
THESIS SUBMISSION

Title: Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"

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*Inspiring
excellence,
transforming
lives through
quality,
impact, and
care.*

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the (master's) degree with specialisation in English in the Department of English in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State.

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DECLARATION

I, Mpho Hope Tsiloane, hereby certify that the dissertation that I handed in for the Master of Arts University of the Free State, titled “Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language" is entirely original and that I have not submitted the same work for credit at any other institution. Furthermore, I affirm that no other scholar’s work has been used without proper citation and that every source that has been cited or used has been stated and acknowledged with full references.

Tsiloane MH

28/11/2025

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my daughter, Oratile Lethabo Tsiloane. I want you to know that when the time is right, the lord will make it happen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr K. Ngara, for his help throughout this journey. It hasn't been an easy one, but your support and patience mean a great deal to me. Furthermore, I would like to thank and appreciate my Co-supervisor, Dr N. Nyika from UKZN, for the guidance and redirection that made a huge difference. May God bless and keep you both. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my family for their unwavering support. A big shout-out to my little sister, Boitumelo Tsilwane; thank you for everything you do for Ora and me. This degree would not be possible without your support. In addition, I would like to thank my accountability group and transportation group. Your support and encouragement helped me through the most difficult times. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering belief in me and unwavering support. I pat myself on the back for not giving up even when the odds were stacked against me.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EFAL	English First Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
LOLT	Language of learning and teaching
SR	Student Respondent
SP	Staff participant
LIEP	The Language in Education Policy
Department of Basic Education	DBE
Foundation Phase	FP
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
LP	Language Policy
MEP	Multilingualism Education Project
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
UCT	University of Cape Town
NWU	North-west University
UFS	University of the Free State
MEP	Multilingualism Education Project

ABSTRACT

The term "language in education" refers to how teachers communicate with learners and the content they teach. Language in education encompasses the use of language as a tool for teaching and learning within the educational system. This encompasses the language of instruction and the understanding of the language of teaching and learning. The language in education concept also encompasses the development of a particular language and the language policies employed by the education department to ensure language inclusivity and multilingualism. Therefore, it is pivotal not to view language within the education system as a means of communication and content delivery, but as a tool aimed at fostering meaningful interactions between the student, the lecturer, and the content. The purpose of this paper is to uncover how the use of English can limit and enhance students' and academic staff members' ability to interact within teaching and learning spaces. It further seeks to map out and reflect on participants' experiences of language and how they reflect power within teaching and learning spaces. The study collected data using online questionnaires that sampled 27 students and 25 academic staff members from the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The study's findings reveal a dual effect that presents language as both an enabler of inclusive interactions and a reinforcer of marginalisation and linguistic inequality. Furthermore, the study revealed how translanguaging can be used to foster positive interactions within teaching and learning spaces. The study is significant because it responds to and addresses the need for multilingual teaching approaches and language inclusivity in higher learning institutions, using the voices of academic staff members and students at the UFS Qwaqwa to reflect on these needs.

Key concepts: Critical discourse analysis, Language inclusivity, Linguistic inequality, , Language in education, Multilingualism, Translanguaging.

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1. Introduction

People perceive and interpret language in diverse ways; consequently, its meaning is constantly evolving. Language is not limited to the language one speaks, but encompasses the discourses and vocabulary used. Husain (2015:01) defines language as a “collection of words strung together in sentences, but each word having a separate identity and meaning. The words are brought together in special ways to give a highly systematic order from which we get meaning. Language is not random behaviour but is systematic, where certain orderings are accepted as having prescribed meanings”. Language functions as a mechanism of social cohesion, emerging through interactions among diverse groups and fostering a shared sense of belonging and meaning. At the same time, it serves as a defining marker of personal identity and plays a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Language can also be regarded as the primary basis of all communication and the primary instrument of thought. It brings together people of diverse social, political, and religious affiliations. Language is vital for the socialisation of people and ensuring that culture, knowledge, and way of life are passed from one generation to the next (Rivera-Sanchez and du Plessis 2020:31). For a society, family, or any social institution to thrive, there needs to be shared values, and language forms part of the core values of a society. Malinowski (2009:07) suggests that “language is a necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment, without which unified social action is impossible”. Thus, language is said to be at the core of humanity; it should be inclusive, reflect the population and provide a sense of belonging and unity. According to Ogli (2020:116), “Language is society's wealth”; it is the social currency people use to bargain and negotiate meaning. It is an essential factor that organises and unites people.

1.2 Background

South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual country with diverse languages spoken by diverse groups of people. South Africa has twelve official languages spoken in various parts of the country, so when students enter higher learning institutions, they bring experiences that

reflect their cultural, linguistic, and personal encounters. These encounters are expressed and shared through language. Therefore, language in South Africa reflects a wealth of history. The twelve official languages are isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Setswana, Sepedi, Siswati, Sesotho, English, South African Sign Language and Afrikaans. In essence, South Africa has been a multilingual country since the enactment of the Constitutional Act 108 of 1996 of the Republic of South Africa, granting official language status to eleven of these languages and sign language in 2012 (Mbirimi -Hungwe 2024:119)

1.2.1 Politics of Language in Apartheid and Post-apartheid South Africa

South Africa is a diverse country, and its diversity is reflected in its language, culture, and religion. Positive and negative factors align with the country's diverse identity, influencing how people perceive and respond to differences. Looking at South Africa's apartheid history, we can conclude that language has always been used to enforce and highlight negative stereotypes. This is reflected through the subjugation people experience due to language and skin colour. The apartheid system did not celebrate South Africa's linguistic diversity but promoted cultural superiority. Masahisa (2022: 06) states that "Language is a contentious issue in South Africa. These contestations manifest themselves through resistance to the use of languages that were used to dominate and disempower. Afrikaans was used as a means of violent oppression of blacks during the apartheid era, and English was used as a means of oppression of Afrikaners under British imperialism and was heavily resisted by them". Therefore, the history of language in South Africa reflects a lengthy line of conflict, power dynamics and stratification. Language was used to subjugate and oppress people. The oppression manifested across multiple levels, including social, political, and geographical dimensions. During the apartheid era, Afrikaans was institutionalised as a dominant language and was imposed on Black South Africa as a tool of control and the same method of using language as a tool to subjugate was used by the British people. They used English to marginalise and oppress Afrikaners. These methods of marginalisation were met with resistance, and the 1976 Soweto Uprising and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902 are prime examples of resisting linguistic imperialism.

South Africa's colonial and apartheid past plays a huge part in understanding the disparities that exist within the country. Most people look at the socio-economic impact of apartheid and overlook how language played an important part in fostering interactions and alienation. Language has historically been a breeding ground for conflict. Colonisers impose their languages on the people they subjugate. Sometimes, new languages were created through the dissolution of empires, but these new codes can lead to further conflict and increased

marginalisation (Nudelman 2015:40). Roberge (in Mesthrie 2002:75) states that there are three groups responsible for the development of the Afrikaans language, which are European settlers, indigenous khoi-khoi and enslaved people of African and Asian Provenance (from 1658) This echoes that idea that new languages are created and used through the dissolution and merging of new empires.

Afrikaans is linked with apartheid because it is the language the Dutch oppressors spoke. The apartheid law thrived on making Afrikaans a superior language; this law marginalised existing languages spoken by Black South Africans (Van Niekerk 1998:05). These languages were given an inferior position within the apartheid system's social, political, and educational order. Van Niekerk (1998) notes that systems of dominance primarily inscribe themselves through language, meaning that language is one of the instruments used by powerful leaders, states, and individuals to force the powerless to conform to new languages while dismantling the influence of their traditional languages. This idea is evident through various apartheid laws. Where black South Africans were forced to socialise, work and learn using Afrikaans as a medium, and those who refused were harshly punished. The punishment ranged from violent attacks to detainment and social exclusion. Thus, dominance was inscribed through language and its corrective measures. Consequently, some might bestow the characteristics of Afrikaans as an oppressor to English because, in modern-day English, it is used as a tool to marginalise and subjugate people who are not native speakers. Skutnabb-Kangas (2015) coined the term linguicism, which refers to discrimination based on language, encompassing unfair treatment due to a person's accent, native language, dialect, or communication style. Linguicism is practised in various spaces, such as the classroom, where one is expected to engage using the LOLT, which is typically English, and failure to adequately express oneself can lead to being shamed or ridiculed. The shame and ridicule one experience reflect the oppressive status English holds in our workplaces and educational institutions, where monolingualism is expected. Furthermore, Skutnabb-Kangas states that educational systems that enforce monolingual (English-only) instruction or assessment can produce "linguicism" discrimination based on language, leading to poorer outcomes for students whose home languages are not English. Therefore, higher learning institutions that utilise monolingualism in multilingual spaces discriminate and marginalise those who are not native speakers because they are forced to engage with content and assessments in a language that is foreign to them and lack the free will to choose a language that they want to learn in.

