisation, expression and therefore ownership of knowledge could be endangered (Matsoso 2007:146). The author concluded her investigation with an argument that because academic language and critical thinking are characteristically so contextually intertwined, it becomes imperative for students to demonstrate proficiency even in the language of critical thinking (Matsoso 2007:167) (*vide* 4.3.2). Through Newi's personal truth this inquiry adds awareness of the power of and need for **empathy** as a need for acquisition of Physics-based critical thinking and English therein. As the insider-implicated researcher I too shared my personal experience-informed perceptions about how values cultivated in me from childhood can benefit academic English proficiency of SSBSs studying at the NUL.

Lifelile

Motho ke motho ka batho/A person is one because of other persons

"*Botho* (humaneness) is a comprehensive value and cultural expectation among Basotho. Exclusion of this value in the life of a typical Mosotho means living in contradiction (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) of Basotho's educative idiomatic expression *Motho ke motho ka batho* (I am because we are, we are because I am). Having grown up at *Ha Tsoeute*, meant being socialised into observing, hearing, emulating, and therefore, living expressions that nourished the value of *botho*. Of the many aspects of *botho* that were cultivated in me by my parents and the *Ha Tsoeute* community, I particularise, generosity, hospitality, sympathy, empathy, and respect for others. I focus on these because of my perception of them as academic English proficiency needs. The perception draws from my intuition personal experience as both a student and education-practitioner at the NUL. **Generosity** as inherent to Basotho's way of life is lived in different contexts. In the context of food provisioning for the needy, this value is embedded in idiomatic and proverbial expressions such as the following:

- ✚ *Le ho re latolela* (There was not even the courtesy to politely tell us that there was no food to offer us);
- ✚ *Le metsi feela (?)* (Not even water? Basotho will normally offer the best they can afford in the absence of food – even water);
- ✚ *Lijo li jeoa ka baeti* (An opportunity for special food comes with the arrival of visitors).
- ✚ *Kena khabong* (You arrive while fighting is going on –a metaphor meaning that a visitor arrives while people are having a meal. So join us);
- ✚ *U maoto a matle* (Your feet are good meaning- You have arrived at the right time (i.e at meal time);
- ✚ *Lela le lapileng ha le mamele* (A hungry stomach doesn't listen – meaning a hungry person cannot be expected to be attentive, and reason intelligently).
- ✚ *Letsoho le lulang le fupere le keke la amohela* (A hand that remains hard-fisted denies itself a chance to receive from others in return).

The expressions point to Basotho's awareness of need for unconditional generosity. They highlight also that biological urge to feel the need to eat renders one vulnerable. Whether by the hungry person or others, failure to provide food could have undesirable results. I adopt this ethno-value sensitive perspective for my interpretation of the role of Sesotho values in academic English of SSBSs studying at English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL. My knowledge of these generosity-oriented Sesotho expressions not only give me the authority and confidence of a knower (Conolly *et al* 2009) but also provoke and create a retrospective metaphorical perception of how I as SSB student of the English-medium NUL from 1974-1978, related and/or could have better related to academic English. Upon enrolment at the NUL my hunger was academic success which depended among others, on my proficiency in academic English. This proficiency however, could not be assumed. I was therefore academically vulnerable and needy of the generosity of the academic personnel to nourish my linguistic and communicative ability in academic English or satisfaction of my hunger – academic achievement. I barely benefited what I would call institutional pedagogical and otherwise generosity except in sporadic instances which I story later in this chapter under pre-classroom and classroom-based experiences with Sesotho as an academic English proficiency need.

The values of hospitality, sympathy, empathy and respect have adorned my life from childhood so much that provocation to reflect on their relevance to academic English proficiency became an easy challenge. These values are about making other people, especially those in need, feel welcome and needed in others' midst. I have lived these values from the hearth. Therefore in my view, and for purposes of this inquiry, the same principle could apply to provisioning for academic English proficiency of NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking background. As a former Sesotho-speaking-background student of the NUL I can attest to how threatening the experience of learning at an English-medium university from a different cultural background can be. I for one felt estranged and rendered vulnerable, by among other culture shocks, non-provision for my freedom to openly seek clarification and/or confirmation through application of my Sesotho TK. I felt I needed to be academically welcome, sympathised with, and respected for who I was. According to me, some of the unpleasant encounters I had with the English of different academic contexts could have been avoided if hospitality, sympathy, empathy and respect for others' ethnicity were the formal pedagogical character of my university.

This is how I personally felt in August 1974 when I enrolled at the university and could not understand the context-based meanings of the words "*programme*" and "*reading*", "*catalogue*" and "*the Dewey Classification Decimal System*" as jargon of student registration and the library settings. Through ethno-culture responsive hospitality, sympathy, and academic generosity of some of the personnel in these departments I realised the positive impact of Sesotho TK on my understanding of the English of registering and accessing academic materials in the library. How this is so becomes clearer later in this chapter in my narrative on pre-classroom encounters with academic English under the theme on Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. It is my experience-informed position that the situation of SSBSs at the NUL is more pathetic, and therefore deserving of more hospitable, empathetic, and respectful pedagogic response than would be for others enrolling from other linguistic backgrounds. SSBSs live in Lesotho, a country where learners have no exposure to functional use of English. As such they learn both everyday and academic English for the first time in school. Against this background, I therefore adopt Zweirs' (2007) position to argue that that academic English is a third language for students enrolling into NUL from a Sesotho-speaking-background. As such the language renders these students more linguistically and academically vulnerable, thus, imposes need for adoption of among others, a culture-sensitive approach to an understanding of and facilitation of their academic English proficiency needs. Underpinning such an approach in my experience, is the value of *botho* (humaneness) lived as hospitality, generosity, sympathy, empathy and respect of others' ethno-cultural and other being".

6.4.6.2 How culturally conflicting values impact on academic English

Bonie

In the Western culture turn-taking rules are observed

"One thing I realised when I first enrolled at the NUL... [I]t took me time to realise that here at university I was free to interrupt a professor to either interject or seek clarification during a lecture... Turn-taking is not very much characteristic of Basotho in a conversation. Often many of them, especially of the same age group, tend to interrupt each other's conversation. I continued living the value of *Bosotho ea ho se kene motho hanong* (Sesotho value of not jutting into one's interlocutor's speech during a conversation). In the western culture, I realised when I came to university, turn-taking rules are often observed. Even when one has to interrupt, they apologise first. I therefore learned from this difference that waiting for my turn in a conversation or lecture allows me time to listen attentively, think carefully and critically over the issues being raised by the other party before I either negotiate for my turn".

What insights emerge from Bonie's text? Bonie's narrative reveals how unawareness of cultural differences in values governing socio-cultural behaviours of communicative acts can constrain learning. This is portrayed in the challenge that Bonie's situation was upon her enrolling at the NUL. She was, for instance, unaware that in the Western culture (which the English-medium NUL is/was in more respects than one), the communicative act of turn-talking during a conversation is supposed to be negotiated for one to conversationally interject. At the same time she practiced her ethno-cultural knowledge of the Sesotho value of politeness "*ea ho se kene motho hanong* (Sesotho value of jutting into one's interlocutor's speech during a conversation)" much to the detriment of her expected participation in academic discussions. Implicitly, this suggests that Bonie's communicative and linguistic competences in the English of negotiating a turn during an academic interlocution could not be assumed to obtain. It was through her experiential discovery of the cultural differences in applicability of the value of politeness for negotiation of a conversational turn, that Bonie was able to adopt the western interpretation of the value to the advantage of her listening ability, focus and criticalness of thought. Presumably she had acquired the English for negotiating a turn in academic conversations. A more or less similar experience showed in Agie's narration.

Agie

I could not look at them in the face, nor confidently ask them questions in English

"...You see this Sesotho thing of don't be too inquisitive with adults? It sort of held me back a bit...Because of the value of respect I was taught I could not stare at a person...it was still in observance of respect that I could not look at them in the face, nor confidently ask them questions in English...I had a slightly different experience from other students in that I felt it was wrong to look at the lecturer because of the way I was raised. But I could not follow what he was saying if I did not look at him because he was speaking difficult English...I think there is something about the University setting. It all of a sudden makes you feel like you have entered a completely different world. Of course it portrays itself this way too because nearly all lecturers will be telling you that this is not high

school. You have to master what it takes to study in English at university. You see some of them will even be telling you that *Mona ha ho ngoloe sekhooda sa composition* (here the English of writing compositions has no room) but academic English)...[T]his made me scared and wondering what type of English is used at university. They gave us an impression that university English was some **monster** – Like you had to forget that you were once at high school. So how could one have the confidence to seek clarification in such circumstances? ...”

What does Agie’s story tell about the role of values in academic English proficiency? It seems from the account that differences in cultural interpretations of socio-cultural expectations and behaviours embedded in values such as respect can hamper free internalisation and expression, therefore construction of knowledge through academic English. It was in practical observance of *“this Sesotho thing of not being inquisitive with”* and not having to stare at adults that Agie felt constrained to seek clarification in English, and in the process, became a victim of cultural difference ignorance by failing to follow lectures in English when she did not maintain direct eye-contact with her lecturers.

Besides culturally conflicting interpretations of eye-contact and its implications for the value of respect, implicitly, Agie’s narrative shows a culture-divide in how the value of hospitality as socio-culturally lived among Basotho contradicts how it is lived in the Eurocentric university setting. Typically, Basotho are a hospitable and accommodative social group to those rendered vulnerable by being foreign or visitors. By virtue of their ethno-cultural background students such as Agie enrolling into the English-medium NUL from a Sesotho-speaking background are vulnerable and deserving of ethno-culture-sensitive pedagogical hospitality from the institution. Sadly, Agie’s experiential narrative points to the contrary. Lecturers for instance, monsterise the university and its type of English by denouncing basic academic English acquired from high school as if it has no place in learning at university. Wouldn’t Whitehead & McNiff (2006) term this violation of the values of hospitality and expectation to be acknowledged for the being that students enter NUL as? Agie’s account brings to surface yet another realisation that

violation of human values such as hospitality demonises academic English and results in fear that cripples students' confidence in practicing this language for studying at university.

Taken in sum, Bonie's and Agie's experiences with cultural differences in values and how the contradictions impact on acquisition of academic English point to what I term the pro-academic-English proficiency-contradiction of ethno-cultural values. Put simply, experiential awareness and knowledge of the cultural differences in applicability of some values can facilitate functional understanding of academic English.

Taken together, documented knowledge and Agie's personal truth render one assumption reasonable. It is a case that students from non-English-speaking-backgrounds enrol into university with some basic proficiency in academic English. The problem is with condescending pedagogical attitude which lecturers display towards such proficiency. Such an attitude monsterises university-based academic English.

6.4.7 Summative perspectives on values as an academic English proficiency need

The following are some of the deductions made from participants' interpretive accounts of personal experiences with childhood values and their relevance to academic English proficiency of SSBSs of the NUL:

- ✚ Application of ethno-culturally-cultivated values can, given a chance, benefit academic English proficiency of SSBSs of the NUL.
- ✚ There are cultural differences in the interpretations and practice of some of the values. Unawareness of such cultural differences can in some instances impact negatively on students' acquisition of functional knowledge of academic English.
- ✚ Some lecturers' condescending attitude towards pre-enrolment sub-standard academic English of SSBSs threatens confidence and self-esteem and thus,

violates a right for such students to be accorded respect and hospitality they deserve for acquisition of the medium of instruction that is foreign to them.

- ↓ Enhanced acquisition of academic English by SSBSs can seemingly be associated with application of the *botho/ubuntu* value as a sum of sub-values that are outlined in 6.5.3 above.

6.4.8 Sesotho TK in development of personal professional philosophy about acquisition of academic English proficiency

Other data pointed to the relationship between conception of Sesotho TK as not only an academic English need, but also a necessity for development of personal philosophy/stance for improvement of one's professional practice. Evidence of this is in Bonie's and Tsums' reflection. Below is Bonie's story - "*I try to contextualise what I teach to life of a student*".

Bonie

"I try to contextualise what I teach to life of a student..."

"This has become even clearer in my professional life as a lecturer too. In fact now I am able to say the type of students I teach at NUL now are unlike when some of us were students here, are at an advantage because as a lecturer from a Sesotho-speaking-background myself, I most of the time whenever they do not understand, try to contextualise what I teach to the life of a student from this background. I openly advise them to reflect on what they know... from their Sesotho background and apply their reflections accordingly whenever they can...Hmm! I tell you... whenever I do it and they realise this thing you call the Aha! Moment".

The excerpt not only portrayed Bonie's perception of Sesotho TK in problem-solving terms, but also the positive transformative impact it had on her professional practice as a practitioner in Accounting education at the NUL "*I most of the time whenever they do not understand, try to contextualise what I teach to the life of a student from this*

background. I openly advise them to reflect on what they know from their Sesotho background and apply their reflections accordingly whenever they can...", Bonie said.

Besides its transformative effect on professional practice, Bonie's perception of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need brought to surface the value of *botho/ubuntu* in the form of empathy for her students in their problematic encounters with academic English in the context of Accounting Education. Evidence of this is in Bonie's "...because as a lecturer from a Sesotho-speaking-background myself...I openly advise them to reflect on what they know from their Sesotho background and apply their reflections accordingly whenever they can..."

For Bonie, being asked what she perceived to be the role of Sesotho TK in academic English triggered memory of her own previous encounters with academic English as a student at the NUL. Clearly, during Bonie's studentship pedagogic practice at the NUL did not recognise Sesotho TK for its positive role in acquisition of proficiency in academic English. This surfaced in Bonie's comparative observation that "...students I teach at NUL now are, unlike when some of us were students here, are at an advantage..." Disclosed in these words was also displeasure with the NUL for failure to give its students such as Bonie, an opportunity to utilise her ethno-knowledge for the benefit of her academic English. This is implicit in Bonie's position that as an education-practitioner now, she does not instructionally leave her students in the same predicament. Hence, her contention that "... the type of students I teach at NUL now are unlike when some of us were students here, at an advantage..." Bonie's contention brings to surface yet another understanding that some students' experience and displeasure with institutional non-provision of opportunity to utilise their TKs for the benefit of academic English can later impact positively on personal professional practice of the individual who has been the victim of such educational practice.