The language history of South Africa reflects Scott's (2001) notion of power dynamics and its effects. Scott (2001) posits that power is achieved through the mainstream or the second stream

of power. In the mainstream of power, investigators have been concerned with the actual exercise of power by a principal over a subaltern: power consists in making someone do something. In a second stream of power, attention has been given to a principal's capacity or potential to do something. From this latter point of view, the central significance of power is found in certain actors' ability to facilitate certain outcomes . Mainstream power during apartheid was achieved by eradicating the use of Black languages in political and educational spaces—and by so doing, the apartheid government wanted to make Black South African languages be viewed as useless and meaningless. The creation of the Group Areas Act of 1950 enforced the segregation of different races to specific areas within urban locales. It also restricted ownership and the occupation of land to a specific statutory group. This meant that Blacks could not own or occupy land in White areas. The Act was another means of the Apartheid government to foster White superiority and to entrench the minority White regime at the expense of the Black majority (South African History Online 2020). Furthermore, the separation of people geographically by culture and language highlighted the apartheid regime's desire to weaken the collective power of Black South African languages. According to Simpson and Mayr (2007), power needs to be regarded as legitimate by people to be accepted. Power is legitimised through language; colonisers legitimise their power by disseminating and enforcing their language over the people they subjugate. Forcing black South Africans to learn, work and engage in public social spaces outside their designated homesteads in Afrikaans was the apartheid government's way of legitimising its power. Because of their political power and control of media, they influenced language and determined societal discourses in places where black people had limited control, such as workplaces, suburban areas and schools. This subjugation placed indigenous African languages at a disadvantage. Currently, Indigenous African languages are still at a disadvantage because they are still given a lower status within the teaching and learning environment and are not used as LOLTs. Linguistic imperialism is not a concept of the past; it remains evident in our everyday lives. It remains evident through the continued dominant status English has across various sectors. English continues to serve as a gatekeeping resource, determining who gains access to opportunities in employment, education, and professional fields. Universities adopting English and marginalising students' home languages is another form of linguistic imperialism, as publishing, digital platforms, and global industries primarily operate in English, reinforcing unequal power relations by valuing English-speaking participants and institutions over others. As a result, English continues to shape social, intellectual, and economic hierarchies, making linguistic imperialism a persistent feature of contemporary globalisation.

People seldom understand the power language yields; they rarely regard it as a tool that produces power, fuels debate or even causes conflict in a single space. In truth, language can operate in all these ways. Language has a profound influence on many aspects of human culture, including religion, politics, society, and economics. Banning specific languages or mandating one over another produced tension and anxiety, charges of isolationism, and even allegations of racism and discrimination. The creation of Bantu education reflects the immense power language possesses. Bantu Education was a system used by the apartheid government to maintain control and have influence over black South Africans using language. Bantu education was based on marginalising Black South Africans through the deprivation of access to good, equal and fair education (Rodney 2012: 11). To make the learning process hard and discourage the black youth from seeking an education, learning using Afrikaans was implemented. Elias and Tshibalo (2016:04) state that the powerless do not receive education through the medium of their mother tongue but are forced to use someone else's language, while others may use their native language as a medium of instruction. In this case, language is isolated from culture rather than being treated as a function of culture (Prah 2012:30). By creating the Bantu education system, the apartheid government hoped to shape and influence young black South Africans' minds using discourses that perpetuate the idea of white supremacy and Black inferiority status. Phillips (1999:22) posits that different strategies were needed to maintain this imbalanced system. Education, or a lack of it, is another strategy employed to provide Black people with lower-quality education so they could not hope to become the political or social equals of Whites.

The other strategy used to subjugate Black people was the creation of Bantustans. Bantustans refer to areas designated by the South African apartheid government as “homelands” for the country’s African ethnic groups (Egero, 1991:06). Black people were given homelands, which meant that whatever their culture was, they had to go to the shared land. Qwaqwa was previously a Bantustan established for the occupation of the Southern Basotho ethnic group. Qwaqwa is populated by the Basotho cultural group, and Sesotho is the primary regional language. However, due to industrialisation, migration, and education through the UFS Qwaqwa campus and the Maluti TVET colleges, people from various cultural groups and geographical locations migrated to Qwaqwa for multiple reasons, with education being one of them. The Qwaqwa community experienced an influx of diverse ethnicities, resulting in multilingual and multicultural interactions that altered the town's economic and educational landscape. According to statistics received from the UFS Directorate for Institutional Research

and Academic Planning, there are 3,781 Isizulu students on campus, representing the highest student population, with 2,228 Sesotho and 277 IsiXhosa-speaking students (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2024). However, the student population is not limited to these ethnic groups. The mentioned groups are among the top three language on campus. Therefore, by accommodating these different ethnic groups within the communities, a more varied and inclusive approach is necessary, as students interact with diverse cultural groups that speak different languages and have different socialisation patterns.

1.2.2 Language in higher education

Language in higher learning spaces fosters conducive interactions and access to knowledge. Through language, students gain access to academic knowledge, research findings, textbooks, and other educational resources (Elias and Tshibalo 2016:03). However, most of the learners in Southern Africa do not receive education through the medium of their home language but only through their second language or third language which is English (Uys 2007:69). Students' success in learning is measured by their ability to comprehend and engage with academic content delivered through English as the medium of instruction.. A language of instruction is regarded as a tool that facilitates the learning of the content subjects (Kyeyune 2016:23). So, not having adequate comprehension of the language of instruction is problematic because lack of access means being excluded from the learning process. Students who are successful in education are those who have mastered the English language or those who manage to get by with limited comprehension of the language of teaching and learning, whereas failure is often attributed to a poor command of English, which hinders their understanding of the subject matter.

Higher education teaching and learning spaces are designed to foster creative thinking, openness, and facilitate learning among students and lecturers. The higher education environment and its learning processes in South Africa differ from those within the Basic Education System within the country. The higher education learning environment enables and promotes engagement and critical thinking. Trowler (2010) observed student engagement in three types of classrooms and found that engagement was the lowest in the lecture theatre. There are assorted reasons that affect interactions within lecture halls, such as shyness, lack of preparation, and language barriers. Therefore, to improve engagement, the above reasons should be examined to enhance students' ability to interact with others and create more

effective learning environments.

1.2.3 Multilingual education

Multilingual education refers to a teaching and learning approach that stresses the importance of multiple languages acquisition alongside other academic subjects (Tan and Xun 2023:13). Multilingual education has its benefits and its challenges in teaching and learning spaces, which are faced worldwide. Numerous studies have examined and explored the positive and negative factors that both hinder and promote effective learning within multilingual classrooms. Furthermore, multiple studies discuss the experiences of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. This section examines the benefits and challenges encountered in multilingual classrooms across various countries. In a study conducted in Asia by Dosi and Papadopoulou (2020), which examined the impact of multilingual education on working memory in Chinese-speaking children. The findings revealed that multilingual education had a positive influence on the working memory performance of children learning in a multilingual setting. The study reveals that regular language switching, and exposure contribute to the development of cognitive abilities. On the other hand, a research study conducted in Europe by Poulin-Dubois et al. (2020) highlighted the influence of multilingual education on metalinguistic awareness. The study reveals that Multilingual children in European countries demonstrated higher levels of metalinguistic awareness, including an understanding of language structure and grammar, compared to monolingual children. Furthermore, a study conducted by Serafini, Rozell, and Winsler (2022) in the United States examined the cognitive flexibility of multilingual individuals. The research found that multilingualism has a positive impact on cognitive flexibility, enabling individuals to adapt their thinking strategies and switch between different mental frameworks more effectively. The multicultural and multilingual environment of America promotes cognitive flexibility through exposure to diverse languages and cultures.

1.3 Purpose of the study and research objectives

The purpose of this study is to map out participants' experience of language by looking at how language limits or enhances students' and academic staff members' ability to interact within various teaching and learning spaces.

1.3.1 Research questions

- How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

• 1.3.2 Research Problem

- The UFS Qwaqwa campus staff and students interact in a linguistically diverse teaching and learning environment. English remains the primary medium of instruction supported within these spaces. This creates communication challenges for many students whose primary languages are indigenous African languages. As a result, classroom interactions may not fully support understanding, participation, or inclusion. Although the university promotes multilingualism, little is known about how staff and students experience language use during the teaching and learning process. The study, therefore, seeks to address the limited understanding of how linguistic dynamics shape classroom interactions and influence access to knowledge on the Qwaqwa Campus.

1.3.3 Research objectives

- To explore the relationship between language, power, and interaction within lecture halls between students and academic staff members and among students
- To analyse how English as a language of instruction enables or limits interaction between students and academic staff members within lecture halls.
- To identify the linguistic dynamics that exist within the UFS Qwaqwa campus.