Interrogation of Bonie's account revealed also existence of a relationship between pedagogical exclusion of Sesotho TK in one's academic English, one's perception of it as

an academic English proficiency need and development of personal philosophy for improvement of professional practice. For instance, Bonie felt that her own learning as a former NUL student was constrained by unawareness of the positive impact that Sesotho TK could have had on her academic English proficiency. Later in her professional life as an education practitioner she has developed an ethno-culture-sensitive personal philosophy for identifying and pedagogically addressing academic English proficiency needs of her students. Hence her story "*I ...try to contextualise what I teach to life of a student...*"

Tsums

A decision to develop a personal culture-sensitive philosophy for improvement of own professional practice regarding acquisition of academic English was revealed also in Tsums' account about Theology. Asked to comment on how application of her Sesotho TK would have benefitted her acquisition of Theology-based English when she studied at the NUL, Tsums' response in the form of a regret, points not only to non-recognition of the role of Sesotho TK in the English of Theology in the pedagogical practice of the NUL, but also to how such exclusion has resulted in development of a personal philosophy for improvement of her own professional practice as a practitioner in Religious education.

I do not want them to be as frustrated as I was

"...Now when I teach my Religious studies students in the Faculty, yes with this sad background and experience I had as a student I do not want them to be as frustrated as I was when I was in their position. Yes I even help those that fear to express themselves in English so that they can use Sesotho and related cultural knowledge to relate to and reflect on how real life issues relate to concepts and issues in their subject the subject".

What did Tsums' experience-informed perception reveal besides its contribution to development of her personal stance about the role of Sesotho TK in Theology English?

A number of realisations surfaced from the excerpt. NUL's failure to enable Theology students to exploit Sesotho TK for how it could benefit their academic English left students such as Tsums frustrated with inadequacy and lack of confidence in the English of their subject of specialisation. "*It would have helped me a lot, especially because I was shy to speak English always thinking that I would break the grammar or misinterpret the words in some cases*", Tsums noted in retrospect. The situation as experienced and interpreted by Tsums, brought forth the insight that there might be a relationship between incompetence in the English of a subject and one's confidence or self esteem.

The importance of the value of *botho/ubuntu* lived as empathy was another feature of Tsums' response. Because as a student at the NUL she suffered marginalisation of her ethno-cultural knowledge as a need in her struggle with the English of Theology, she feels the value of respect or her identity was violated. Consequently, like Bonie she does not want to subject her present students to the same situation. "*...with this sad background and experience I had as a student I do not want them to be as frustrated as I was when I was in their position...*", Tsums said.

How do Bonie's and Tsums' reflections subscribe to current knowledge?

The cited participants' impressions fitted into at least three theoretical understandings benchmarking this inquiry. One is what I dubbed an Africanisation theory-grounded scholarship on transformed AHE. Such scholarship as discussed in 5.2.2.1 of this thesis dwells on the role of and advocacy for African indigenous knowledge in development of teaching and learning in African HE. It is underpinned by among others, the Africanisation theory (Nel 2008) with its principle on need for recognition of a people's indigenous knowledges and value systems as foundation for formation of all forms subsequent knowledge. The other, elaborated on in 5.2.2.4, is the living theory (Whitehead & MacNiff 2006) with its emphasis on need for practice of education to

ensure non-violation of the values of being of the learners. The third, also a component of Chapter 5 (*vide* 5.2.2.5) is the transformative professional development theory (Taylor 2007) with its emphasis on personal experience-based critical reflection for improvement of professional practice.

So what lessons emerged from the cited participants' impressions about Sesotho TK as a problem-solving academic English proficiency need? Where SSBs encounter problems conceptualising and communicating in English-medium learning contexts, Sesotho TK has potential to demystify the arduous English of academia. Another insight was that ontological values can be an academic English proficiency need for SSBs. It seems also that personal experience with relegation of Sesotho TK in acquisition of the English of learning in academia can, in cases where victims themselves may later become education-practitioners, positively impact on professional practice of such practitioners. For instance, Bonie and Tsums' displeasure with marginalisation of use Sesotho TK for clarification of their academic subject-based English needs as students of NUL made them empathetic with their students and led to development of ethno-culture-sensitive personal philosophies which are being implemented in the individual courses they now teach at the same institution.

Tsums' and Bone's accounts point to how previous experience with violation of one's values of being can sometimes be a lesson leading to positive radiation of the same values to others – thus, living the value of empathy. This, as evidenced in Tsums' and Bonie's current professional practice, is living the Sesotho value of *botho/ubuntu* for betterment of personal professional practice of teaching English for academic achievement. It is on this basis that Sesotho TK should be understood as an academic subject-specific English proficiency need for students entering English-medium HE institutions from a Sesotho-speaking background.

In sum, an overarching revelation and inference from the narratives was that the extent to which Sesotho TK and other TKs represented at the university such as the NUL can

have a noticeable impact on students' academic English depends on whether or not these TKs are institutionally recognised. Section 6.4.8 below presents findings in this regard.

6.4.9 Recognition of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need at the NUL

Characterising most of the perceptions about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need were expressions pointing to imbalance of opportunity in utilisation of Sesotho TK and academic English in the different academic contexts at the NUL. Specific personal experiences with the imbalance came out clearly in the following accounts by Agie, Tlhorie, and Abie.

Agie

The tendency was to associate our Sesotho TK with academic failure

"The tendency was to associate our Sesotho TK with academic failure. No effort was made to understand from our own perspectives and experiences the extent to which *Bosotho ba rona le litsebo tsa rona tse kollang ho bona* (Our being Basotho and the knowledge therein embedded) were a resource for mastery of some of the English expressions in our different academic subjects. You see when you arrive at a university from an African culture, you are already labelled lesser university material until you have been thoroughly ritualised into the anti-African culture".

Tlhorie

I think too much emphasis on use of English was at all cost and made some of us lose respect for our cultural being as if it did not have a place in creation and contribution of knowledge in higher education

"Much as I wouldn't remember a specific incident,...because the orientation sessions were done in English I thought Sesotho was totally prohibited...So my confidence was belittled by the fact that I thought now here at university English was a must...I know there were cases where I felt I wanted to ask a certain thing but I wasn't confident because I was unsure whether it was going to come out in proper English...Hei 'M'e! Now that I am academically more mature, it in a way denied me my human right to access knowledge through a medium I was more knowledgeable and confident in – my cultural knowledge. In flashing back, I think too much emphasis on use of English was at all cost and made some of us lose respect for our cultural being as if it did not have a place in creation and contribution of knowledge in higher education...This deprived us of some sense of security...even at times when you felt like you wanted to ask of something, because you were around people whom you believe are more comfortable with English you were afraid to ask because you feel you might embarrass yourself...It was like the language of the bush or grassroot people".

Abie

"Ntho ena ea bokolone ea hore Sekhooa se betere (This colonial mentality of regarding English as better.)".

What findings emerged from the interpretation of foregoing perceptions on the issue of power relations between Sesotho TK and academic English? The narratives revealed one overarching reason for non-recognition of Sesotho TK at the NUL. This is the colonial mentality which manifests itself in the form of exclusion of use of Sesotho TK for clarification of academic context-based English, association of Sesotho TK with academic failure, institutional failure to explore ethno-cultural knowledge of non-English-speaking background students for the contribution it can have to academic English proficiency of such students, assimilationist nature of

pedagogic practices which Agie perceives as "*ritualisation of SSBSs into the non-African culture (vide 6.4.9- "The tendency was to associate our Sesotho TK with academic failure)*, lack of confidence and low self-esteem with regard to the power of Sesotho TK in facilitation of acquisition of academic English by SSBSs o the NUL. In a nutshell, the finding points to the imbalance of power relations in which African TKs such as Sesotho TK are relegated to a lower standard presumed to be likely to soil the Western emporium (*vide 3.2.1*).

There is also the methodological insight from the findings. Auto-ethnography is by nature, reflexive – engaging the person to critically reflect on personal experience for among others, the extent to which such reflection enhances one's understanding and enactment of one's cognition/intellect, self, knowledge, and behaviour or practice in life (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011:1-17) (*vide 5.4.1.2*). In this auto-ethnographic inquiry Tlhorie's discovery of how her academic maturity enables her to "*flash back*" and realise how marginalisation of her Sesotho TK contradicted her "*...human right to access knowledge through a medium [she] was knowledgeable and confident in – [her] cultural knowledge...as if it did not have a place in creation and contribution of knowledge in higher education...*" (*vide 6.4.9 – Tlhorie's perspective*). This is evidence of the relationship between auto-ethnographic reflection and development of a personal understanding and appreciation of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need.

Implications of the insights for documented scholarship? The extracts inform different aspects of documented literature amassed for purposes of this inquiry. *Ubuntu/botho* (Nel 2008) (*vide 3.2.1.3*), coupled with the ontological values aspect of the living theory (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) as well as concerns with Eurocentrism of educational practice in HE, are examples of such scholarship (*vide 3. 2.1 and 5.2.2.4*) Self-esteem, confidence, respect for one's personhood and identity are examples of values of being if we go by stipulations under ontological values as made by Whitehead & McNiff's (2006). Using these values as a basis for understanding and relating with

other human beings, particularly those in circumstances rendering them more vulnerable is *ubuntu/botho* (Nel 2008).

The essence of the cited participants' experiences with imbalanced power relations is vulnerability of NUL SSBSs who have to learn through English as a non-mother-tongue language. If recurrence of effective application of Sesotho TK is taken into account, it becomes reasonable to perceive its exclusion as a power imbalance which results from the English-mainly character of educational practice in African HE (Ntsoane 2005). Exclusion of students' utilisation of their TK as a problem-solving strategy is contradiction of values such as that of *ubuntu/botho*. It educationally denies such students freedom to source from their ethno-knowledge for better understanding of the English of learning in different academic contexts.

Like all the findings deduced from data under the preceding themes the cited literature stands to benefit experience-appraised practicality from the findings on the issue of how inequality of power relations between Sesotho TK and Western pedagogical practices impedes acquisition of academic-subject-based proficiency in English. In sum, it is my summative deduction from the foregoing narratives that acquisition of academic English by SSBSs at the NUL is constrained by among others, by imbalanced power relations in which Sesotho TK is relegated to a lower status.

6.5 SUMMATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Chapter 6 set out to analyse data and interpret the results to determine insights about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need. Although the data were presented by theme, synthesis of the findings was not easy because of their overlapping nature within and across themes and sub-themes. This character therefore necessitated synthesis of all disclosures into the following main findings which point to Sesotho TK as a capital and problem-solving strategy from which Sesotho-speaking-background

students can source for functional knowledge of academic English that is requisite for academic achievement in the English-medium NUL.

- ✚ Academic English is difficult and a barrier to academic achievement
- ✚ Sesotho TK is a knowledge source and problem-solving strategy embracing among others, knowledge of proverbs, myths, values, agricultural practices, physical & climatic features of Lesotho, art, metaphors, for application in challenges posed by academic English.
- ✚ Cross-curricular applicability of Sesotho TK in academic English adds ethno-culture-sensitivity and specificity to some specific theories and other documented scholarship.
- ✚ Failure by English-medium universities such as the NUL to explore Sesotho TK for its role in academic English could be associated with imbalance of power relations between Sesotho TK and academic English in NUL's pedagogical practice.
- ✚ academic English as subject/concept-specific
- ✚ Power of memory in application of Sesotho TK in academic English.
- ✚ Applicability of Sesotho value of *botho/ubuntu* in academic English proficiency
- ✚ Sesotho TK as facilitative of development of personal learning and teaching theories for acquisition of academic English.
- ✚ The cross-curricular Aha moment effect of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency.
- ✚ Use of critical auto-ethnography has had effected pedagogical thoughtfulness, and critical reflexivity on the insider-implicated researcher.

Section 6.6 below presents summative perspective which I contribute to scholarship as a personal experience-appraised metaphorical and intercultural interpretation of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs of NUL.

6.6 MPHO'S METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION OF SESOTHO TK AS AN ACADEMIC ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NEED

Informed by findings and conclusions from chapters 2-4 and 6, I adopt a metaphorical approach to understanding Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in the terms outlined in the following sub-sections. My metaphorical understanding is benchmarked on Muncey's (2005) concept of metaphor for understanding the research phenomenon (*vide 5.4.1.2*).

6.6.1 Sesotho TK as *sesiu* (silo) for academic English proficiency

Sesiu is a large basket-like grass-woven container in which Basotho in their crop-farming livelihoods store dry harvest of grains for later consumption. This ethno-Sesotho concept is borrowed to illustrate my research-appraised understanding of Sesotho TK as a capital and resource for SSBSs to appeal to for deabstracting and disentangling problems posed by academic English as difficult and a barrier to attainment of cross-curricular academic achievement as a livelihood of the academic university community.

I conceptualise the *sesiu*/silo as symbolic of the knowledge reserve that Sesotho TK is. I contend that as such Sesotho TK can be tapped on for solution of problems posed by linguistic and communicative problems with academic English. According to the findings from the inquiry, forms of Sesotho knowledge include Sesotho proverbs, beliefs and myths, art in the form of dance and song, artefacts and and heroic poetry, Basotho's crop-farming practices as in harvest processing, Lesotho's geographical features (such as rivers, mountains, and lightening), experiences with acceptable and unacceptable social behaviours enhancing and/or violating the fundamental value of *botho/ubuntu*, etc. (*vide 6.4.1 – 6.4.9*).

6.6.2 Strategic application Sesotho TK: A knowledge construction need for the English-medium NUL

For my conception of the interface between Sesotho TK and university-based knowledge (academic English in the case of this inquiry) I adopt a Western concept for a metaphor - namely a funnel shape. I view the wide-open part of the funnel as symbolic of the opportunity that academic English has to benefit from opportune utilisation of Sesotho TK (the *sesiu/silo*) if vision, mission, core values, policy, curriculum and education practice in HE provide for such. The beginning and end of the narrow ends of funnel in my view symbolise oneness and or consolidation of knowledge from the two different cultural knowledges – namely, Sesotho TK and university-based knowledge being accessed through English as a medium of learning and teaching.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 6 investigated the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking-background. Analysis and interpretation of findings from the literature (*vide* chapters 2-4) point to not only concern with exclusion of African traditional knowledges in African HE, but also to co-existence as the recommended strategy for mainstreaming of these knowledges into HE. Findings from analysis of selected documentary sources depict implicit inclusion of TK at vision and mission statement levels, but absolute exclusion of the same at policy, course description and assessment levels. Revelations from experience appraised interpretive narratives point to a positive relationship between application of different aspects of Sesotho TK and acquisition of linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural dimensions of academic English. Hence my reference to Sesotho TK as facilitative of discovery of the *Oooo/Aha moment* effect of ethno-knowledge on academic English proficiency. The study therefore provides a research-informed contention that given a chance, Sesotho TK can impact positively on acquisition of academic English proficiency

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by SSBSs of English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL. Chapter 7 presents conclusions and recommendations from the inquiry.

CHAPTER



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 7 as the last chapter of this thesis logically follows on Chapter 6. Chapter 6 presented data, analysed and interpreted findings on how application of Sesotho traditional knowledge benefits acquisition of proficiency in academic English among university students from a Sesotho-speaking background. The main reason for this research was to investigate the role of traditional knowledge in academic English of students in higher education institutions. This was undertaken in order to recommend research-informed ways in which education-practitioners and their students can tap on their traditional/indigenous knowledge for development of proficiency in academic English of students from a Sesotho-speaking background. The main aim was achieved through the following:

- (i) Engaging in in-depth literature in order to conceptualise traditional knowledge (*vide* Chapter 2).
- (ii) Amassing documented scholarship on the place of traditional knowledge in Higher Education (*vide* Chapter 3).
- (iii) Defining academic English and its various notions (*vide* Chapter 4).
- (iv) Engaging in empirical investigation in order to identify the experiences of participants with how Sesotho TK/IK benefits/can benefit acquisition of academic English.

In the following sections conclusions are therefore advanced.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

The bulk of the literature amassed provided important perspectives regarding the current and potential use of TK/IK for improvement of learning and teaching in African universities such as the National University of Lesotho.

7.2.1 Conclusions from Chapter 2

The chapter addressed the first theoretical subsidiary question of the inquiry (*vide 1.3.2.1*). It grounded Sesotho TK in documented understandings about traditional knowledge. It depicted definitions and notions of TK interpreting them for how they form a framework for investigating the role of Sesotho TK specifically, and other traditional knowledges in academic English proficiency of HE students learning through languages other than their mother-tongues. Chapter 2 revealed among others, orality as a more comprehensive conceptualisation of the non-scribal aspect of TK. The following were the insights from the chapter (2.2.1-2.2.2).

- ✚ Traditional knowledge is non-static and in this capacity is, depending on circumstances, potentially capable of adoption for solution of problems, therefore, of positively influencing construction of knowledge in new teaching and learning contexts.
- ✚ While primarily oral, traditional knowledge has become scribal. In this capacity way traditional knowledge should be understood as having therefore claimed its role in the print-oriented formal education of which academic English is part and parcel.
- ✚ Traditional knowledge is ethno-culture-bound.
- ✚ Despite its ethno-culture-boundedness, traditional knowledge is interculturally transferrable. This spells not only its interconnectedness with other traditional knowledges, but also its universality.

7.2.2 Conclusions from Chapter 3

Intended to answer the second theoretical subsidiary question of the inquiry (*vide.1.3.2.1*), Chapter 3 reviewed scholarship on the role of TK in HE. The chapter brought to surface several findings. These included concerns about marginalisation of TK/IK in African HE institutions, reasons for exclusion of TK in HE, the rationale for mainstreaming TK in HE, and strategies for integrating TK/IK into HE. Implicitly and explicitly stated theoretical underpinnings of perceived need for mainstreaming of TK were another deduction from Chapter 3. The following conclusions were drawn from this chapter.

- ✚ Traditional knowledge has a role in HE (*vide 3.2*).
- ✚ Traditional knowledge continues to be marginalised in HE due to Eurocentric attitudes leading to lack of ethno-culture-sensitive policy provisions to guide its mainstreaming (*vide 3.2.1.1*); failure by culturally detached Western-oriented researchers researching African-sensitive issues, to use research appropriate culture-sensitive methodologies and predominance of the researcher-driven perspectives at the expense of the "I" perspective of the researched in researching African issues (*vide 3.2.1.2-3.2.1.3*).
- ✚ Indifference to the fact that all traditional knowledges are virtually equal and important in items of the reserve that they are of a wealth of knowledge which students enrol into HE with (*vide 3.2*).
- ✚ Meaningful knowledge construction in HE depends on among others, the extent to which the cultural context and active participation of students are recognised as fundamental bases for teaching and learning (*vide 3.3.1.1-3.3.1.2a-b*).
- ✚ Traditional knowledge can be mainstreamed into HE as an academic-subject-specific learning need (*vide 3.3.1.1*).
- ✚ The Africanisation and *Ubuntu* theoretical perspectives can be an important basis for mainstreaming TK into HE.

7.2.3 Conclusions on Chapter 4

7.2.3.1 Conclusions from literature on academic language and academic English

Chapter 4 is a response to the third theoretical subsidiary question (*vide 1.3.2.1*). It set academic English in its theoretical context by: reviewing literature for definitions and notions of academic language (*vide 4.2*), examining scholarship for notions and definitions of academic English (*vide 4.3*), critiquing Scarcella's (2003) conceptual framework for academic English (*vide 4.4*), and reviewing previous studies for coverage of the role of TK in academic English proficiency of non-English-speaking background students in English-medium universities. Arduousness of academic English as a critical-thinking oriented, therefore, more challenging academic area was deduced. So was silence of previous research about the role of TK in acquisition of academic English. I drew conclusions from the chapter as outlined below with reference to sections and sub-sections from which findings leading to the conclusions are reported.

(a) *Academic language*

- ✚ Identification of academic language needs of students from language backgrounds other than those of the languages they have to study in, facilitates understanding of the medium of instruction (*vide 4.2.3*).
- ✚ Acquisition of academic language proficiency is not automatic but dependent on context-specific instruction (*vide 4.2.3*).
- ✚ Acquisition of academic language is a non-haphazard and more cognitively demanding academic context-bound process than everyday language for basic interpersonal communication (*vide 4.2.3*).

(b) *Academic English*

- ✚ Academic English with its linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural dimensions, is more demanding on the intellect of both those who teach and learn through it,

and thus becomes difficult and a barrier for academic achievement by students learning through it as a second language (*vide* 4.3.1- 4.3.2).).

- ✦ Proficiency in academic English is intertwined with critical thinking ability (*vide* 4.3.1). This implies that critical thinking is, in its own right, an academic English proficiency context.
- ✦ Academic English is a complex, context-specific barrier to academic success of many non-English-speaking-background students (*vide* 4.3), but unfortunately is one of the academic areas still barely explored for how learning in their context can be enhanced by application of TKs of such students (*vide* 4.5).
- ✦ Proficiency in academic English remains assumed by some education-practitioners in HE institutions (*vide* 4.4.4).
- ✦ Academic English with its linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural aspects serves general and specific purposes in the practices of teaching and learning in formal education settings such as HE institutions.

7.2.4 Conclusions from theoretical perspectives on methodology (Chapter 5)

In addition to describing the design of the study, Chapter 5 reviewed literature on theoretical perspectives which underlie the methodology. Underpinning the review was my personal philosophy about need for research to seek an understanding of people's needs from an open-minded "*first person*" perspective. Such a perspective is premised on perception of human nature as complex because the cosmos/environment from which it forms is an entangled component of different and yet complementary aspects (*vide* 5.2.1). This personal stance necessitated a review of literature for theoretical underpinnings of research that is aimed at the "I" perspective approach to understanding people's livelihoods. The literature focused on six theories – namely, the oral-style (*vide* 2.4), the Africanisation, *ubuntu*, the critical hermeneutic, the living, and critical self-study as/for transformative professional development (5.2.2.1-5.2.2.5). Experience-based, culture contextualised, and non-othering understanding of

perceptions that people hold about their life-worlds and themselves emerged as a common feature of these theories.

↓ Conclusion

Credibility of research aimed at adding culture-sensitivity, therefore, meaningfulness, relevance, and improved professional practice, depends on among others, the extent to which investigation of learning needs of students includes among other issues, their ethno-identity, their ethno-knowledge and its background, the value of *Ubuntu/botho* (humaneness) as embracing the personal and ethno-cultural values they have lived, and interpretive meanings which these students attach to how their lived experiences impact on their learning in different academic contexts (*vide 5.2-5.4*).

7.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION (Chapter 6)

This part of the study is complementary to, and further builds on corpuses of theory identified from the literature. Below are the main conclusions from the study. The findings which led to the conclusions are in the form of general and issue-specific impressions about Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need.

7.3.1 Conclusions on general impressions

7.3.1.1 TK as a problem-solving strategy for academic English proficiency

Participants perceive academic English as so difficult that it threatens academic achievement of SSBSs enrolling into the NUL (*vide 6.4.1.1 - "In my experience this is difficult English" by Abie, and "Sesotho TK opens doors for knowledge of English" by Mamane*). However, participants note that their ethno-knowledge is a problem-solving strategy that facilitates their understanding of the English for concept-formation in different academic contexts. Participants are concerned about lack of freedom to appeal to their pre-university cultural TK to solve many of the learning problems imposed by

complexity of academic English. Participants such as Abie make this depiction from incidences of personal experiences with the comfort, confidence and security which Sesotho TK affords them in clarifying academic English. An inference from this finding is that:

- ✚ **Use of Sesotho TK for clarification of academic English is marginalised at the NUL despite the unriddling effect students perspective it to have.**

7.3.1.2 Sesotho language and culture as academic English proficiency needs

Another of the overall impressions about the role of Sesotho TK in academic English is that Sesotho language and its culture are academic English proficiency needs (*vide* 6.4.2 – “*We have tactics that we source from our culture and language...*” by Tlhorie, and “*It easier to address something when you understand it in Sesotho too*” by Pitsos). The finding points to a conclusion that:

- ✚ **One’s ethno-language and culture form a basis for understanding academic English in English-medium institutions such as the NUL.**

7.3.1.3 Importance of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency

Perception of Sesotho TK as an important academic English proficiency need features in some narratives (*vide* 6.4.1.3 – “*Use of a person’s knowledge of Sesotho and Bosocho should not be denied*” by Abie;- “*Sesotho as both a language and culture is very user-friendly*” by Tlhorie;- “*Sesotho and Bosocho are our identity*” by Monie). This importance, according to narrators, lies in a number of observations about Sesotho TK. Sesotho TK is pristine and intertwined with life as lived by ethno-Basotho. It is a background of tactics and different forms of knowledge to be tapped on for solution of problems from encounters with English as a foreign medium of learning for SSBSs. Sesotho TK is the identity of Basotho. On the modern education front, some participants perceive TK as a

non-threatening academic problem-solving academic English proficiency need. Apparent from the foregoing is a conclusion that:

- ✚ **Sesotho TK is a fountain and capital/reserve of different forms of knowledge forming a basis for interaction with and construction of knowledge in new learning situations that SSBSs find themselves in beyond and different from their ethno-cultural cosmos. SSBSs therefore, enrol into university with Sesotho TK as valuable knowledge.**

7.3.4 Sesotho TK as a context-specific academic English proficiency need

Participants' experiential narratives brought to surface conception of Sesotho TK as also an out-of, and within-academic course-specific concept (*vide 6.4.4.1-6.4.4.2*).

7.3.4.1 Conclusions on Sesotho TK as an out-of academic course English proficiency need

I did not for once anticipate fellow participants' perception of academic context-specificity of Sesotho TK in out-of course terms. The reason was that it took me to be an education-practitioner myself to appreciate *out-of course contexts* as also academic, and therefore worthy of consideration as providing learning that is trajectory to improved course-based learning. Given that all of us were either high school teachers or HE education-practitioners at the time of participating in this inquiry, the following **conclusions** seemed reasonable:

- ✚ Perception of *out-of course* contexts as academic could be related to professional maturity resulting from extended experience in academic settings.
- ✚ Some participants perceive their lived ethno-cultural experiences as examples of *out of-academic course* contexts. Such experiences are deemed to provide knowledge which given a chance to be reflected upon for their contribution to understanding of academic-subject-specific English, could be adopted for

improvement of academic English proficiency of SSBSs entering the NUL. A typical example is Bonie's experience-informed argument that home-based ethno-numeracy proficiency acquired through life with live-stock could facilitate understanding of the English of numeracy-related concepts in academic subjects such as Accounting (*vide. 6.4.4.1 – "Accounting that was practiced at home"*).

- ✚ By virtue of having equivalents with some concepts making knowledge in the modern academic arena, some ethno-cultural livelihoods and experiences of students can be perceived as foundational knowledge on which acquisition of academic English can be facilitated.