1.4 Research design and methodology

Frost, Nolas, Brooks-Gordon, and Esin (2010:2-3) state that using a pluralistic approach is vital for exploring how different researchers make sense of the data received, as it provides multiple

ways of understanding qualitative research. Furthermore, it provides multiple ways of generating meaning. Pluralism offers layers of interpretation and diverse perspectives, as well as participants' accounts of their experiences. The incorporation of multiple methods encourages creativity and innovation, thereby extending the scope and depth of the data. The study employs a combined phenomenological and critical discourse approach to gain a deeper understanding of how language influences interactions within teaching and learning spaces. Phenomenology is employed to explore participants' everyday lived experiences, allowing insight into their perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of language use. Viewed by some scholars as a methodological orientation, phenomenology effectively aligns with the core concerns of interpretive research. As a philosophical approach, phenomenology resists the notion that legitimate knowledge can only be generated through detachment from everyday human experience. Instead, it privileges subjective accounts of ordinary, lived realities, capturing how individuals make sense of their social worlds from their own perspectives (Crotty, 1998, cited in Jackson, Ronald, Drummond, Camora, & Sakile, 2007). In this study, a phenomenological approach is particularly appropriate, as it enables a nuanced exploration of students' and academic staff members' views on how language influences interaction and participation within teaching and learning spaces. Critical discourse analysis provides a lens for examining the underlying power relations embedded in these interactions.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a theory, methodology, and type of analysis used across various fields, including linguistics, sociology, and philosophy. CDA focuses on how language is used; discourses are found within language, and knowledge is created through these discourses. CDA can be implemented with qualitative data collection methods, such as photo-elicitation interviews, archival data, and observations, to uncover power relations and social inequalities in those texts. CDA offers a methodology to penetrate beyond surface-level themes, understanding how language functions at the micro level and thereby bolsters understanding at the macro level. This micro–macro connection illustrates how discourses gain legitimacy at multiple levels, become dominant and embedded with power, and are perpetuated. The following studies illustrate how CDA provides alternative perspectives and insightful contradictions in sport contexts. In emphasising the power relations, this work demonstrates that critique must be present in interpreting and challenging the data.

A qualitative approach provides personal insight and in-depth responses. It highlights and

strengthens subjective opinions. This aligns with the objective of this study, which is to provide subjective views and experiences of participants and find ways to enhance those experiences. A qualitative approach is beneficial because it allows for the description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences, and interprets meaning through their actions. The advantages of this kind of study are inclusivity and reliability. A qualitative study is inclusive because it asks open-ended questions that prompt detailed responses from participants, reflecting their experiences. Participants in a qualitative study can fully express their opinions and views on the matter, providing the researcher with a more precise understanding and insight into the phenomenon.

1.4.1 Sampling

Koerberand McMichael (2008:476) posit that sampling is distinguished between “probability” and “non-probability” techniques. Vehovar, Toepoel, and Steinmetz (2016:327) refer to non-probability sampling as the absence of a probability sampling mechanism, meaning it deviates from the principles of probability sampling, such as randomly selecting participants. The authors identified three non-probability techniques which are purposeful, convenience, and snowball. This study employs purposive sampling, which focuses on selecting participants who meet specific criteria and serve a given purpose to the study; however, not enough participants were received through the purposive approach, so a convenience approach was added. The fusing of these two sampling methods was beneficial because it allowed for multiple portals of engaging with and analysing the data received.

1.4.2 Research site and population

A research population is the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records, or other sampling units concerning the research problem (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport 2005). The population shares common characteristics that are of interest to a researcher. The common characteristics of the groups distinguish them from other individuals, institutions, objects, and so forth. The research population for this study will consist of students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The academic staff members comprised of lecturers, facilitators and academic facilitators. While undergraduate and postgraduate students will represent the student body. The staff member sample is based on individuals who directly interact with students within the teaching and learning space. This population provided a comprehensive account of their insights and experiences on how language limits or fosters interaction between students and staff members in lecture halls. The study includes all academic

staff members regardless of race and gender. The reason is that academic staff members can account for and retell their experience of how language has limited or enhanced their ability to interact with students within the classroom. The study also includes all students, regardless of level of study and faculty, as the reason is that it seeks to track the lingual experiences of students throughout the campus to see how they experience language within the classroom. Stuart Hall (in Gqola, 2001) suggests that identity is never complete but is defined, inscribed, and accessible through language. Therefore, the role of language is not limited to unifying, marginalising and subjugating. Language also plays a role in creating shared identities and ways of life. As a result, the absence of diversity and the marginalisation of one language over the other hinders people's ability to define and inscribe their identities publicly.

1.4.3 Sample size

In qualitative research, sample size refers to the number of participants selected for the study and the number of individuals expected to provide responses to the research instrument.. This study consisted of forty-eight participants, divided into the following categories: twenty-three academic staff members, including facilitators, lecturers, academic facilitators and Jnr lecturers. Twenty-five undergraduate students, which encompasses both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This site and the diversity it represents provide quality differences that highlight participants' experiences with the teaching and learning space.

1.4.4 Methods and Procedures

This study employs a qualitative approach, and uses a pluralistic approach that fuses two methods for in-depth analysis and engagement with the data. There are pros and cons attached to every method of collecting data. The benefit of using the chosen methods and procedures is that they enable the researcher to explore social and organisational characteristics, as well as individual behaviour and its meaning; therefore, fusing phenomenology and Critical Discourse Analysis is vital because it enables an intricate analysis of experience and discourse. A pluralistic approach enhances the study's ability to locate and uncover intricate interactions in lecturing spaces and offers participants a chance to narrate their experiences. This study will use open-ended questionnaires. There will be two separate questionnaires, one will be created for academic staff members and the other for students. The questionnaires will have similar themes and questions, however with minor differences here and there as the experience of a student is different from the one of an academic staff member. The study will use an online

questionnaire as a data collection method, to gain in-depth responses on participants' lingual experiences within classrooms. Using an online open-ended questionnaire will be beneficial because it offers participants the flexibility to respond at their own convenience without any added pressure. These questionnaires will be administered online, and participants can engage at their own comfort. They will be given a week to respond and send back their feedback. If feedback is not received after a week, a follow-up email will be sent to check if the participant is still willing to participate in the study. Overall, the aim of this research to uncover the role of language in fostering interaction between students and academic staff members within lecture classes at the UFS QwaQwa campus.

1.4.4.1 Open-ended Questionnaires

Open ended questionnaires, as an instrument for collecting data, involves asking a given subject to respond to a set of written questions. Open-ended questionnaires have many uses, most notably to gather insights into what the public thinks. These include market research, customer service feedback, evaluations, and social science research (O'Leary, 2014). O'Leary (2014) suggests that this research method has some obvious strengths: it allows the researcher to generate data specific to their research and offers insights that might otherwise be unavailable.

1.5 Data analysis

Once data is collected from participants' written responses, the responses will be analysed using NVivo, and a thematic analysis will be conducted. To examine similar ideas, common threads, and responses to draw connections, this approach will address the phenomenological side of the research. Mouton (1996) posits that analysing data consists of two steps: first, reducing the data into manageable proportions, and second, identifying patterns and themes in the data. The data collected will be qualitatively analysed using Fairclough's three-tiered model. The three-tiered model will examine participants' responses as social structures, discourse events and social events, meaning the lecture class is viewed as a social practice that can be analysed using this three-tiered model. The aim of the data analysis process is to understand how linguistic encounters and interactions manifest within a learning space such as a lecture class. Data extracted or collected during the analysis of the questionnaire will outline the linguistic dynamics around the campus and the possible limitations of such encounters.

1.6 Motivation for research

The motivation for this study stems from recognising and acknowledging that language is not

merely a medium for communication but a powerful tool that fosters access, participation, and success within various higher learning institutions. So, at the University of the Free State Qwaqwa campus, English remains the dominant language of instruction, yet students and staff members come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, which creates challenges. Challenges associated with language barriers and access. To some, English bridges the gap created by multilingual encounters, while for others, it fosters negative self-consciousness that affects confidence and engagement due to a lack of proficiency. Despite the UFS's efforts to promote multilingualism, there are very limited studies on how language limits or enhances interactions with teaching and learning spaces, so understanding the dynamics language produces in teaching and learning spaces is vital because it gives a voice to the lived experiences of students and academic staff members.

1.7 Chapter outline

Chapter one introduces the study. It provides a background and situates the study within broader discussions of language within higher learning institutions. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the research problem, research questions, and aim, and provides motivation for the study, which discusses the significance of exploring linguistic dynamics in staff–student interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa Campus.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature on the role of language and discourse. It looks at multilingualism and multilingual classroom interactions. The chapter further explores linguistic diversity in higher education, language policies, and sociolinguistic perspectives relevant to classroom interactions and the various discourses surrounding these topics.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology used. It discusses and justifies the use of a pluralist approach and further discusses why combining phenomenology and critical discourse analysis is vital for the study. Additionally, the chapter addresses the qualitative design used, sampling, data collection instruments, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The chapter also describes Fairclough's 3D model of analysis, which serves as the theoretical framework employed. This theory is used to analyse language use and power relations in the classroom.

Chapter four presents the data received from the administered online questionnaires. It presents the received data and identifies themes to provide an understanding of the data.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the data received and discusses the findings emerging from the participants' experiences of language in classroom interaction, using Fairclough's 3D model to better understand and analyse the data. The chapter gives life to the themes identified

and provides its placements within the broader social practice.

Chapter six concludes the study by summarising the key findings, presenting the implications for practice and policy, outlining the study's limitations, and offering recommendations for future research.

1.8 Ethical considerations

This research acknowledges the ethical concerns associated with research; therefore, it is committed to ensuring that fairness and full disclosure are consistently provided to participants. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), ethical considerations are pivotal when undertaking research; the following six points represent the crucial principles of ethical research. This paper acknowledges the ethical concerns aligned with using human participants and seeks to ensure that all participants and issues surrounding their well-being are considered. Participation in this study is voluntary. Adverts will be sent via different universities' mass media communication sites to attract and evoke interest from interested people who feel they can add value to the study. The advertisements will clarify that participants can withdraw from the study at any point with no questions asked. This will also be made clear even before the actual data collection process. Informed consent: participants will be asked to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to partake in the study. All necessary information regarding the study will be disclosed to participants prior to their participation. A study that uses human participants has potential risks, Such as emotional, personal and social distress. These risks will be mitigated by providing participants with information about the necessary support structures available on campus and assuring them that their opinions will not be misquoted or used in any way to harm them. Furthermore, the study does not provide any incentive for participation; therefore, participants will be informed of this upfront to avoid creating false expectations. Anonymity: All participants will remain anonymous, and their identities will be kept private. When writing and reflecting on their responses, I will use pseudonyms such as 'Respondent 1' or 'Participant 2'. Confidentiality: The information shared by participants will be kept confidential and accessed only by my supervisor and me. No added individuals will have access to questionnaires. Participants' identity will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The results of the overall paper will be shared with participants, allowing them to see how their viewpoints were presented. Potential social, physical, or emotional harm will be prevented, and participants will be encouraged to speak up if they experience such harm. The study acknowledges the need to obtain approval from the scientific and ethics committees, as well as approval from the University's management, to use students and staff members as participants.

The necessary steps will be taken to ensure that ethical clearance is obtained.

2.1 Introduction

The focal point of this chapter is unpacking the influence that language has on interactions. The chapter reflects on people's experiences of language within various teaching and learning spaces, examining the role that language and discourse play in multilingual classroom interactions. The study aims to understand the linguistic dynamics that exist between academic staff members and students during interactions in lecture halls, facilitation sessions, tutorials, and others. Additionally, the study aims to unpack the lingual dynamics, focusing on the following: an overview of language, discussing the distinct functions of language, discourse, the role of discourse in interaction, and language in education. The study further provides a historical account of language, defining and exploring the views of various authors, such as Noam Chomsky (1928) and Edward Sapir (1920), on language and how they conceptualise its use. In addition, the chapter explores assorted topics related to language to map out the role of language within multilingual classrooms. Furthermore, the topics are mapped out as follows: the importance of multilingualism and multicultural interactions, as well as the advantages of using English in a multilingual classroom. The chapter also examines the South African government's efforts to promote multilingualism, analysing the language policies of four different universities and assessing the practicality of these policies in promoting language inclusivity and multilingualism.

2.1 The functions of language

Multiple theorists and linguists have defined language over an extended period. The meaning associated with language is not stagnant. It evolves and assumes various shapes and forms as it fits the society. Here is a representation of the various theorists' views of language. Edward Sapir (1920), who authored the book *Language in 1920*, described language as “serviceable”, meaning that language is not a passive tool. It can be used to fulfil various functions. Language can be used to meet the speakers’ various needs, and it is adaptable. Furthermore, he states that language is a “purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. These symbols are, in the first instance, auditory and they are produced by the so-called organs of speech” (Sapir 1920:07). Therefore, one can say that language is a powerful tool that shapes knowledge, culture, and political realities. Additionally, language plays a crucial role in the creation and

maintenance of interactions and social relationships. Norman Fairclough (1989) regards language and its usage as a social phenomenon, and he states that one of the main goals of this phenomenon (language and its usage) is to foster collectivism and shared national identities. Fairclough (1989) posits that language is not merely a tool of communication but is deeply embedded in social practices; language both shapes and is shaped by society. Language is a social phenomenon because it can be used in various social contexts such as religion, politics, and education. In addition, Noam Chomsky (1928) defines language as a cognitive system that enables humans to produce and comprehend language. He argues that we are born with the innate ability to acquire language.

Language is a powerful medium for understanding the world and accumulating centuries-old human expertise. It is a repository of cultural values, a means of preserving people's socio-historical heritage. Furthermore, language plays a crucial role in understanding people's inner world. Language has multiple functions, and various language investigators discuss these functions (Barvina 2018:26). The first investigator I will examine is Geoffrey Leech (1974), who describes the five functions of language. He states language is informational, expressive, directive, phatic and aesthetic. It is informative because it provides added information and encourages discussions. In addition, language can serve an expressive function, conveying the feelings and attitudes of its originator. Furthermore, language has a directive function on the behaviour and attitudes of others. The most specific instances of the directive function are commands and requests. The fourth function of language is phatic. It has a sociological effect of creating, prolonging, and ending the conversation to establish rapport. Finally, language has an aesthetic function: "the use of language for the sake of the linguistic artefact and has no purpose. This aesthetic function can have at least as much to do with conceptual as with affective meaning" (Leech 1974:27). Furthermore, Brown and Yule (1988) identify two functions of language. The authors state that language plays a transactional and interactional function within interactions. The transactional function is primarily interested in the dissemination of factual or propositional information. Communication is primarily focused on the speaker informing the hearer of something or eliciting some action from them. Furthermore, Brown and Yule (1988) posit that "language enables man to utilise the knowledge of his/her forebears and the knowledge of other men in other cultures". The second function of language is the interactional view, which focuses on the use of language to establish and maintain social relationships. Furthermore, this function focuses on how language is used to negotiate roles in relationships, foster peer solidarity, exchange turns in conversations and maintain face for both

the speaker and the hearer. Halliday (1975) later coined seven functions of language; the instrumental function focuses on expressing wants, needs, and preferences. While the personal function looks at how language is used to express individuality, the interactional function focuses on the maintenance and development of social relationships, the regulatory function is used to control the hearer's actions, the representational function is used to explain and give clarity, and the heuristic function is used to uncover, find, or hypothesise information. The imaginative function is grounded in the idea that language is employed to entertain, explore, and create. Language plays various roles, but at its core is the ability to maintain linguistic relations and disseminate information. Therefore, one can deduce that language plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information, as stated by the authors. The authors employ various functions to illustrate the significance of language. However, there is a common thread that ties these functions together. Leech states that language is informational and expressive, and Brown and Yule posit that language is transactional. Finally, Halliday states that language is instrumental and interactional. The common thread is the notion that language is a tool used to give and receive information. It is used to relay and express thoughts, ideas and feelings. In conclusion, the functions of language play a vital role in helping us understand the position language plays in enhancing or limiting interactions between students and staff members. Additionally, an understanding of the functions of language deepens insight into its significant role in education and highlights the need for language practices that meaningfully represent students' identities and experiences. Language should enable students to access knowledge, participate fully in learning, and construct meaning without positioning them at a disadvantage. Consequently, the adoption of linguistic resources that fulfil these functions in inclusive ways is essential to ensuring equitable learning opportunities and fostering a sense of belonging within educational spaces.

In society, the traditional function of language is to facilitate verbal communication, but language serves a broader purpose than merely facilitating communication. Cheer (2004:15) notes that language can be understood from various perspectives. It can be understood from the perspective of the listener, speaker, topic, code and message. Understanding the variation of language from a listener's perspective means that language has a directive function; it not only prompts the listener to do something but also elicits a response. From the speaker's perspective, language serves as a means of disseminating information and expressing the speaker's attitudes and reflections. From the topic side, language functions as a reference. From a code perspective, language functions as a metalinguistic tool and language are used to define and

discuss language itself. Finally, language carries the message, passing information from one speaker to another.

There is a strong relationship between language and society. Malinowski (2009:07) suggests that “language is a necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment, without which unified social action is impossible”. Language can thus be said to be at the core of humanity, meaning that language plays a fundamental role in human activity; it is crucial for sharing ideas, building relationships, and forming identities. It is used to foster communication and cultural preservation by passing information from one generation to the next. Language is central to social interaction in every society, regardless of location and time. Language and social interaction have a reciprocal relationship, meaning one influences the other. So, language cannot be separated from society. The idea that language cannot be separated from society is rooted in the theory of Sociolinguistics, which examines the connection between language and society (Remained 2000:18). It explores how people use language in various social contexts, situations, and encounters. The basic principle of sociolinguistics is the acknowledgement of a constantly changing environment, which results in language not being uniform or constant. For example, how people engage with one another differs depending on the relationship, social status and social proximity between those engaging in the interaction. For example, a mother speaks differently to her kids based on their age and level of maturity; the same woman uses different registers and tones to engage with her lover, friends, and superiors. Therefore, language is varied and inconsistent. This inconsistency in tone, word choice, and register does not hinder socialisation among participants in a discursive encounter. It encourages and teaches linguistic diversity. This socio-situational variation is sometimes referred to as register and depends not only on the occasion and the relationship between the participants but also on the participants’ region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and gender (Crossman 2019).