Concerning university-based *out of-course* relevance of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need, some participants' experiential accounts particularised academic registration and library orientation sessions for new entrants to the NUL as examples. In particular, the narratives reveal how incompetence in the English of the academic community leave SSBSs with feelings of academic inadequacy, vulnerability and threatened self-esteem all of which result in reluctance to use English to seek clarification. Thanks to the kindness of Messers Ntho and Molise who rescued my shortfall by volunteering the Sesotho clarifications of the English jargon of academic registration and book-classification in the library in my case and Abie's unpleasant encounters with pre-classroom context academic English at the NUL (*vide 6.4.4.1. – "The library tour session" by Abie; "The Dewey decimal classification system and cataloguing" and "What academic programme are you enrolling in?" by myself*). Gleaned from these revelations were the following conclusions.

- ✚ Some of the proficiencies normally accredited to modern education have existed since the beginning of human societies. Substantiation of this is in deduction of lessons from Bonie's narrative (*vide 6.4.4.1 – "Accounting that was practiced at home"*).
- ✚ Unawareness of context-boundedness of the meanings of some English vocabulary results in communicative incompetence in situations where learning

depends on knowledge of specialised meanings. The conclusion is discussed in 6.4.4.1 for this conclusion.

- ✚ Communicative incompetence in situation-specific medium of communication and learning constrains confidence to seek clarification in one's mother-tongue.
- ✚ Execution of the Sesotho value of *botho* (humaneness) in the form of sympathy can be associated with acquisition of academic English proficiency. It was as a result of Messers' Ntho and Molise interventions in Sesotho that I left the registration hall and library with functional knowledge of library and academic registration-bound meanings of "catalogue," "programme" and "read".
- ✚ Power relations between Sesotho TK and English as a medium of instruction relegate the former - thus, giving an impression that it (Sesotho TK) is incapable of complementing the latter - i.e. English as a medium of teaching and learning.

I consider that *out of-course* academic contexts share a common ground with academic subjects into which students enrol. It is reasonable contention therefore that positive application of Sesotho TK for academic English in them has potential to transfer similarly to practice with, and acquisition of requisite competencies in course-specific English at classroom level.

7.3.4.2 Conclusions on Sesotho TK as an academic subject-specific English proficiency need

The bulk of Chapter 6 (*vide* the entire 6.4.4.2) discusses and draws conclusions from each experiential narrative by academic subject. This sub-section highlights conclusions and recommendations by academic subject and cross references by title of a subject-specific story for findings and discussions informing the conclusions and recommendations.

(a) The English of Accounting

Sesotho TK embodies different forms and interpretations of knowledge (*vide* 2.5). Such

knowledge is often used metaphorically for different purposes of communication in different contexts. It can be communicated verbally by word of mouth and/or non-verbally through body movement. For example, Basotho attach specific metaphorical interpretations to the functions of the left and right hands. They genderise the right and left hands by referring to the left as female and the right hand as male. Male persons are culturally perceived as providers for female persons and children in the family. Basotho also refer to the right hand as *lehoja* (the hand used for eating); while the left hand is *leqele* (the hand for receiving).

The inquiry revealed how some participants who are Accounting education-practitioners teach the jargon of their subject from an ethno-cultural perspective. Richie says he effectively capitalises on this ethno-knowledge to clarify the meanings of the terms "credit" and "debit". He extends the open palm of his right hand in a giving position to illustrate the meaning of "to credit". For the meaning of "debit" the palm of same hand is extended in grabbing position to illustrate the act of "taking away" (*vide 6.4.4.2 (a) – "This is how I have had to go about it to address my students' need to understand the jargon of Accounting" by Richie*). The finding brings to surface at least two following conclusions:

- ✚ Strategic use of body language and its interpretation in the context of Sesotho culture enhances the understanding of English jargon for concepts such as *credit and debit* in Accounting.
- ✚ The extent to which aspects of TK can be identified and effectively used to enhance concept-specific proficiency in academic English may depend on whether or not a particular education-practitioner either shares, or is aware of the cultural background with students.

By referring to Sesotho TK as living knowledge that is stored in memory for retrieval at university, Bonie's narrative as cited (*vide 6.4.4.2(b) – "This is Accounting that is recorded in memory and lives as knowledge"*) brings to surface a conclusion that:

- ↓ Accounting-based academic English can be learned via ethno-Accounting.

(b) The English of Economics

About Economics, the following perspectives became apparent from experiential narratives by Bonie (*vide 6.4.4.2(b) i-iv*):

- ↓ Intercultural closeness in meanings of some cultural practices such as *bartering, production, paid labour and opportunity cost*, coupled with ability to retrieve and apply knowledge gained from experiencing such practices in learning and teaching, can facilitate acquisition of Economics-based proficiency in English.
- ↓ Some Sesotho proverbs have a clarifying effect on concept-specific English in Economics. This is, as per Bonie's experience in her learning of the concept *opportunity cost* in Economics (*vide 6.4.4.2b (iii)*).
- ↓ Frustration resulting from incompetence in the jargon of concepts in Economics can lead to disinterest in and withdrawal from learning (*vide 6.4.4.2 b (iii)*).
- ↓ Failure by education-practitioners to facilitate for students' utilisation of the Sesotho TK for understanding of concept-specific English impacts negatively on understanding of concepts such as *opportunity cost* (*vide 6.4.4.2b (iii)*).
- ↓ Education practitioners' adoption of Sesotho TK-sensitive approaches to clarification of some concepts in such as *production* (*vide 6.4.4.2b (ii)*) in Economics enhances acquisition of concept-specific English.
- ↓ Proficiency in subject -specific English results from application of differences and similarities between students' ethno-knowledge and new knowledge cultures in HE institutions. The conclusion is apparent from Bonie's experience with the concept "*paid labour*" in Economics as against how it is conceived of in Sesotho (*vide 6.4.4.2b (iv)*).

(c) The English of Counselling Psychology

Counselling Psychology, according to Agie (6.4.4.2c) includes courses such as Mental Health with jargon such as *schizophrenia* which pose serious conceptualisation problems for students. The inquiry reveals how application of knowledge of Sesotho myths such as *thokolosi* clarifies the meaning of Mental-Health-specific jargon. The inquiry revealed that it is however, cause for concern to SSBSs such as Agie that SSBSs students make independent and secret decisions to resort to such ethnocised approaches to understanding the concept-specific jargon. The study shows that secretiveness of application is associated with institution-based attitude which relagates African TKs such as Sesotho TK to sub-standard knowledge that has no contribution to creation of knowledge in Eurocentric HE. The findings point to the following conclusions:

- ✦ Sesotho myths are a body of knowledge that can facilitate an understanding of topic-specific jargon in subjects such as Counselling Psychology.
- ✦ Institution-based negative attitudes towards use of TKs of students stifles freedom and openness to being ethno-culture-sensitive in disentangling problems imposed by academic English in learning and teaching. It renders HE institutions non-emancipatory.
- ✦ Pressure to acquire subject-specific knowledge can lead to self-reliance and personal decision to appeal to one's TK for understanding the jargon of one's subjects of study at university. This is despite the relegating attitudes towards such TK.

(d) *The English of English Language*

It is apparent from narratives of participants majoring in and teaching English Language that an understanding of functions of some grammar concepts such as the *Adjective*, and the *Verb as a qualifier* can be constrained by rigidity of school-based language policies which deny students freedom to appeal to Sesotho TK for clarity. The study reveals however, that such resistance by policy can be counteracted by living the values

of assertiveness, confidence in, and commitment to Sesotho TK as a self advocacy strategy for acquisition of proficiency in academic English (*vide 6.4.4.2d (i)* – “*I was teaching the Adjective*” by Abie; “*The Verb as a qualifier*, and “*My knowledge of Sesotho became my redeemer*” by Tlhorie; and “*I can very well relate to your problem having had it myself*” by me the insider-implicated researcher). One conclusion deduced from this revelation is that,

- ✚ The need to acquire and teach for acquisition of proficiency in academic English pressurises students and teachers to resort to use of Sesotho TK-related life skills such as assertiveness to challenge anti-TK application school-based policies.

Still about English grammar-specific English, the study further points to the positive relationship between the behaviour of prepositions in both Sesotho and English languages (*vide 6.4.4.2d (i)* – “*This helped me realise that in Sesotho there are prepositions*” by Monie). The relationship suggests that,

- ✚ Strategic but positive transfer of knowledge of prepositional behaviour in Sesotho as a language can facilitate understanding of similar behaviour in English Language as an academic subject.

Transferability and applicability of Sesotho TK to improved understanding of the English of English grammar applies also to Phonetics as an aspect of English Language (*vide 6.4.4.2d (iii)* – “*...he used to pronounce the word exactly as it was written*” by Pitsos; and “*Yes...and there my knowledge of Sesotho helped me*”). Debouching from this revelation is a conclusion that Sesotho TK is facilitative of proficiency in English Language-specific phonetics.

(e) The English of Literature in English

The general perception among participants was that all literary genres, regardless of whether poetry, drama, short story, etc. benefit from application of knowledge of some aspects of Sesotho TK. The experiential narratives point to values of Basotho, beliefs, and Sesotho expressions for description of people in real life to name but a few (*vide*

6.4.4.2e (i) – (iv)). Deducted from this overall finding is the impression that,

- ✚ Sesotho TK as facilitative of Literature students' ability to use real life experiences to understand the English for making contact with the content of literary works.

(f) Geography English

Interpretation of narratives on experiences in the context of Physical Geography reveals how teacher-influence, self-motivation and awareness of the environment help demystify the English for learning the subject (*vide 6.4.4.2f – "I got it from my high school geography teacher" by Relebo; "I benefited from application of my knowledge of the geographical features of my home district" by Abie; and " My village is near Qabane River" by Pitsos*). The findings rendered reasonable the following deductions:

- ✚ Appreciation of the physical environment for its role in demystifying subject-specific English jargon can be teacher-induced.
- ✚ Awareness of the physical environment in one's life, augmented by self motivation to understand subjects can in turn benefit an understanding of environment-oriented concepts such as intensity of snow and glaciations, formation of rocks and stages of a river.

(g) The English of History

History students such as Aggie in this inquiry view not only knowledge about historical events, but also tangible and intangible aspects of Sesotho TK as a capital for unpacking the meanings of certain issues and concepts particularly in studying Economic History as a subject. Examples of such sources of History-specific proficiency in English include the First and Second World Wars, history of Lesotho, song and heroic poetry of the Basotho, and Basotho's handicrafts/artefacts (*vide 6.4.4.2g – "Sesotho TK helped a lot in Economic History" by Aggie*). In a nutshell, the experience with English in Economic History points to how

- ✚ Informed knowledge about tangible and intangible forms of Sesotho indigenous knowledges can be associated with effective application for understanding the English for effective learning of Economic History.

(h) The English of Public Administration

Like all subjects narrated on in this inquiry, Public Administration seemingly has its specific linguistic demands on students in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL. It is for instance, an experience-informed perception of Public Administration majors such as Richie (*vide 6.4.4.2h – "Ooooh! So concepts such as administration, management, etc. fit very well into Basotho's concept of organisational structure?"* by Richie). Note must be taken that Richie enrolled into the NUL as an already adult student. As such, he can be assumed to have lived an extended experience with, and knowledge of administrative, managerial and organisational practices of Basotho as a cultural group.

Former NUL students such as Richie are only concerned that the Aha! Moment-effect of application of Sesotho TK for academic English proficiency is not provided for in the educational practice of the institution. The rewarding use of Sesotho TK remains student-initiated. As such, it leaves unanswered the question of what happens in the case of those students and lecturers who may not be as ethno-culture-sensitively proactive as Richie. This position therefore, makes reasonable the following inference:

- ✚ Maturity and extended active life with, and in one's ethno-cultural setting can be associated with knowlegeability and spontaneity with which one retrieves aspects of Sesotho TK that are capable of demystifying the English of courses such as Public Administration in Richie's case.

(i) The English of Physics education

Regarding whether as a student of Physics at the NUL he was ever sanitised into the importance of Sesotho TK in facilitating understanding of the English for learning the

subject, Newi draws a blank and regrets that the teaching of Science at the time of his studentship at the NUL never gave his TK a chance in solution of many of the problems he had understanding the subject-specific jargon. Newi attributes his discovery of the positive role of Sesotho TK in Physics-based English proficiency to deep thought which eventuated in adoption of some Sesotho IKs and practices for teaching the English for learning and teaching the English for understanding problematic concepts. Such IKs included harvesting (*vide 6.4.4.2i (i)*-"*Creation of convection current*"), behaviour of weather (*6.4.4.2i (i)* – "*lightening*"), brewing concocting (*vide 6.4.4.2i (iii)* - "*infiltration*"), ailments (*6.4.4.2i (iv)* –"*pressure*"), and *electron* (*vide 6.4.4.2i (v)*). These Physics-based findings from Newi's narrative brought to light the following conclusions:

- ✚ Failure by lecturers to explore students' Sesotho TK/IK for its potential to enhance understanding of academic-specific English leaves students unaware of its role in solution of subject-specific language problems.
- ✚ Discovery of the role of students' TK/IK in enhancing proficiency in English as a tool for accessing, internalising, and communicating – therefore, of constructing modern knowledge, can be associated with extended experience in relevant professional practice.
- ✚ Exploration of Sesotho TK for its role in acquisition of Physics-specific English proficiency can be associated with critical reflexivity as determination to engage in deep thought for teaching strategies that can solve students' communication-related problems.
- ✚ Given that Newi is a Physics teacher educator when he discovers the role of Sesotho TK in acquisition of proficiency in the English of physics, it seems reasonable to assume and hope that the teachers he trains will transfer the ethno-Sesotho-sensitive approach to physics-specific English to their teaching after graduating from the NUL.