2.1.1 Discourse

Blommaert (2005:2) defines discourse as language in action and investigating it requires attention to both language and action. He further posits that discourse can become a site for meaningful social differences, conflict, and struggle. Fairclough (1995:85) defines discourse as the practice itself, namely, social practice, which belongs to the dynamic multivariate process of interaction, including text production and consumption. Discourse is defined as “a serious speech or piece of writing on a particular subject” (Longman Dictionary of

Contemporary English, 2001:388). In this general sense, it incorporates both the spoken and written modes, although, at times, it is confined to speech being designated as “serious conversation between people” (ibid). This restriction is also implied in the word when it is used as a verb. On the other hand, Reisigl and Wolak (2001:304) define discourse as a structured form of knowledge about social practices that may align with different ideological positions. Based on the various views presented in discourse, one can infer that discourse cannot be separated from social experience and real-life encounters. Discourse is tied to the social, cultural and political contexts in which it is used. Hence, Blommaert states that discourse is language in action, meaning it has a recurring and adaptive feature. Fairclough, on the other hand, argues that it is a social practice, while Reisigl and Wodak (2001) posits that it is knowledge that shapes this social practice. The differences between the above views lie in the fact that Fairclough views discourse as an interaction of power and ideology. He views language as a reflection of society’s power structures and ideologies. On the other hand, Blommaert views discourse as an evolving tool that is shaped by who, when, and where it is used. Finally, Reisigl views discourse as a tool that influences action and perception. Therefore, discourse becomes a mirror, an active indicator of the ability to use language socially, culturally and politically to persuade, exclude, resist and form identities. The above-mentioned definitions of discourse share a similar approach, which is to link discourse with society. However, there are partial differences between the authors. Fairclough primarily focuses on discourse within a specific social or institutional context, examining how discourse can reflect existing power structures and how language reinforces these power structures within an institution or society. On the other hand, Blommaert examines discourse not only at a social or institutional level but also at a global stage; he discusses how discourse operates in global spaces and how it portrays global inequalities. While Reisigl and Wodak (2009) view discourse as knowledge that shapes and reflects social practices. Therefore, the use of discourse by participants in a discursive event is a recurring process of knowledge production that is linked to the culture, society, and politics of the institution. The use of discourse and discourse itself is relevant to this study because discourse plays a crucial role in representing students’ lingual experiences within social and academic contexts. Therefore, if students don’t have access to or understand the discourse and language used in classrooms, they are deprived of the ability to engage effectively, they are excluded and alienated from the social practice of learning, and in turn, they become withdrawn from the action. If they have access to the discourse through language and vocabulary, they get to create an environment that encourages active engagement.

We can draw inferences that discourse reflects social engagements and relations. We use discourse to give meaning to our interactions. A mountain is beautiful because someone identifies and regards it as such. For example, Blommaert (2007: 118-119) posits that.

One speaks differently about cars or music than about the economy or about sex. In one instance, one can speak as an expert using a particular register, indexing membership of expert groups, in other instances, one can speak as a novice; one can shift from a very masculine voice on a particular topic (e.g. sex or cars) to a gender-neutral voice (e.g. when discussing the war in Iraq), each time also shifting registers, often even accents, pace, tone and rhythm using a declarative tone on one topic, a hesitant one on another.

An event becomes a problem as soon as it is recognised as such, meaning that language gives meaning to interaction. If one regards something as beautiful, they create a linguistic discourse that describes and expresses their feelings and views, and those who align with the view have the language to engage and interact. Blommaert (2007:35) problematises the long tradition of treating discourse in linguistic terms as a complex linguistic form more prominent than a single sentence. He challenges the conventional view that discourse can be fully understood by analysing linguistic elements like syntax, semantics, and cohesive devices. He suggests that a more nuanced consideration should be given to the social, political, and cognitive context in which language is used. The discourse used in an interaction indicates the relationship subjects have with one another. Therefore, the critical aspect of analysing interaction is to examine the language, diction, and tone used, but we do not look at these in isolation. We examine the context in which the language is used by focusing on the where, when, and why the interaction is happening. Secondly, we examine the power relations that shape and influence the interaction, considering who holds authority within it and how the language used reinforces or challenges existing power structures. Finally, understanding discourses and its relevance is important for this study because we look at the underlying ideologies that influence people's choice of words. This is done by looking at how discourse depicts the broader social beliefs, biases and norms. So, analysing discourse is crucial to answering the question of the role of language in fostering interactions between students and academic staff members in lecture classes on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus

2.1.2 The role of discourse in interactions

Social theories of discourse describe how language and speech are embedded in interactions between people. Participants in the talk jointly construct and enforce social norms that tacitly define the expectations of the interaction (Wegner and Gonzalez-Howard 2018). Sociolinguists also commonly study dialect, which is the regional, social, or ethnic variation of a language. For example, English is the primary language in the United States. However, people who live in the South often vary in how they speak and the words they use compared to people who live in the North, even though they all speak the same language (Bhuri 2021: 52).

Therefore, language cannot be divorced from society; society has an influence on the language one speaks and the dialect that is generated. In South Africa, we have different languages and people; these two factors, integrated due to migration and industrialisation, have thus led to the creation of dialects. These dialects become a mirror of the diverse societies; we have different dialects based on the location where one finds themselves. The Sesotho spoken in the Free State differs from that spoken in Johannesburg. KwaZulu-Natal is an isiZulu-speaking province, but there are varying dialects of the language spoken in rural areas and cities. Therefore, one can conclude that the role of discourse in interaction is important because it is not only shaped by the language one speaks, but also by the different dialects that might produce differences in meaning. Understanding language is crucial for fostering engagement among diverse individuals. In conclusion, this paragraph argues that language functions as a social product, shaped by societal dynamics such as migration and geography, and that dialectal variations influence discourse, interaction, and mutual understanding in multilingual contexts.

2.2 Linguistics dynamics at UFS's Qwaqwa campus

The government has made multiple efforts post-1994 to enhance and create an inclusive education system. However, the rural education sector in South Africa continues to experience inequality that still exemplifies the legacy of apartheid. The Bantu Education Act (Act No. 47 of 1953) was implemented to create separate learning experiences between Black and White students. Phillips (1999:22) posits that many different strategies were needed to keep this imbalanced system of apartheid in place. Education, or a lack of it, was a strategy employed to provide Black people with lower-quality education than Whites, so they could not hope to

become the political or social equals of Whites. The same experience Black students encountered during apartheid is the experience Black learners are experiencing in democratic South Africa within rural areas. Learners within rural areas lack basic services such as water, study material and sanitation within schools. Their experience and lack of basic services affect access to quality education as they have to walk long distances to schools, attend schools with poor infrastructure and have limited learning materials.

The South African government has managed to use geographical areas as an exclusionary factor in education. The idea of using location as an isolation technique started during apartheid, Black people were given homelands, which were meant for diverse cultural groups. Qwaqwa For example was previously a Bantustan created to be occupied by the Southern Basotho ethnic group. Qwaqwa is populated by the Basotho cultural group. However, due to industrialisation, migration, and the establishment of the UFS Qwaqwa campus, previously known as the University of North, people from various cultural groups and geographical locations migrated to Qwaqwa for multiple reasons, especially education. The Qwaqwa community experienced an influx of diverse ethnicities, this diversity was influenced by students enrolled on the UFS Qwaqwa campus. Students from various ethnic groups enrolled in the program, and some chose to live off campus in private accommodations. In their pursuit of private accommodation, they were integrated into different communities. According to statistics received from the UFS Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (2024), there are 3,781 isiZulu-speaking students on campus, which is the largest student population, followed by 2,228 Sesotho and 277 isiXhosa-speaking students (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2024). However, the student population is not limited to these ethnic groups. The mentioned groups are the top three highest language groups on campus. These numbers are like the number of African learners in public schools, where a majority are speakers of indigenous African languages, and the basic education system is exclusionary to them in more than one way. They are geographically excluded based on urban and rural locations; a learner in an urban area does not receive the same type of education as those in rural areas. Rural area learners are often excluded due to the limited availability of learning resources and inadequate learning resources. They are excluded in terms of infrastructure and educational quality. These experiences are like those of students in rural campus universities, where students from rural areas are geographically, culturally, and financially excluded from the learning environment experienced by those in urban areas. Therefore, cultural and geographical factors do have exclusionary elements that affect how one engages with learning.

2.2 Multilingualism and Multicultural Interactions

Multilingualism is understood in various ways. One definition conceptualises it as the teaching of a range of languages to provide learners with opportunities to develop a repertoire of relevant languages for communication. This approach is often framed within a language-for-specific-purposes orientation and typically does not consider learners' existing language profiles (Bickerton, 2004). A second understanding views multilingualism as the expansion of institutional language programmes to include the teaching of multiple languages to both staff and students, thereby enhancing an institution's capacity in languages that are valuable within a contemporary university context. This approach necessitates the deliberate development of a language policy and is implemented with varying degrees of commitment across institutions. A third, and less commonly adopted, perspective understands multilingualism as an institutional response to the multilingual and multicultural composition of staff and student populations. This approach acknowledges the challenges such diversity poses to long-established pedagogical practices and requires both learners and educators to reflect critically on their linguistic repertoires and develop effective strategies for drawing on them. It is this latter conceptualisation that aligns with the focus of the present study and highlights the pressing need for the inclusion of African indigenous languages within higher education learning spaces (Kelly 2015:72).

Like the rest of the world, South Africa experiences multilingualism in its classrooms, where learners from different ethnic groups who speak, different languages are expected to learn and engage with the content provided in the same classroom. This poses a significant challenge to the education system. It is a challenge because the education system prioritises the use of the mother tongue within the foundation phase; this changes when learners reach the intermediate and secondary phases of learning. When the system changes to bilingualism, learners get to choose two languages, one as a home language and the other as a first additional language. A learner gets to pick their home language based on various reasons; one being based on the language they speak at home or feel comfortable learning in (Altun 2023). However, the challenge lies in the fact that English is required to be the learner's language of instruction post the foundation phase, which results in a shift from learning in their home language to learning and getting assessed in English. This makes language inclusivity a challenge because learning is expected to happen in English, except in language classrooms. Proficiency in English is difficult because learners who used their home language during their foundation phase learning are not properly exposed to using English, and when they start university, learning in English

and having a multilingual classroom becomes a challenge. The call for language inclusivity requires teachers and lecturers to be able to facilitate multilingual teaching and learning processes based on students' individual language proficiency.

Learners come from different parts of South Africa and other countries with different languages, behaviours and cultures. This meshing of languages in a multicultural classroom presents a challenge as to how best to incorporate the knowledge of various languages into the teaching and learning environment. Researchers argue that the only way to enhance learning in multilingual classrooms is to value and make use of the linguistic resources that learners bring to school (Micaella, 2015a; McKinney 2017). Multilingual interaction involves inter-comprehension between the speaker and the listener (Garcia 2018). At the core of multilingual interactions are attitudes of openness, flexibility, and respect. Multilingualism is the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency. However, it has been realised in both the written and verbal communicative practices that proficiency in one language usually tends to dominate in a multilingual setup compared to the others. Multilingualism can also be regarded as the co-existence of several languages within a society (Okal 2014:03). These several languages can be official or unofficial, native or foreign, and national or international. Multilingualism allows a shuttle among semiotic features on different scales using various negotiation strategies. Being open, willing to learn, and engaging creates room for successful interactions.

Multilingualism presents several challenges to inclusion, nationalism, and education. These challenges manifest at both the meso and macro levels and serve as portals of tension and conflict. Multilingualism poses a challenge at the meso level, affecting communities and institutions. For example, schools and universities are part of the meso level, and the mentioned institutions can be exclusionary by privileging the preferred LOLT, which in turn excludes speakers of the minority languages. If the LOLT of a school is Sesotho, learners who are not Sesotho speaking can either bear the brunt and learn in Sesotho, or they must look for alternative schools that have their preferred LOLT. Some might travel long distances to get to a school that can accommodate them. Monolingualism in teaching and learning spaces is perceived as a challenge to multilingualism because it highlights its exclusionary characteristics. Monolingualism in teaching and learning spaces often constructs multilingualism as a problem rather than a resource, thereby highlighting the exclusionary nature of such environments. By privileging a single dominant language as the primary medium

of instruction and interaction, monolingual practices tend to marginalise students who possess diverse linguistic repertoires. This framing positions multilingualism as an obstacle to communication and academic success, rather than as a pedagogical asset that can enhance understanding and participation. Consequently, monolingual approaches may limit meaningful classroom interaction, restrict knowledge construction, and reinforce existing power hierarchies, as linguistic diversity is rendered invisible or treated as a deficit. Recognising multilingualism as a legitimate and valuable component of teaching and learning challenges these exclusionary practices and opens possibilities for more inclusive and equitable educational spaces.

At a macro level, government policy may be exclusionary because it advocates for multilingualism but is not fully equipped to implement it. Some schools in South Africa are monolingual, meaning that learners engage in content-based learning using a single language, which might be problematic. Language proficiency is another challenge ESL students face in multilingual classrooms. Area and Matocha (2002:454) defined language proficiency as the use of fluent speech in such a way that it effectively conveys intended meanings or messages. It encompasses the notions of grammatical correctness and communicative competence while considering learners' different levels of language development. Students sometimes lack proficiency in the primary language used for teaching and learning, which creates tensions surrounding inclusivity and othering. In a study they conducted, Mphasha, Nkuna and Sebata (2022:262) looked at the impact of English as a language of instruction in first-year modules and found that not all the students in higher education using English as the medium of instruction are coping. The study revealed that some of them do not understand it as the language of teaching and learning. The study provides a case study of first year students at the University of Venda. The study posits that some of the students enrolled at the University of Venda are native speakers of South African indigenous languages who went through the public schooling system, and their proficiency in English varies; some have limited proficiency in English, while others are fluent. So, putting students with varying proficiency in the same class and expecting learning and knowledge acquisition to be inclusive is exclusionary. Some students are from disadvantaged schools where the main language of instruction was their home language, which in turn might affect their understanding of English and their exposure to the language, not all learners from public schooling systems struggle with English some are proficient however there is a particular group of students that struggle with the language and it is a problem because English is mostly used in the lecture room during academic activities.

Furthermore, Kumalo (2022 in Joubert and Sibanda) states that having English as the only medium of instruction in contemporary South African Universities demonstrates a lack of diversity and reinforces the colonial violence of excluding the indispensable Other, thus further alienating them from South African higher education institutions. The lack of awareness about how monolingualism is exclusionary and the failure to recognise the implications of monolingualism for the experience of those who are not proficient in a language and are marginalised by it create a reluctance to learn, as education becomes inaccessible and tedious for the excluded. Kumalo (2022:116) speaks about the “disciplining effects when Blackness uses its mother tongue in the pedagogic space”. This refers to how Black students are constantly corrected when using their mother tongue in classrooms. Where institutions, schools, teachers and lecturers at times do not allow engagement or discussion in the indigenous language, thus making students feel that their mother tongue is not suitable for knowledge acquisition and dissemination, hence some liken intelligence to the ability to speak English.

2.2.1 Advantages of using English in a multilingual classroom.

English has been described as an international language, a lingua franca, and a link language. It is a window to the rapid progress of technology and advanced scientific knowledge (Dash & Dash, 2007 in Aluko 2019:36). One could also agree with Brutt-Griffler (2017) that around the world, English has become a language of multilinguals. If well implemented in classrooms, it encourages high levels of engagement and academic achievement across the board. It allows students and academic staff members from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively. It fosters understanding and encourages collaboration as students and academic staff members get to learn using a common language and negotiate collective meaning. It equips students and staff members with the skill of being global citizens who can engage with a global community that has diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds. English promotes inclusivity as it is a common language that enables students to communicate and collaborate effectively. Furthermore, using English in a multilingual classroom promotes cultural exchange and advanced career opportunities. Proficiency in English enhances students' employability globally. Therefore, using English in a multilingual classroom does benefit students' learning and self-development (Omid ire 2019:38). As the benefits are glaring, the disadvantages are also paramount for English Second Language (ESL) learners. This is supported by Mondlane (1992:248 in Nell and Muller 2010), who postulate that non-English speaking students who are African mother-tongue speakers may experience challenges with understanding and engaging

with content. According to Kapp (2004:260-261), these students are often labelled as at risk or disadvantaged because of the linguistic, cognitive and social transition they must make when entering higher education, where most teaching staff are English proficient but lack proficiency in the students' mother tongue. These statements provide a caution when discussing the benefits of English as the benefits are not universal and inclusive. These benefits are context-specific and not all-encompassing of everyone who experiences English as a LOLT.

2.2.2 Government efforts to promote multilingualism.

The post-apartheid South African government has attempted to create and foster language inclusivity in the country by promoting multilingualism, creating, drafting, and passing policies that stress and enforce language inclusivity and equality. The South African Constitution (1996) Chapter 1 Section 6 highlights the importance of previously marginalised languages and states that it "Recognises the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages". Section 6 of the Constitution provides the principal framework for multilingualism, the development of the official languages and the promotion of respect and tolerance for South Africa's language diversity. All this is factored in The National Language Policy Framework of 2003, which aimed to promote language equity and language rights as required by a democratic dispensation. The policy aimed to promote multilingualism in South Africa and understands that this requires efforts that do not discount the knowledge in societies with prominent indigenous languages. The government also, prior to the National Language Policy Framework of 2003 the government created the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education 2002, which was reviewed in 2020; the purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages in scholarship, teaching and learning and communication at South African higher education institutions. The aim of the policy is to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and practices of South Africa's public Higher Education institutions. Most importantly, the policy views the role of higher education as promoting and creating conditions for the development and inclusion of historically marginalised languages. Finally, the Language in Education Policy 2004 incorporates the principles of the above-mentioned policies by promoting the use of learners' first language and English as a medium of instruction in most schools. Through this language policy, the government wanted to implement language inclusivity in teaching and learning. The policy promotes and fosters the use of learners' first languages as an aid to rebranding Indigenous African languages as pedagogical languages.

The above-mentioned policies were created to ensure that all previously marginalized languages are included educationally, socially, and politically. However, it is important to note that the government created numerous language policies and interventions, but the above-mentioned are important for promoting multilingualism in the education sector. Understanding the government's effort to promote multilingualism and language inclusivity is beneficial for this study because it lays the foundation and highlights the importance of inclusive language in teaching and learning. It highlights the need for language, and the role language plays in creating and limiting dialogues. The policies give us guidelines on what institutions are expected to do to create language-inclusive teaching and learning spaces. The policies force universities and schools to acknowledge and include other South African indigenous languages in their curricula. The government understands that putting policies into play will push universities to move away from monolingualism, which does not represent the student and staff populace. Therefore, these policies cannot be ignored when trying to understand the relevance of language in higher learning teaching and learning spaces, which is the core objective of this study.