(j) The English of Religious studies

Regarding the role of Sesotho TK in the English of Religious studies the experiential narrative -“*When we grew up we were told a folktale about Moshanyana’ Sankatana*” (vide 6.4.4.2j by Tsums) reveals concern with marginalisation of TK in teaching and learning at the NUL. The narrator believes that if this folktale was appealed to for clarification of scriptures about the birth and preachings of Jesus Christ, she and fellow students of Theology would have understood better. Now as an education –practitioner in Religious studies, she empathises with her students and has taken a bold decision to adopt an ethno-culture-sensitive approach to Religious studies education. As did narratives by Richie (vide 6.4.4.2a), and Newi (vide 6.4.4.2i) the account by Tsums makes reasonable a conclusion that:

- ✚ Personal theories and improvement of one’s professional practice benefits from previous experience with exclusion of one’s TK in education.
- ✚ Ethno-culture-sensitive philosophy stands a better chance to inject into the high school practice of teaching Religious education, an ethno-culture-sensitive approach to teaching the English of the subject.

(k) The English of knowledge assessment terminology

Analysis of narratives for the meanings of the English terms for knowledge assessment (vide 6.4.2k) revealed that these (terms) have the same meanings with those in Sesotho. The findings suggest further that the terms are as critical-thinking-oriented as those in Sesotho. Inferences from the finding pointed to the following:

- ✚ There is a positive relationship between application of the functional knowledge of knowledge assessment terms in Sesotho and understanding of those in English (vide 6.4.2).
- ✚ Sesotho TK at a language level is, like academic English, composed of the linguistic and cognitive dimensions (vide 4.4.2-4.4.3). Both Sesotho TK and academic English are by this virtue, complementary.

7.3.5 Sesotho TK as instrumental in development of professional philosophy about academic English proficiency

How application of Sesotho TK benefits development of personal philosophy for learning and/or teaching of academic English was another of the major findings of the inquiry. The discussion drew attention to the possibility of a relationship between retrospective reflection on personal experience with a research phenomenon and improvement of personal professional philosophy regarding it (research phenomenon). This surfaced in the experiential narratives of Bonie (*vide* 6.5 – “*I try to contextualise what I teach to the life of students*) and Richie (*vide* 6.4.4.2a), Newi (6.4.4.2i) and Tšums (*vide* 6.4.4.2j and 6.5 – “*I do not want them to be as frustrated as I was*”) who upon reflecting on their previous experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need in their different areas of specialisation, realized how the experiences have now enabled them to develop experience-informed ethno-culture-sensitive personal philosophies and professional practice for ensuring acquisition of subject-specific English proficiency.

Introspective critical narrative in auto-ethnographic inquiry is, like writing, research through which participants have an opportunity to discover how previous experience grounds development of their personal philosophies later in their professional practice for development of subject-specific proficiency in English of the students enrolled in their different academic subjects. Through the voices of some of former students of mine and that of my son Refiloehape - the unanticipated participant in this inquiry (*vide* 6.4.2.2k – “*You drew my attention to equivalents of these in Sesotho*” by Monie *vide* 6.4.4.2 – “*Mom! They go on and on about how motherly you are as a lecturer and how you should be my role model*” by Refiloehape, and “*I grew up as a child of the village community*” by me) I discovered the undeclared ethno-culture-philosophical orientation of my approach to academic English. Also revealed by the inquiry is auto-ethnography as an opportunity for an insider-implicated researcher to get a horse’s-mouth revelation and deeper understanding of their personal pedagogical philosophy regarding acquisition of course-based proficiency in English. A synthesis of the findings on how

Sesotho TK is instrumental in development of personal philosophy pointed to the following conclusions:

- ✚ Unpleasant previous encounters with relegation of Sesotho TK in acquisition of subject-specific English leads to radiation of sympathy to one's students later in one's life as a professional/practitioner.
- ✚ Implicitly therefore, ethno-values lived in childhood have potential to transfer to improvement of professional practice for improvement of academic English of non-English-speaking students in English-medium universities such as the NUL.
- ✚ Sometimes discovery and appreciation of one's personal philosophies can result from adoption of research designs that use the "I" and "Thou" inquiry methods in which the researcher assumes an insider-implicated role. I for one, had I not been an implicated participant in my inquiry, I would not have had such direct benefit of discovery of others' perception of my ethno-culture-embracing philosophical approach to academic English proficiency of my SSBSs.
- ✚ Listening to, as well as writing and speaking auto-ethnographic reflections can therefore become opportunities for the insider-implicated researcher to discover the role of TK in acquisition of formal education through academic mediums such as academic English.

7.3.6 Conclusions regarding Sesotho values and their transferability to academic English proficiency

Botho/ubuntu in the form of values such as responsibility, commitment, etc. recurred across participants' narratives as one of the most fundamental principles necessary for acquisition of Academic English by students in Africa-based English-medium universities such as the NUL (vide 6.4.6). As a participant, I argue in my experiential narrative that by virtue of being non-native speakers of academic English SSBSs are linguistically vulnerable and therefore more likely to academically falter. I note as other participants

do from experience that such vulnerability depends on the extent of radiation of the fundamental value of *botho/ubuntu* and its sub-values (*vide* 6.4.6) by lecturers.

My discussion of the finding draws from the *ubuntu* perspective according to which respect and recognition of others' identity are fundamental for not only what this identity, but more for the contribution it can make to improve their learning and whatever practice of those rendered vulnerable by the *status quo* (*vide* 5.2.2.2).

7.3.7 Conclusions regarding recognition of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need at the NUL

Data from analysis of selected key documentary sources of the NUL – namely, the vision, mission, policy and course descriptions (*vide* 6.3.2) reveal non-specificity, therefore, exclusion of Sesotho TK/IK and other cultures represented by the student population. The finding is consistent with that from amassed literature in which authors document concern with predominance of the pre-independence colonial mentality characterised by relegating attitudes in which African cultures and their knowledge are perceived as substandard, and therefore, generally sidelined in the provisions of HE (3.2.1). In this inquiry the same concern is evidenced in the experiential narratives by Agie (*vide* 6.4.9 - "*The tendency was to associate Sesotho TK with academic failure*"), Tlhorie (*vide* 6.4.9 – "*Emphasis on English at all cost*") and Abie (*vide* 6.4.9 – "*Ntho ena ea bokolone ea hore Sekhooa se betere*) (This colonial mentality that English is better than Sesotho). The main deductions from these findings were that:

- ✚ The NUL is no exception to those English-medium African universities which still cling to Westnocentric educational practices in which African perspectives remain unexplored for their contribution to acquisition and creation of new knowledge.
- ✚ The NUL still lags behind universities such as the University of the Free State which already have in place policies on IKS/TK.

- ✚ Adoption of ethno-knowledges such as Sesotho TK to facilitate acquisition of academic English by non-English-speaking-background university students depends on provisions of such in institutional visions, missions, and curricular.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE LITERATURE AND THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

7.4.1 Recommendations regarding the literature

7.4.1.1 Chapter 2

- ✚ **Literature must document among others, how different aspects of TK\IK, can be identified and explored for how they benefit subject-specific English for construction of knowledge in HE.**

The nature of TK as dynamic (*vide 7.2.1.1*) implies its context-specific applicability and problem-solving capacity. This nature of TK points to need for education practitioners in English-medium African HE institutions such as the NUL to be conversant with what is involved in traditional knowledge to understand how it is fundamental to creation of new knowledge. Literature must document among others, how different aspects of TK\IK can be identified and explored for how they benefit acquisition of the English of individual academic subjects in English-medium HE institutions.

- ✚ **Literature would do educationally well to be explicit and research-informed about how TK is a confidence-building and academically empowering academic language need in teaching and learning in English-medium HE.**

Literature on traditional\indigenous knowledge documents educative but still scarce research on how application of knowledge from one's ethno-cultural background is a source of authority to self-advocate for clarity of knowledge being sought. Literature would do educationally well to be explicit and research-informed about how traditional knowledge is a confidence-building and academically empowering stance.

7.4.1.2 Chapter 3

- ✚ **Develop a clear understanding of the dynamic nature of TK and reflect on how it can be researched into and practically lived in HE as a cross-curricular academic context-specific English proficiency need**

This is a process that should involve some of the following:

- ✚ Documenting how African TKs such as Sesotho TK can be recognised, mainstreamed, and researched into for the role they have in enhancing construction of knowledge in academic areas such as academic English.
- ✚ Documenting perspectives on academic context-based communication needs of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds and how these can be understood from the "I-Thou" perspectives.
- ✚ Documentation of meta-research on TK\IK as an academic language proficiency need. Such documentation would avail knowledge on not only types of investigative approaches to understanding the role of TK\IK in acquisition of mediums of instruction, but the extent to which academic English in particular, has been inquired into for how it can benefit from application of ethno-knowledge. Coverage of such issues by literature would provide research-appraised concretisation of theoretical perspectives about the role of TK\IK in HE.
- ✚ Unpacking and providing knowledge on how TK/IK policies should be developed, injected into visions, missions, curriculum development and implementation for effectiveness of mainstreaming. As it reads presently, scholarship on mainstreaming of TK\IK barely addresses these issues.

7.4.1.3 Chapter 4

There is need for awareness of the relationship between demonstration of critical ability and academic English.

✦ The cognitively arduous nature of academic English renders it deserving of pedagogical attention that is provisioned for by appropriate training of personnel

Scarcella (2003) argues that academic English should not necessarily be formerly taught. Instead, it must depend on students' previous reading for its acquisition (*vide* 4.4.3). It is contended in this inquiry that by virtue of being non-mother-tongue-speakers of English, students such as those from a Sesotho-speaking background are likely to be more academically challenged by having to learn and communicate their critical ability through academic English. It is on this ground that the cognitively demanding nature (*vide* 4.4.2-4.4.3) of academic English is perceived as suggestive of need for exposure to appropriate training on how to teach it from a critical thinking-informed perspective. Because critical thinking is an aspect of all traditional knowledges regardless of ethno-cultural background, such training should include reflections on experiences with critical thinking as lived in the cultural contexts of students and lecturers. This nature of academic English therefore, necessitates institutionalisation of reflective practice research and in-service training of providers of education through the medium of English. Such training would among others, ensure that:

- (i) Education practitioners in English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL are linguistically and communicatively competent in the English of their academic specialisations to be able to identify context-based communication needs, and the extent to which such needs can benefit from application of among other strategies, context-specific/based application of students' traditional knowledge.
- (ii) HE institutions explore ways of institutionalising collaborative academic-subject-based self-study research for improvement of personal pedagogical

practice towards enhancement of academic English proficiency by NESB students.

- (iii) As institutional policy, non-English-speaking-background students enrolling into English-medium universities are assessed for pre-university proficiency in academic English. If adopted, such policies and practices would appraise teaching and learning with research-informed assumptions about academic English proficiency levels of students, and requisite pedagogical responses implied by such levels.
- (iv) By virtue of coming from a common ethno-cultural backgrounds with their students, most education – practitioners (such as myself) teaching in English-medium universities such as the NUL, see the need for, undertake research and base their teaching on awareness of the ethno-cultural contexts and personal experiences of these students, since by so doing they inform their professional practice with, and generate the “I-thou” perspective about the role of traditional knowledge in academic English. In a nutshell, education practitioners must improve their practice with phenomenographic research.

7.4.1.4 Recommendations on methodological theoretical perspectives

‡ **Adopt an ethno-culture-sensitive multi-theory approach to researching students’ learning needs such as proficiency in academic English**

Literature on concerns about marginalisation of TK in HE (*vide* 3.2.1) and that on research on language needs of international students in HE points to authors’ discomfort with predominance of positivistic research approaches which study phenomena more from the perspective of the researcher than from the voice and ethno-culturally grounded opinion of the researched (*vide* 4.4.5). This contradicts the positivist research convention by showing through narrative data (*vide* 6.4.2-6.4.9) that an understanding of academic learning needs such as proficiency in academic English benefits from application of perspectives from theories that provide for appreciation of

the ethno-identity, personal experience, values of being, and perspective of the researched. On this ground, the study effectively employed a multi-theory-appraised approach to understanding the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of SSBSs of the NUL (*vide* Figure 5.). Research on the role of TKs in HE should therefore ensure meaningfulness, relevance, learner and academic-culture-sensitivity by adopting a culture-sensitive multi-theory or theoretically eclectic approach as a basis for understanding learning needs of students from different ethno-cultural groups.

7.4.2 Recommendations regarding the empirical investigation

✚ **Institutionalise an IK/TK policy which recognises and provides for Sesotho TK for its role in academic English proficiency of SSBSs enrolling into the English-medium NUL**

Regarding students' TK and their IK backgrounds as a problem-solving strategy and a basis for understanding academic English (7.3.2.1-7.3.1.2), the study shows that discovery of Sesotho TK as beneficial to academic English came about as a result of independent decision by individual students and lecturers. Implicitly, TK/IK is not provided for by institutional policy. It is in view of the deduction about exclusion of TK/IK policy that the following becomes the recommendation:

- ✚ Although personnel providing essential services in *out-of course* academic contexts such as the library and students' records offices are not teaching, they have to have hospitality skills for making students feel welcome into the university as a new community and cultural context for them. As policy, the NUL should institutionalise inservice training on among others, the English for hospitality skills for such employees. Such a move would save many NESBs such as myself the embarrassment in communication instances such the one in which I battled with the question "*What programme are you going to read in?*" (*vide* 6.4.4.1).

↓ **Perceive the act of teaching as involvement of your whole self**

Teaching is expression of knowledge. Such expression as understood by Jousse (2000) (*vide* 2.4.2) involves use of the voice and the whole body or total physical engagement. I am influenced by findings in 6.4.2-6.4.9 which point to SSBSs as linguistically vulnerable in the context of English medium education by virtue of being non-native speakers of the medium of instruction. As members of an African culture which normally suffers relegation in the predominantly Westnocentric African HE (*vide* 3.2.1), SSBSs in HE become culturally vulnerable upon enrolment into university. Their learning therefore calls for commitment of not only the voice, but the whole body and soul of practitioners such as Richie in Accounting (*vide* 6.4.2.2a).