2.2.3 Language in education

The term "language in education" refers to how teachers communicate with learners and the content they teach (Stein 2017:05). Language in education encompasses the use of language as a tool for teaching and learning within the education system. This encompasses the language of instruction and the understanding of the language of teaching and learning. The language in education concept also encompasses the development of a particular language and the language policies employed by the education department to ensure language inclusivity and multilingualism. Finally, language in education also examines how language is utilised to promote access and equity in education (O'Connor 2016:06). Language in education is not just a concept referring to how language is used within the education system; it is also a policy that was published on July 14, 1997. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) refers to language in education as a process of planning, developing, and implementing the language arts curriculum, so that one is trained to acquire language skills that will facilitate their ability to cope with other life skills (Amadi, 2014:1). In contrast, Stein (2022:207) states that "Language in education refers to the role of language in teaching and learning. It involves how language is used as a medium of instruction, how students acquire and develop language skills, and how language policies affect education systems". Therefore, one cannot fully understand the role of language in fostering interactions within lecture halls without examining the concept of

language in education and its significance in the educational context. The concept of language in education was developed through the creation of the Language in Education Policy of 1997, which recognises that diversity is not limited to language; it refers to the support of languages used for various purposes, including international trade, communication, religion, and education. However, the purpose for which the language is used is not limited to the previously mentioned; the policy does not exclusively focus on them. The language in education policy states that the language of learning and teaching must be one of the official languages of South Africa.

LiEP promotes the development of all eleven South African official languages and multilingualism. Through this policy of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) multilingual education is supported by providing education in all eleven official languages at the foundation phase (FP). Schools are expected to negotiate the languages of learning and teaching with parents. The choice of language for learning and teaching (LOLT) is determined by the language indicated as the preferred LOLT in the learner's registration document. This information enables the schools to determine the appropriate LOLT to be offered based on the learners' population (Sapere and Roberts 2017:12). However, this is applicable in the foundation phase only; when moving forward from intermediate to secondary phases, English is the outlined LOLT. Most learners who speak African languages in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, face threats to the quality of their teaching and learning when transitioning from the foundation phase to higher phases where English becomes the main LOLT. Since the mid-20th century, there has been concern about the linguistic mismatch between the language of instruction and the home language. Therefore, language in education is important not only as a concept but also as a theory, as it provides an outline of why language is crucial in teaching and learning spaces and why the correct implementation and inclusion of inclusive language policies are essential within multilingual learning environments.

2.3 How practical are the language policies?

There are twenty-six universities in South Africa, but this project reflects on the language policy of four universities by interest and the aim of demonstrating how language policies shape the language culture of a university. The chosen universities are associated with various regional languages spoken by many South Africans. The study cannot address all universities, but the four will provide a clear picture of the language politics surrounding the call for language inclusivity. The universities used are the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University

of Cape Town, the University of the Free State, and the North-West University. Different universities' language policies outline different objectives, but the central idea is to create language inclusivity. Every policy sets out how the University aims to achieve multilingualism. However, universities face challenges associated with implementing the language policy. Madiba (2013:387, cited in Turner and Wildsmit-Cromarly 2014) states that the progress universities make towards achieving multilingualism and language inclusivity, as outlined in their respective language policies, hinges on the institution's commitment and its lack thereof. Commitment is measured through active steps taken to bring the policy to fruition. On the other hand, a lack of commitment is evident in the stagnation and lack of change regarding language implementation, where policies are created, but few to no active steps are taken to ensure progress is achieved.

2.3.1 Looking at the different universities' language policies

Language policies are crucial for creating and fostering language inclusivity in higher education; these policies aim to bridge the gap created by using English as the sole medium of instruction. The policy aims to address language inequality and incorporate Indigenous African languages into teaching and learning. Some language policies empower Black students to use their mother tongues in their learning space; however, most still regard English as the only medium of instruction. These policies are derived from and influenced by the National Language policy. This part of the discussion looks at how different language policies are curated and whether they address language inclusivity issues. Most universities have a language policy that states how the institution aims to promote language inclusivity and recognition of previously marginalised languages. This section looks at the language policy of the following Universities: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the University of Cape Town (UCT), North-West University (NWU) and University of the Free State (UFS). I chose these universities because they all have different regional languages, and I find it interesting and intriguing to see how the language policies acknowledge and treat the regional languages. For UKZN, the regional language is isiZulu; for the UFS is Sesotho, NWU is Setswana; and UCT uses IsiXhosa and Afrikaans. Therefore, the study focuses on seeing how previously marginalised Indigenous languages are accounted for by different universities in their language policies, The University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN) created its language policy in 2006 and later revised it in 2014 and 2018. The policy strives to achieve language inclusivity and promote multilingualism. However, bilingualism is the focus of the policy. This means that the

university seeks to achieve bilingualism before accounting for the multilingual part of the policy. It seeks to ensure that isiZulu is well established and incorporated within the university as English is. So, the focal point is teaching and enhancing the status of isiZulu within the university's teaching and learning programs, official communication channels, and marketing. The policy encouraged the use of isiZulu as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). The institution created a language board in 2011; its purpose was to ensure that isiZulu is well integrated as an LOLT. "The board recognised the need to develop and promote proficiency in the official languages, particularly English and isiZulu" (Language policy of The University of KwaZulu-Natal 2014: 06). The aim of the board was the development of isiZulu by ensuring that teachers and students have the necessary resources and mechanisms to teach and learn the language. The university does not, unlike some, regard isiZulu as a remedial language for tutorial classes or as a code-switching or translanguaging method to be used during teaching and learning. It enforces the use of the language and states that it will provide training for students and staff members who do not have proficiency in either English or isiZulu. In 2014, isiZulu was introduced as a compulsory subject for all non-African language-speaking students who wish to graduate from the institution. Even if the policy is leaning more toward bilingualism and not multilingualism; however, it aims to establish at a later stage other African languages such as isiXhosa, Sesotho, and Swahili after successfully integrating isiZulu (Language policy of The University of KwaZulu Natal 2014: 06). The bilingual approach is important as a first step in ensuring language inclusivity and recognition because isiZulu is the language spoken by most people living in KwaZulu Natal (KZN), so recognising and advancing it as a language of teaching and learning is vital.

The language policy of North-West University (NWU) was adopted on June 23, 2022, to pursue and provide for a fair and functional multilingual environment. The policy recognises these four languages (English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, and Setswana) as mediums for communication, teaching and learning, engagement, and understanding. The policy does not reduce the status of previous LOLTs, which are English and Afrikaans, but seeks to promote and elevate the status of Sesotho and Setswana to ensure inclusivity, as the language (Setswana) is the regional language (The language policy of NWU 2023:1-3). The policy has been newly implemented and suggests many guidelines for ensuring language inclusivity and the recognition of previously marginalised Indigenous languages. The language policy also created a language policy plan. This plan stipulates the role of faculties, departments, and the University Management Committee in implementing and promoting multilingualism. The language plan

provides guidelines for ensuring that different university stakeholders adapt and include the policy in pursuing language inclusivity.

The University of Cape Town's language policy of December 2024 views language as a resource that can be used to foster an inclusive teaching and learning environment. The university recognises English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans as official university languages; the University also recognizes Kaaps, South African Sign Language (SASL), Neu, and Khoekhoegowab and is committed to their development. Funds are made available to ensure the development of the above-mentioned languages. The policy does not state that English is the primary medium of instruction; this is the approach: "Teaching and learning at the university will be informed by the dual principles of promoting South African Indigenous languages as well as access to academic literacy in English. The university will empower educators and students to work collaboratively to draw on their multilingual repertoires for teaching and learning" (UCT Language Policy 2024). The policy further states that IsiXhosa will be used as a language of teaching and learning and assessment alongside English. The policy provides remedial assistance to undergraduate students who do not have proficiency in any of the South African Indigenous languages in their grade 12 results, enabling them to take a course in IsiXhosa communication. It also accounts for the translation of PhD thesis into the marginalized South African language. The policy also states that the university's official languages will be used in written, oral, and internal communication. Finally, The UCT language policy will be implemented at university and faculty level. Faculties and support structures will develop implementation plans that address research, teaching, learning, assessment, and communication. Plans should cover short-, medium-and long-term strategies.

2.3.2UFS language policy

The UFS language policy (2023) remains committed to promoting multilingualism, as articulated in Section 29(2) of the South African Constitution and is aligned with the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020). To maintain this commitment and stipulation of the national policy, the UFS language policy recognises the use of five languages within the institution in different capacities. The languages used are English, Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiZulu, and South African Sign Language. However, English remains the sole language of instruction in teaching and learning spaces however, the policy strongly emphasis the promotion of multilingualism which requires or pushes lecturers to work towards ensuring that their classrooms are multilingual. In addition, the university offers language

modules in Sesotho, Afrikaans, and isiZulu. These modules deviate from using English as a LOLT. It is within these lecture rooms that students and lecturers are exempt from using English. The university employed various strategies to ensure that the other four languages are used, even though they are not LOLT. For example, South African Sign Language is now developed as a module that students can take as part of their curriculum. Afrikaans, Sesotho and isiZulu were developed years ago as core modules that students can enrol in as part of their curricula. However, the policy encourages the use of isiZulu in engagement within tutorials through codeswitching or translanguaging to promote engagement and participation in modules where the LOLT is English. The institution is committed to promoting the use of Sesotho in academic spaces, as it is the regional language of the Free State. By equipping students with the language, a smoother transition and socialisation within their environment will be ensured. The new policy does have modifications and showcases the institution's need for language inclusivity., However, African languages still serve a remedial role, being used in tutorials for translanguaging purposes. The language policy also states that five recognised languages will be included in social and cultural communication, marketing communication, and signage. While Sesotho and isiZulu are in the process of being developed and re-intellectualised as academic languages, where articles, Master's, and PHD projects written in Sesotho and isiZulu are transcribed to ensure inclusive access. Active steps on how this will be done are detailed in the policy, where collaboration between departments, institutions and faculties is recommended. The Academy of Multilingualism was established to serve as the custodian of language policy, overseeing its development, amendment, and implementation. The academy has been collaborating with the African Languages department on the UFS Qwaqwa campus to develop a language corpus that will facilitate the translation of research articles and dissertations submitted to the department, ensuring access and availability on the library's online platforms and systems. Over fifty papers, dissertations, and articles have been translated and are available for public use. This research seeks to understand how this policy and its language stipulation help enhance or limit interactions between staff and students within lecture halls.