↓ **Appreciate and capitalise on students' ethno-cultural background for academic English proficiency**

Regardless of your ethno-cultural background in relation to that of your students recognise and live instructional commitment to your students' TK for its benefit to their academic English proficiency. The act of teaching at course-level is an individual activity often dependent on beliefs and preferences of an individual lecturer. On this note, it may not be assumed that by virtue of sharing an ethno-cultural background with students, a particular lecturer would necessarily be aware of the need, or willing to instructionally capitalise on students' TK for facilitation of acquisition of academic English proficiency. Neither should it be an assumption that the practice of teaching by lecturers from cultural backgrounds different from those of students cannot espouse students' TK as an academic English proficiency need. All lecturers, regardless of their ethno-cultural origin, should therefore, be sensitised to the value of TK in enhancing proficiency in the English of individual academic-disciplines. Such practice, would as Bonie suggests, be recognising knowledge that students enrol into university with for its contribution to reconstruction of knowledge (*vide* 6.4.4.2(b) – "*This is Accounting that is recorded in memory and lives as knowledge*").

⚡ **Establish reasons for students' decisions not to learn certain subject-based concepts**

It is not always that lecturers can account for reasons behind the decisions to not learn in some of the courses. It is necessary for not only lecturers in Economics as in Bonie's case (*vide* 6.4.4.2b (i)-(iv)) but in all subjects to establish the extent to which the reason(s) for their NESB students' decisions to withdraw from active participation—therefore, from learning, may be related to non-recognition of TKs as academic English proficiency need.

⚡ **Include ethno-culture-sensitive approaches to solutions of academic English-related problems of your students**

While education-practitioners may have a variety of teaching approaches at their disposal for addressing concept-based communication challenges in subjects such as Economics, they stand to benefit their NESB students' proficiency in course-specific English by adopting teaching strategies that include sourcing from students' TK.

⚡ **Provide in-service training on ethno-culture-sensitive strategies for developing course-specific literacy in English**

English-medium institutions of HE such the NUL should not assume that education-practitioners have language teaching skills. This spells the need for provision of in-service training on among others, application of ethno-culture-sensitive skills for identifying and instructionally addressing subject-specific communication problems of NESB students such as the SSBSs of the NUL. The curriculum content for such training should include topics such as comparative and contrastive analysis of cultural knowledges. Such a topic would provide for application of comparing and contrasting aspects of the Sesotho TK and the course-based knowledges in the university setting.

⚡ **Be organised in identification of types of TK that can be facilitative of acquisition of English that is specific to your subject of specialisation**

Traditional knowledge consists of varieties of sub-bodies of knowledge. Adoption of it (TK) for improvement of proficiency in English should therefore not be haphazard.

Instead, it should be guided by reflection on, and identification of aspects of it that lend themselves appropriately to problems with subject-specific English.

✚ **Teach difficult concepts by permeating students' cultural ways of thinking especially in subjects such as science and Economics, generally perceived to be more intellectually demanding than the social sciences subjects**

Not only Physics teacher-educators, but all education-practitioners should teach complex concepts of their subjects of specialisation by permeating their students' way of thinking from their cultural backgrounds to identify possible equivalents. This will help students demystify the common Western thinking that Sesotho TK has no place in HE in general and in the development of English of academic courses in particular.

✚ **Adopt an academic context-based pedagogical practice with SesothoTK as an academic English proficiency need**

Through revelations from experiential narratives, the inquiry has pointed to academic context-specificity and *Aha/Oooo* moment-effect of application of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need for SSBSs of English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL (*vide* 6.4). This deduction renders reasonable the need for education-practitioners across all academic contexts within and out of course to explore and tap on individual aspects of Sesotho TK for how they can facilitate acquisition of academic English by non-English-speaking-background students such as the SSBSs of the NUL.

✚ **Education-practitioners should be conversant with the meanings behind the knowledge assessment terms to be able to guide students in identification of equivalents of these and those different in meaning for clarity of those on English**

Education practitioners, particularly those from the same ethno-cultural-background with students in their courses, would do well to scrutinise the concepts making their areas of specialisation, subject their ethno-knowledge to areas of it which can lend themselves easily to understanding of these concepts and adopt accordingly for clarity of situation-specific English. For instance, strategies to this end could include use of Sesotho proverbs with the rich knowledge and advisory nature that could help lecturers

and students out of stereotypical belief that there is nothing in our own cultural heritage.

✦ **Underpin personal professional practice with *ubuntu/botho* as a value of being**

The value of *ubuntu/botho* would account for lecturers' readiness to empathise and tap from previous experiences and encounters with use of Sesotho TK to improve their own professional practice. Furthermore, the value would enable lecturers to appreciate that English is foreign to SSBSs enrolling into English-medium universities such as the NUL, renders them vulnerable. Lecturers would realise that by virtue of being members of the academic English-speaking university community, they are challenged to live the *botho/ubuntu* value by executing its sub-values of empathy, sympathy and hospitality and the responsibility and commitment they depend on for acquisition of academic English proficiency. Living this value should include institutionalisation of collaborative reflective practice research approach to teaching in HE. Such an institutional stance would create among others, an opportunity for collegiality in which education practitioners across disciplines improve their professional practice for academic English proficiency not only from intra-personal but from inter-personal introspection as well.

The inference about relevance of *ubuntu/botho* to teaching for acquisition of academic English leads to a contention that acquisition of academic English by non-English-speaking-background students such as the SSBSs of the NUL calls for adoption of ethno-value-sensitive learning and pedagogical practices – therefore, fulfilling the pedagogical values notion of the living theory (*vide 5.2.2.4*). This way students' identity and self-esteem, and values will not be violated, but will be recognized for how they help demystify academic English as a knowledge-accessing tool, which unfortunately has remained a barrier to many non-English-speaking background students. In sum, the study stresses that regardless of their ethnicity/nationality, education-practitioners should inform their course design, pedagogical practice, and assessment in academic subjects such as academic English with basic appreciation of their students' ethno-

cultural cosmos and values of being. Such an approach would be in line with the Africanisation and *ubuntu* perspectives as discussed in 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.2.

✚ Institutional vision, mission, policy, and curriculum should provide for cross-curricular mainstreaming of TK\IK

Though highly recommended, mainstreaming of TK/IK in some African HE institutions still remains a challenge even in universities such as UFS which already have relevant policies in place. The NUL should consider having an IK/TK policy in place as a basis for serious measures to be taken against relegating attitudes towards African TK/IK and their potential for adoption as needs in development of academic English.

It is evident from the study that policy, vision, mission and pedagogical practice at the NUL barely recognise and provide for the beneficial role of traditional knowledge in general, and particularly of Sesotho TK in acquisition of academic English by its students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (vide 6.4.9). For it to be a lived pedagogical reality, academic English proficiency should be provided for at all levels of the NUL.

7.4.3 Concluding remarks

Using Sesotho traditional knowledge as a case, the study set out to establish the role of Sesotho TK in academic English proficiency of HE education students from a Sesotho-speaking background. An overarching revelation from the investigation is that given policy recognition and non-relegating institutional attitudes at pedagogical level, TK serves as a problem-solving strategy regarding challenges posed by academic-context specific English. A similarly overarching recommendation is that English-medium HE institutions such as the NUL should consider adoption of an ethno-culture-sensitive policy-provisioned and academic-context-based approach to academic English proficiency. The institution should specifically, consider establishing consultative links with universities such as the University of the Free State which already have in place policies on indigenous/traditional knowledge. Even more informative would be links with

HE institutions such as the Universidade Pedagógica of Mozambique where mainstreaming of TK/IK is already regulated for and being implemented through ethno-mathematics and ethno-physics. The consultative links will serve as a template for the procedure and guidelines for institutionalisation and implementation of a curriculum-wide, ethno-culture-sensitive yet academic context-specific English policy as shall be determined by the relevant office of the NUL.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of the study were particularly methodological. One had to do with gender balance among participants. Of the thirteen voluntary participants, only three were male. It is therefore possible that the imbalance denied the study the possibility of realising the gender effect on auto-ethnographic perception about Sesotho TK as a need in acquisition of academic English. Participation in the study was voluntary. I therefore could not force males to participate. The gender imbalance was therefore unavoidable. It was for this reason that gender was not included as a factor in participants' perception of the role of Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need.

Another methodological limitation had to do with data collection techniques. For example, print-material such as course outlines for the academic subjects represented by participants were requested, but to no avail because lecturers in such offerings felt they were being evaluated. Access to course outlines would have added strength to the problem statement where I express concern with conspicuous silence about indigenous knowledge/traditional knowledge in key official institutional documents such the vision, mission statement, core values and language policy. Surprisingly, even those lecturers who were participants in the inquiry were as unwilling to share their course outlines. As would be expected, only my course outline was available for analysis.

Besides documentary sources and audio-recorded face-to-face experiential narratives, video recording was planned as the visual strategy. It would have enabled me to capture live moments such as facial and other visible body language expressions which characterized and enlivened perceptions of participants. This was not to be. Participants were not comfortable with it. Had it been permissible, the emotions and gestures which spontaneously spilled out of the participants during the narratives would have added a more evocative response to the readership of this thesis.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research focused on reflections of former students of the NUL, who at the time of participating in this inquiry were education practitioners at high school and tertiary levels. Among others, the finding on the *Oooo/Aha!* Moment-effect of Sesotho TK on acquisition of academic English of SSBSs at the NUL, as well as on development of personal philosophies by some participants has implications for further research. In particular it implies need for a collaborative study in which the researcher, the participants and practitioners in other institutions adopt an ethno-culture-sensitive approach to critically self-study their current professional practice for strategies which ensure academic English proficiency.

The finding on institutional Eurocentric attitudes militating against free use of Sesotho TK for acquisition of academic English implies need for sensitisation of NUL education-practitioners about the role of traditional knowledge in students' functional knowledge of English as a medium of learning. This could take the form of engagement of individual departments at faculty level in subject-specific reflective self-study action-research research projects. Anticipating that not all practitioners are conversant with self-study research methods such as critical auto-ethnography, the workshop strategy in the form of on-the-job training and focus on auto-ethnographic data-collection strategies for improvement of professional practice could be adopted and augmented with follow-up workshops for progress reporting and related reflections. Reflections

from these workshops could inform the number and focus of cycles as would be found necessary by participants. Individual lecturers could for instance, engage in self-study research on course-specific English and how it benefits from application of students' ethno-knowledge. In the end, research-appraised knowledge about what might be termed ethno-academic English would inform facultywide teaching and learning. The bigger picture and policy-informing institutional effort could be a meta-analysis of faculty-based critical self-study auto-ethnographies for improvement of professional practice towards culture-sensitive facilitation of acquisition of academic English proficiency by SSBSs and other non-English-speaking-background students enrolling into the NUL. This would be an attempt towards implementation of my decolonising metaphorical synthesis of the relationship between Sesotho TK and acquisition of academic English for HE non-English-speaking-background students such as those enrolling at the NUL from a Sesotho-speaking ethno-cultural background.

On a general note, scarcity of post-modernist research using ethno-culture-sensitive investigation approaches to understanding learning needs of disadvantaged students from the "I" perspective warrants attention of those researching issues in HE. On a specific note and in sum, the importance of traditional knowledges as strategies for solving problems related to academic-context-based English, coupled with perception of academic English as difficult, warrant further research that explores individual academic subjects for not only areas that are problematic, but how these can benefit from application of knowledge from different aspects of ethno-knowledges.

7.7 CONCLUSION

Literature on the role of TK in HE points to need for integration of such into teaching. Such integration is rationalised on the reasoning that traditional knowledges are foundational to formation and construction of knowledge in learning situations subsequent to the ethno-cultural contexts. Documented scholarship however, registers authors' concerns which include too much adherence to Eurocentric attitudes and

positivist research approaches to understanding learning needs of HE students from different cultural backgrounds. Still a limited number of academic subjects have been investigated for how they can benefit from application of knowledge from ethno-knowledge (*vide 3.4.1.3*). This study adds on to the number by revealing how proficiency in academic English of SSBSs can benefit from application of Sesotho TK. The study therefore, recommends that in Africa-based English-medium universities such as the NUL, consideration should be made for institutionalisation of ethno-culture sensitive policies, research and pedagogical approaches to problematic academic subjects such as English as a medium of learning and teaching.

Undertaking this inquiry has felt like an arduous journey which I metaphorically recount as follows for closure of this thesis.

MY ARDUOUS, REFLEXIVE, AND TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY TO DISCOVERY OF TRADITIONAL/INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AS AN ACADEMIC ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NEED

As a pupil, student and lecturer from a Sesotho-speaking-background, I have extended experience with some aspects of Sesotho traditional knowledge as effective strategies for solving some problems related to academic English. One of the concerns which challenged me to undertake this study was scarcity of research that aims at an understanding of academic English proficiency needs from ethno-culture-sensitive perspectives of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

At this point I implore the reader to join me in an abridged account of the challenges and discoveries which became my experiences during the inquiry. I adopt the concept of "journey metaphors" (White 2004). Thus, I talk of my **arduous, reflexive and transformative journey**. The bold type is symbolic of the impact the journeyed experience has had on me as a person and more importantly as an English education-practitioner in an English - medium African university – namely, the National University of Lesotho. I deliberately employ a first person voice for a recount of personal experiences in this journey. The reason is that the study itself is an absolute product of the "I" perspective. The "I" refers to both my perspective as the insider-implicated researcher, and the personal experiential accounts of all of the others who participated in this inquiry. I therefore come to the end of this journey with a baggage of many "I" perspectives about Sesotho as an academic English proficiency need for university student from a Sesotho-speaking background. For me such a baggage is new and transformative knowledge resulting from a totality of participants' interpretations of own first person experiences with the interface between Sesotho traditional knowledge and academic English. The title conceptualization, methodology and analysis laps of this inquiry made my journey to discovery of how application of traditional knowledge can facilitate acquisition of academic English proficiency of students who have to study

through English as a non-mother tongue language in English-medium universities such as the NUL.

a) *Journeying the title of the study*

I undertook this study at the time when ethno-knowledge was receiving attention in writing and research in academia generally, but particularly in higher education. The debate focused and still dwells on mainstreaming of ethno-knowledge in higher education. Using Sesotho TK and students from a Sesotho-speaking background as part of my case, I decided to investigate the role of African traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds but having to study in English-medium higher education institutions such as the NUL. "*Hm! The role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English – and English for that matter! We are going to face a lot of challenge. You will have to take every opportunity to present and get inputs on this topic*", my Supervisor commented. This was my first challenge.

Coincidentally I was due to travel to England in May 2008. The trip was on a staff exchange programme between my institution – the NUL and Durham University. I heeded my Supervisor's advice and took advantage of the trip to bounce my topic for inputs from colleagues I met overseas. Indeed one of the challenges I faced in Durham upon sourcing contributions was why I wanted to "*indigenise English*". I had already started examining literature on IK/TK in higher education, and preliminary insights gained already included a discovery that all knowledges, regardless of their nationality, are primarily indigenous and oralate and informed by human beings' interaction with different features of their environment (*vide* 2.2.1). I was already familiar with scholarship on perspectives on indigenous/traditional knowledge and how research should pursue an understanding of its role in higher education from an ethno-cultural perspective (*vide* 2.2.1.2-2.2.1.3). This background afforded me assertiveness in advancing at least two arguments for the title of my research. One was that English as a language for basic interaction is indigenous to its native speakers. Another was that

academic English itself is an indigenous mode of communication and knowledge construction for the academic community. I stressed that the different academic contexts in which it (academic English) is learned and utilized form the cosmos/environment from which it has developed. I did not expect colleagues in Durham University to agree with me. My gain was their input that I academically reasoned for my position.

Recall use of the pronoun "We" in my Supervisor's remark about the risk of investigating academic English from an ethno-culture-oriented perspective. I was soon to discover the significance of my Supervisor's use of the pronoun "We". Professor Monnapula Mapesela - my Supervisor (Prof. as I often addressed her), lived her use of the pronoun. Through the generosity of the National Research Foundation (NRF) she made it possible for me and fellow doctoral students to regularly meet with and benefit from presentations by renowned professionals researching and publishing on indigenous knowledge. "Prof's use of the pronoun communicated her commitment to our studies. We were not on our own. She was determined to source and avail the resources she could get for the benefit of our studies. The gesture by Prof. made me realize what is involved in living *botho/ubuntu* as a professional value necessary for improvement of learning in higher education. What was to be *botho/ubuntu/humane* in my own research? I looked for and found this in more ways than one as substantiated in many instances of Chapter 6 of this inquiry.

Prof. invited different scholars to the then Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development (CHESD) and now Centre of Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the University of the Free State to give presentations on different issues pertaining to research on the place of indigenous knowledge in higher education. Diane Hill from Canada, Professors Joan Conolly from Durban University of Technology and Edgard Sienaert were some of the scholars whose presentations helped me conceptualise the title of my thesis. The contacts included invitations of scholars to UFS and visits to other institutions of higher education to interact with professionals and students.

The title of my study benefitted greatly from these contacts. The initial reflections leading to conceptualization of the title of my inquiry benefited from personal contact with Diane Hill when Prof. invited her to give a presentation on *ethno-stress*. Diane's presentation was an advocacy for institutions of higher education to have in place policies that commit curriculum to strive for ethno-stress-free educational practice. She explained how institutional policy in her institution makes it possible for pedagogical practice to combat ethno-stress by effectively integrating ethno-knowledge of Canadian Native Indians into curriculum and teaching. The presentation challenged me to reflect on whether or not Sesotho and *Bosotho* can contribute to improvement of not only academic English proficiency of students from a Sesotho-speaking background, but also to my professional practice as an English Education practitioner. It enhanced my appreciation of, and pride in my ethnic background – *Bosotho* (being a Mosotho).

Most importantly, Diane's seminar set me reflecting back on my education career for experiences in which I have felt ethno-stressed learning and teaching as a pupil, student and now a practitioner. The reader is importuned to recall how tensed up and secretive I was about application of Sesotho TK as the reason for my enviable performance in English (*vide* 1.1.1). "So I could consider looking into this for a research topic?" I followed this up on a one-to-one basis with Diane in the presence of my Supervisor. "*Just read this book tonight and let's talk when you have time*" Diane said as she handed me the book - *The power within people* which she co-authored with Robert Antone and Brian Myers. I had barely read through the first seven pages of the book when it became clear from the following excerpt that my inquiry had to adopt an ethno-stress-free approach to understanding academic English proficiency needs of students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

Ethno-stress occurs when the cultural beliefs or joyful identity of a people are disrupted. It is the negative experience they feel when interacting with members of different cultural groups and themselves. The stress within the individual centers around this self image and sense of place in the world... As human beings, we have strong needs that have to be met. These needs include] a need to be heard when

we communicate... [and] a need to be allowed to take a place in the world...If human needs are fulfilled, people will become empowered...However, if the basic needs are not met , people will adopt "survivalist" behaviours as a response to the stress created by any unfulfilled needs (Antone, Hill & Myers 1986:6-7, 9).

The extract engaged me in deep reflective thoughts which informed the rationale/background for my inquiry. It forced me to reflect back on my experience with English as a medium of learning. I became aware that by denying me an opportunity to freely resort to aspects of Sesotho to clarify equivalent aspects of academic English, the educational system of Lesotho could be faulted for violating my "cultural beliefs and joyful identity". I was ethno-stressed. The practice of education in my country ethno-stressed me. The extract enabled me to ground my study on a stance that denying students an opportunity to openly explore their ethno-knowledge for its potential to benefit acquisition of academic English proficiency limits their access to knowledge, thus crippling their marketability in the competitive world. Such educational practice, I further noted, contravenes the basic human need "to be heard" when they communicate for among other purposes, taking a place in the world.

As I write the reflective account of personal challenges and discoveries I become aware of the **validating effect** of what I call post-inquiry auto-ethnography. For instance, I have just discovered how perception of ethno-stress as resulting from violation of joyful identity and basic human values of a people (Antone *et al* 1986) is validated by Whitehead & McNiff's (2006) postulation about how contradiction of ontological values impacts negatively on the practices of teaching and learning. The discovery has been instant. This blink manner of my awareness of the similitude in assertions of Antone *et al* (1986) and Whitehead & McNiff (2006) provokes a metaphorical interpretation of auto-ethnography.

I realize that like a still camera which captures **the moment** of a photograph being taken, auto-ethnography challenges the writer's mind to instantly recall and apply knowledge stored in memory. Writing this post-inquiry reflection reminds me that the

process of writing auto-ethnography is the process of re-inquiring and re-discovering (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005) (*vide* 5.4.1.2, 6.4.4.2: "I am a child of a rural village community" by me as a participant). Personal reflections subsequent to this contact informed my decision to adopt an ethno-culture sensitive approach to understanding academic English proficiency needs of students in African universities such as the NUL.

While the key terms of a title may point to the underpinning theory, identifying literature on such theory or theories may not be as easy. Such was one of the challenges I had to contend with. I could not immediately locate a theory; let alone theories on acquisition and application of indigenous/traditional knowledge. Through funding from the National Research Foundation, my Supervisor was able to accept a courteous invitation for her and her students to meet and discuss with Professor Conolly's doctoral students at Durban University of Technology in 2008. The theme of the discussions during the visit was indigenous knowledge. Within this theme, the reflections focused on among others, sources and forms of expression of knowledge in its pre-print form. Professors Sienaert and Conolly introduced us to Marcel Jousse's (2000) concept of Laboratory of knowledge and the oral style theory, highlighting and the relevance of these to research on traditional/indigenous knowledge and its relevance to formal education. *"This has implications for the theoretical grounding of my inquiry. The professors recommended Marcel Jousse's book The Anthropology of Geste and Rhythm"*. I thought as I reflected in my hotel room on the night after the presentation. After the Durban trip and as per advice from Professors Sienaert and Conolly, I acquired Marcel Jousse's book and interrogated the *oral-style theory* therein. It was too complex for me to follow, yet I could see its relevance to my study.

God never stops to respond to our needs. Professor Sienaert had just joined the University of the Free State (UFS). He continued to give presentations which included his review of Marcel Jousse's *oral-style theory*. There could not have been a better time for me to understand the theory from a one-on-one contact with Professor Sienaert. Often very relaxed and less threatening, many of the interactions I had with Professor

Sienaert enabled me to freely seek clarification on Jousse's *oral-style theory*. Consequently, I realized the need to base the study on conception of traditional knowledge as constructed from human beings' interaction with their immediate environment, primarily *orale*, and expressed via the voice, the whole body and artifacts (*vide* 2.4). I ascribe clarity of the theoretical basis for the title of my study to an opportunity which UFS afforded me to interact with scholars researching and publishing on issues related to my research interest.

The experiences I refer to above were the initial opportunities in which I lived my Supervisor's advice by utilizing every academic exposure to source inputs towards improvement of the title of my study. I did so effectively. In October 2009 I successfully presented my proposal to the CHEDS for onward presentation to the Title Registration Committee of the University of the Free State. A month later I was notified of official acceptance of the title. I credit this development in my research process to the learning experiences I have referred to in the first lap of my journey to discovery of the nature of the relationship between application of Sesotho traditional knowledge and acquisition of proficiency in English.

b) The methodology journey

Then there was the methodology leg of my journey. Professor Conolly shared with us not only the literature, but her experience in supervising auto-ethnographic research at masters and doctoral levels abroad and in South Africa. I was particularly enthused by how Professor Conolly's practice of teaching in higher education benefits from ethno-culture-sensitive critical self-study research. During one of my one-to-one consultations with her, she commented,

"Lifelike as I listen to you reflecting on the title of your study, you hardly refrain from referring to how as a pupil, student and in some instances as a lecturer, you have effectively applied knowledge from your Sesotho cultural background to understand and facilitate others' understanding of English as a medium of learning in your educational context. Have you considered going auto-ethnographic in your study? You are doubtful that

your experience will be accepted as scientific, therefore, reliable data. This is your truth as experienced by **you** (she emphasized) in your own context over the years. You become a reliable and authentic source by virtue of being an ethno-Mosotho. Another person in the same context may not necessarily have had the same experience and feelings. Should you decide on this route, be prepared for challenge though. Some researchers are still so positivist that they will need serious convincing. But do not stress there is ample literature on which you can draw to stand your ground”.

I was aware of ethnography but not its auto-version. This was the challenge. I heeded Professor Conolly's probes and plunged into the deep end of the literature on auto-ethnography. Professor Conolly's inputs and the literature challenged me to reflect on the methodology for my study. During the literature review lap of my journey I became aware of not only what authors such as Feuer (2007:123) refer to as “reflexivity inherent in qualitative ethnography.” Auto-ethnography is also about employment of culture-sensitive critical self-study for improvement of personal professional practice (Afonso & Taylor 2009:273) was another of my discoveries.

Professor Conolly's input posed two challenges for me. My ever-constant personal experience with strategic but successful application of Sesotho traditional knowledge for understanding of academic English needed to be subjected to experience-informed research in order to be considered part of formal documented scholarship which would serve as a reliable source for practitioners to reflexively research for improvement of personal professional practice. Furthermore, there was need for me to boldly embrace and assume the eminent position of an emic insider-implicated researcher (Feuer 2007; Whitehead 1999) in my study. Such an approach would result in the “I” perspective about the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of Sesotho-speaking-background students.

Another of the challenges implied by inputs from my contact with Professor Conolly was to address the question of whether or not a study based on a single voice can be regarded as a contribution to scholarship in general and improvement of my personal professional practice in particular. Yes it can. For instance, in justifying single voices as

reliable data, Trahar (2009) argues that by virtue of membership to a larger society, an individual may hold perspectives that represent those of his/her community. I am an individual who is a member of multiple larger societies. Primarily, I belong with the rural community of *Ha Tsoeute* – my home village. Within the same community I would be classified with those who have been exposed to formal education up to university. In my capacity as an education-practitioner, I qualify for membership to the modernist academic community with functional linguistic and communicative competence in academic English. I therefore, could be assumed to be not only aware and appreciative of, but also to have the potential to represent and practice values of the societies of which I am a member.

Use of auto-ethnography gave me an opportunity to be genuinely alone with myself to be able to generate data for this study. It allowed me to discover in me the self that was raised in a rural community with traditional values of Basotho of the time, but was later to be exposed to modern education and yet continues to respect and live her ethno-knowledge for its contribution to construction of modern scholarship. Among others, the process of retrospective reflection has revealed to me how unavoidable adoption of some aspects of Sesotho traditional knowledge is as a problem-solving strategy for addressing some complexities of the English of learning. Living auto-ethnography in this inquiry has made me discover in retrospect, but for the improvement of my present and future practice, how application of one's ethno-knowledge can facilitate acquisition of the English for learning in different academic contexts.

In her narrative of personal growth from her doctoral work on linguistic, cultural and social anomie, Feuer (2007:123) discovered how inclusion of the "I" perspectives of others in her research made her realize "the actual closeness of her experiences and attitudes" of those with whom she shared a common background. I have had a similar experience in my inquiry. By doing an auto-ethnographic study in which I included participants who like my self were not only graduates from the NUL, but were

education-practitioners in different institutions of education, I allowed myself and the readership of my inquiry to discover how the "I" perspective can be of not only the self that is the insider-implicated researcher, but also that of the self that is the other participant.

My Supervisor was cautious that I do not completely abandon some basic conventions in developing the methodology chapter in qualitative research. I for instance, still had to adhere to some of the conventional aspects such as the literature review chapters. The reward was the Mpho's Multi-theory Web (*vide* Figure 5.1) which I was able to develop subsequent to the study of literature for theoretical underpinnings of the methodology chapter.

Still the challenge for me was to be conversant with scholarship on auto-ethnographic terminologies. For instance, upon familiarizing myself with previous auto-ethnographic studies, I discovered that "research concern" is a more appropriate expression for statement of the problem in auto-ethnographic research. I also became aware from the study of the literature that a combination of personal, social and academic reasons makes a statement of the rationale in auto-ethnographic research (*vide* 1.1.1-1.1.3). These discoveries were also confirmed during my one-to-one consultation with Professor Jack Whitehead during a workshop on "Living standards of researching, teaching and learning in higher education," held at Durban University of Technology between 18-22 July 2011. Three weeks later, the discoveries were reconfirmed at a presentation which I gave to a selected group of experts for validation of my research. The event was held at the Central University of Technology (CUT) on August 30th 2011, per courtesy of NRF through Professor Monnapula-Mapesela.

c) Journeying the data

While the advent of modern technological developments such as *Atlas ti* (*vide* 5.7.3) has reduced the pressure to engage with such overwhelming amounts of qualitative data, narratives as one of the main features of auto-ethnography require the researcher

to attend to them as entities representing individual truths. My study of literature for this benefitted also from interactions with scholars with experience in auto-ethnographic research. I gained particularly from one-to-one contacts with at least two such scholars. One was Professor Emilia Afonso when my Supervisor invited her to the Central University of Technology in 2010. Another was Professor Peter Taylor who generously responded to my email with challenging inputs. I became aware from both professors that findings from individual narratives as auto-ethnographic data must normally be immediately interpreted also for how they relate to documented literature to give them credibility.

Prior to the stage of narrating and critically interpreting actual personal experiences of how Sesotho can be a need for proficiency in academic English, the participants and my self were unaware of the power of critical reflection in revealing to us the storytellers, those theories and/or philosophies which situation-imposed experience makes us to unconsciously chose to live in our lives as individual professionals and students teaching/learning through English as a non-mother tongue medium. By adopting auto-ethnography for a method of inquiry, I have provided an opportunity for myself and others to be aware of situations in which Sesotho traditional knowledge should be/could have been explored for how it benefits acquisition of proficiency in academic English of students from a Sesotho-speaking-background.

As I exit this study I feel a profound change in me as a researcher and more importantly, as a practitioner. I know better who I am every time I stand before my Sesotho-speaking-background student-teachers - many of whom are training to teach more than one subject through the medium of English. I know how I can develop in my student-teachers the ability to explore and strategically apply their own and their students' ethno-knowledge for how it can benefit acquisition of proficiency in the English of doing school. To close, I borrow from Feuer (2007:129) and "take comfort in knowing from critical reflection of personal experience" that application of Sesotho

traditional knowledge has the *Aha/ooo! Moment* effect oin academic English of students from a Sesotho-speaking background.

I should not be misrepresented to be partronising if I say all this would not have been; were it not mainly for the "We" and slave-driving spirit built into this journey by my Supervisor. I was to earn the Ph. D; and the responsibility to meet the challenges was therefore mine after all. It was the value of my Supervisor's *botho/ubuntu* that underpinned and facilitated the opportunity for me to meet with, learn from and network with renowned professionals, authors and researchers in the areas of particularly indigenou knowledge, reflective practice/action-research and auto-ethnography to name but a few fields. I hope I have arrived. Yes. I have arrived and for that matter with research-appraised knowledge and contribution that Sesotho traditional knowledge is a context-specific and need driven need.

SUMMARY

Key words: traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge, academic English, academic language, academic English proficiency, Sesotho-speaking background, higher education, African higher education, non-English-speaking-background students, academic-context, academic-subject-specific, ethno-culture, culture-sensitive, auto-ethnography, multi-theory.

Using Sesotho traditional knowledge as a case, the aim of the inquiry was to gain an understanding of the role of traditional knowledge in academic English proficiency of higher education students from a Sesotho-speaking background. The inquiry was motivated not only by literature, my personal and others' encounters with academic English as difficult, and therefore a barrier to academic achievement of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds, but also by the question of whether or not and how application of knowledge from traditional knowledge can enhance acquisition of English as a medium of knowledge acquisition. The inquiry adopted a multi-theory approach to understanding this role. The theoretical template for the inquiry was my personal philosophy about the relationship between one's ethno-culture and academic English proficiency. The theories - oral-style, the Africanisation, the *ubuntu*, critical hermeneutic, the living, and the critical self-study for improvement of personal professional practice were sourced from the literature to augment my personal stance.

The inquiry employed the qualitative design. Auto-ethnography was the method adopted to understand the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge from an ethno-culture-sensitive personal experience perspective of Sesotho-speaking background former students of the NUL – inclusive of myself the insider-implicated researcher. Personal experience narratives of experiences with Sesotho TK as an academic English proficiency need were the main data collection strategy.

An overarching revelation from the inquiry is the cross-curricular but academic context-specific *Oooo/Aha* moment-effect of strategic application of knowledge from students' ethno-culture on acquisition of academic English proficiency. The study therefore, points to a positive relationship between Sesotho TK and academic English proficiency. However, concern is registered about non-recognition of TK for its role in academic English proficiency. Such exclusion is associated with lack of clear IK policy at the NUL.

If Africa-based English-medium universities such as the NUL were to institutionalise IK policies, relevant research, language policies, curriculum development, and implementation of culture-sensitive approaches to academic English proficiency would effect.

OPSOMMING

Sleutelwoorde: tradisionele kennis, inheemse kennis, akademiese Engels, akademiese taal, akademiese Engelsvaardigheid, Sesotho-sprekende agtergrond, hoëronderwys, Afrika hoëronderwys, studente met nie-Engelssprekende agtergrond, akademiese konteks, akademies-vakspesifiek, etno-kultuur, kultuursensitief, outo-etnografie, multi-teorie.

Die doel van die ondersoek was om 'n begrip van die rol van tradisionele kennis in die akademiese vaardigheid in Engels van hoëronderwysstudente vanuit 'n Sesotho-sprekende agtergrond te verkry deur gebruik te maak van Sesotho tradisionele kennis as 'n gevallestudie. Die ondersoek is nie alleen deur die literatuur, my eie en ander se kennismaking met akademiese Engels as moeilik gemotiveer, wat gevolglik 'n struikelblok in die akademiese prestasie van studente vanuit nie-Engelssprekende agtergrond is nie, maar ook deur die vraag oor hoe die toepassing van tradisionele kennis die verwerwing van Engels as 'n medium van kennisverwerwing kan verbeter. Die ondersoek het 'n multi-teorie-benadering tot 'n begrip van hierdie rol gebruik. Die teoretiese templaar vir die ondersoek was my persoonlike filosofie omtrent die verhouding tussen 'n mens se etno-kultuur en akademiese vaardigheid in Engels. Die teorieë – orale styl, die Afrikanisering, die *ubuntu*, kritiese hermeneutiek, lewendes, en die kritiese selfstudie vir die verbetering van persoonlike professionele praktyke is uit die literatuur verkry ten einde my persoonlike standpunt te verbreed.

Die ondersoek het die kwalitatiewe ontwerp gevolg. Outo-etnografie is die metode wat aanvaar is om die rol van Sesotho tradisionele kennis vanuit 'n etnies-kultureelsensitiewe persoonlike ervaringsperspektief van voormalige studente van die NUL met 'n Sesotho-sprekende agtergrond – insluitende myself, die intern-geïmpliseerde navorser – te verstaan. Persoonlike ervarings-narratiewe van

ondervindings met Sesotho TK as met die behoefte aan 'n akademiese vaardigheid in Engels was die hoof- data-insamelingstrategie.

'n Oorkoepelende onthulling vanuit die ondersoek is die effek van die kruis-kurrikulêre, maar tog akademiese inhoudspesifieke *Oooo/Aha*-oomblik van die strategiese toepassing van kennis vanuit studente se etno-kultuur betreffende die verwerwing van vaardigheid in akademiese Engels. Die studie dui gevolglik op 'n positiewe verhouding tussen Sesotho TK en akademiese vaardigheid in Engels. Kommer word egter ervaar oor die nie-erkenning van TK vir die rol wat dit in akademiese vaardigheid in Engels speel. Sodanige uitsluiting word geassosieer met 'n gebrek aan 'n duidelike IK-beleid by die NUL.

Indien Afrika-gebaseerde, Engelsmedium-universiteite soos die NUL IK-beleide sou institutionaliseer, sou die gevolg relevante navorsing, taalbeleide, kurrikulumontwikkeling en die implementering van kultuur-sensitiewe benaderings tot akademiese vaardigheid in Engels ten gevolg hê.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE NARRATIVE GUIDE

The role of traditional knowledge in acquisition of proficiency in academic English by students in a higher education institution: An auto-ethnographic study

I am adopting a personal experience-informed approach to understanding "the role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of academic English proficiency by NUL students from a Sesotho-speaking background". You are voluntarily participating in this study as a Sesotho-speaking-background former student of the NUL. I therefore, request you to share with me by way of storied and perceptual narratives your personal life experiences with whether or not, and how application of knowledge of different aspects of Sesotho traditional knowledge can benefit/benefits or does not benefit acquisition of academic English. It is my hope that while they should not necessarily confine you, the following may help focus your experience-informed narratives.

I PERSONAL DETAILS

- 1.1** Gender: Male Female
- 1.2** Home district:
- 1.3** Home village:
- 1.4** Where you were raised as a Mosotho from a Sesotho-speaking-ethno-cultural background:
- 1.5** Values that were nurtured in you from this background.
- 1.6** Subjects of specialisation at the NUL?

II. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF SESOTHO TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH OF NUL STUDENTS FROM A SESOTHO-SPEAKING BACKGROUND

Your experiences with how Sesotho OTK as an academic English proficiency need/no need in different academic contexts at the NUL.

NB: Such knowledge encompasses the following and other sources you may think of:

- Basotho's cultural values
 - Basotho's beliefs, myths, and superstitions
 - Basotho's ritual practices
 - Geographical features (mountains, rivers, valleys, weather, seasonal) of Lesotho
 - Plants/medicinal
 - Proverbs
 - Riddles,
 - Song and Dance
 - Artefacts
 - Poetry, etc.
- 2.1 Why decision to apply socio-cultural knowledge from your Sesotho traditional culture.
 - 2.2 Aspects of academic English benefitting/not benefiting from Sesotho OTK.
 - 2.3 Personal feelings about successful application of Sesotho traditional knowledge for improved understanding of academic English at university.
 - 2.4 Based on this personal experience what impressions/conclusions do you have about Sesotho OTK in acquisition of academic English at university?

III WHAT IN YOUR OPINION THIS IMPLIES FOR THE ENGLISH-MEDIUM NUL.

- 3.1 Share with me events of personal experience with how Sesotho values benefit/do not benefit your understanding of academic English when you were studying at the NUL.
- 3.2 How the situation made/makes you feel as a former student from a Sesotho-speaking background and now an education-practitioner?
- 3.3 Your overall impression(s) about the educational practice at the NUL with regard to the role of Sesotho OTK in your acquisition of academic English?

IV RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Your vision of the NUL as a local English-medium university best suited for promotion of acquisition of academic English proficiency by its students from an oral Sesotho traditional background?

APPENDIX B

Letter of consent and acceptance form

Faculty of Education
National University of Lesotho
P.O. Roma 180
LESOTHO

August 4, 2010

Dear Colleague

Subject: Request for your participation in my Ph.D study

My name is Lifelile Mpho Matsoso. I am a PhD student at the University of the Free State (UFS). The title of my thesis is "**The role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of proficiency in academic English by students in a higher education institution: An auto-ethnographic study**".

The research has been provoked by observation of, and concern with continued marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems in teaching and learning in higher education institutions. This marginalisation is despite documented awareness of the positive role these knowledge systems in formal education. I align myself with a documented view that if left to persist, the situation threatens the cultural identity, creativity and intellectual capacity which are embedded in the ethno-cultural being of students and so form a strong knowledge base for acquisition of western knowledge in higher education institutions. Although focused specifically at the English-medium NUL and its population of students coming mainly from a Sesotho-speaking background, I believe that the research that I am embarking on will contribute research-supported knowledge on the role of not only Sesotho traditional knowledge, but of indigenous knowledge systems from other cultures in acquisition of academic English (the English for doing academic and professional work).

As a graduate of the English-medium NUL you are, by this letter, humbly requested to kindly volunteer to participate in this study as an interviewee. Specifically, you are invited to share with the researcher your personal-experiences with the extent to which knowledge from your Sesotho cultural background benefited /benefits your academic English at the NUL. With your permission, an audio-tape, camera, and/or video-camera will be used to capture the conversation during the interview which will be scheduled at the time and venue suitable to you. Each interview will last not more than one hour. I

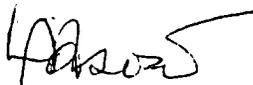
enclose for your perusal, an interview-guide for the investigation. You are also assured of the following:

- Every effort will be made to respect your right to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.
- The interview transcript will be presented to you for confirmation.
- You are free to suggest improvements on the interview guide.
- You will be offered a summary of the research results at the completion o the study.
- You are free to opt out of the research at any stage.

Kindly indicate your acceptance of participation in this study by signing the enclosed consent form.

I thank you in anticipation of your kind acceptance of my request.

Yours Sincerely,



Lifeliile Mpho Matsoso

Acceptance form

Ihave read the above letter of consent and feel informed enough to participate in the study on **"The role of Sesotho traditional knowledge in acquisition of proficiency in academic English by students in higher education institutions: An auto-ethnographic study"**.

Signature..... Date.....