The four previously discussed universities can be regarded as committed to incorporating African languages into their teaching and learning. The commitment of UKZN is based on its policy stipulation, which moves isiZulu from being an indigenous language that needs to be acknowledged to being an inherent requirement for non-native speakers. The policy states that students and staff members will have to learn conversational isiZulu to participate and function not only within the institution but also outside, as it is the regional language. Understanding

the basics will make students and staff members engage in seamless interactions. UCT has recently, in their approved 2024 language policy, opted for a similar route of requiring undergraduate students whose NQF 5-7 education does not include a marginalised South African indigenous language to take up an IsiXhosa communication module. This shows commitment to ensuring fair access to learning spaces, as translanguaging has been made a core part of teaching and learning because IsiXhosa has been adopted as a LOLT. Non-native speakers of isiZulu and isiXhosa will benefit academically from learning these languages because it increases their language repertoire and provides them access to Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural sensitivity, and personal growth. Madiba (2013) believes a language develops through usage. If African languages are sufficiently developed and used as LOLT, the gap that language policies seek to address will be bridged. Some of the language policies evaluated by this study do not discuss how marginalised languages will be incorporated into the everyday operations of the university. The policies merely state the need for inclusivity and the recognition of previously marginalised African languages but provide no clear specifications about how and when these languages will be included as LOLT. The language policies stipulate that the languages will be used in official marketing materials, tutorials, and other relevant contexts as needed. The general idea I gather from the policies is the acknowledgement of the existence and importance of the African language. While others are going as far as implementing and ensuring equal usage of the regional language. Universities such as UCT are going as far as to create a language development plan. The plan aims to create activities that will promote language inclusivity, some of which are projected through the Multilingualism Education Project (MEP). The MEP is responsible for highlighting multilingualism on campus; it has created projects such as the UCT Mother Tongue Celebration and the IsiXhosa Literacy and Performance Competition. This competition aimed to promote the use of isiXhosa in writing and performance; the advertisement for the competition was written in isiXhosa. The UFS has developed a language corpus for subjects such as mathematics, Sesotho, and isiZulu, allowing students and staff members to refer to it during discussions, thereby enhancing the understanding of concepts. Therefore, one can conclude that strides in creating language-inclusive spaces at the above-mentioned universities are indeed visible.

Most universities face challenges in facilitating knowledge creation and acquisition using students' native languages. There are several reasons why universities experience challenges with incorporating the mother tongue as a language for learning and teaching (LOLT). The first problem lies in the idea that mother tongue languages are regional languages only relevant to

a specific group of people, which in turn affects the student's employment prospects because the job market is global and requires proficiency in English. Secondly, universities' competitiveness in the wake of globalisation is another challenge. Universities are making concerted efforts to attract high-calibre students and staff members; with the best, the university can improve its ability to generate funds for research, enhance its national and global ranking, and compete both globally and nationally. The current university landscape is English-oriented. It does not make provision for vernacular graduates. Job applications are completed in English, and research grant applications require proficiency in English to be filled out. Therefore, it becomes problematic for universities to train students in the vernacular when the global, or national job market does not create space for mother tongues (Nyika 2015:04). This struggle is created by the institution's inability to incorporate the mother tongue because of the fear of losing the relevance of English as it is the lingua franca and the feeling of not equipping students with the relevant skills and linguistic capabilities to participate in the modern economy and world of work. This restriction thereby creates a feeling of alienation and vulnerability in students. The lack of inclusion creates boundaries between students and their learning process. This creates a lack of confidence, and the students feel alienated and vulnerable as they are omitted. The lack of confidence hinders students in the learning process due to their inability to incorporate their mother tongue. One finds confidence in knowing that they can share ideas and express themselves in any language of their choice. Another challenge for universities is the re-adaptation and definition of existing Western theories and the need to find space for new indigenous African forms of knowledge that have been developed for and in the African context (Kaschula: 2013). The new indigenous African form of knowledge refers to a postcolonial view of African knowledge production, which debunks the westernised perception of what knowledge is, but depicts and narrates knowledge through the African lens, by Africans for Africans using African languages. However, looking at the Language policies, South African universities are working on translating and creating a corpus for different African languages that will help bridge the gap in knowledge production in African languages. Universities are going as far as translating research articles and theses, which is a win for the recognition of African languages as languages of knowledge production.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Norman Fairclough is one of the most prolific scholars who writes and engages in critical discourse analysis (CDA). The field was developed in the 1970s from critical linguistics. El-sharkawy (2017:03) states that “the orientation of CDA was developed by neo-Marxist and

post-modernist approaches of social theorists”, such as Foucault (1972) and social linguists, such as Pecheux (1975), who helped understand ideology in relation to discourse, which becomes the primary instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted, and reproduced. CDA focuses on language use and its reproduction. Norman Fairclough is one of the critical key founders of CDA, and he defines it as

a systematic analysis of the relationship between discourse practices, texts and socio-cultural practices (Fairclough 1997). He states that language is not neutral, it reflects and perpetuates inequalities and power dynamics that exist within the society or institution”.

The basis of his argument lies in the idea that language does not exist in isolation; it is determined by the society, the relationship between the people involved in the social practice and the power relations that exist at the time of use. He argues that language mirrors society; hence, Fairclough defines “language use in speech and writing a form of 'social practice', meaning a dialectical relationship exists between discourse, society and social events such as (language and politics)” (Fairclough 1997:215). For example, he explains that there is an interconnected and mutually dependent relationship between language and politics. He states that discourse shapes politics and vice versa. Discourse and politics shape and influence each other as they work in conjunction to create a seamless social practice. Political discourse and jargon help us understand the political landscape of a country while politics help place meaning on the jargon used in the field.

Critical discourse analysis is a dynamic process that involves the production, consumption, and analysis of texts. It addresses social problems as a form of intervention in social practices and relationships, bridging the gap created by discursive power relations. Critical discourse analysis reflects society and culture, focusing on social realities such as inequalities and discrimination that are embedded in language or language use. Hence, Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258) state that discourse is socially constitutive and socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups. Language is constitutive in two senses: it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and, from another perspective, contributes to transforming it. Critical discourse analysts consider the field to be “a true multidisciplinary” as it accounts for the intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture” (Van Dijk 1993a: 253).

Critical discourse analysis has various versions, and theorists focus on different aspects of the theory. Critical discourse analysis looks at the opaque and transparent relationship of control,

discrimination, power and dominance and how it manifests in language (Habermas 1977:259). The theory examines how social inequality is expressed, signalled, and legitimised through discourse and language. CDA is considered critical because its focus is not to be merely descriptive, as this is only the initial stage of the analysis. Instead, its focus is to understand the interconnection between language and society. Thus, there is an explanatory nature to CDA, which aims to understand social phenomena through the analysis of discourse (KhosraviNik, 2015).

Describing CDA as a social practice means that a connection exists between the discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) that frame it. Thus, the linguistic encounters of students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus within different teaching and learning spaces constitute a social practice. The encounter is a social practice because the UFS Qwaqwa campus has a diverse group of students and staff members who bring forth social experiences and language proficiency and limitations that depict their social, economic and cultural backgrounds. It provides hidden cues that prompt the creation of social norms and identities. The classroom becomes a space where language is not neutral but assumes different forms and manifestations. Power is embedded in the language used on campus; power determines the social practice and how participants of the practice engage with it. For instance, some students might be experiencing multicultural and multilingual interactions for the first time on campus thus might now have access to power that lies in classroom interaction. As a result, their experiences provide an overview of how language reflects and reproduces social relations; every interaction briefly depicts the participant's social, cultural, and educational background. The representations of these lingual encounters are affected by social values, favouring some views of reality to the detriment of others. By studying these encounters, the study will also identify the linguistic and social structures between students and staff members. Critical discourse analysis is a broad field of study, so this study will focus on using Fairclough's 3D model as a method of analysing data to understand and unpack the linguistic encounters of students and staff members.

2.4.1 Fairclough's 3D model

Fairclough's three-tiered model for analysis of discourse (1992, 1995a) is an essential first step toward analysing language and power in diverse types of texts. It is a valuable tool for analysing both spoken and written encounters. The model is vital because it helps us understand how language can help uncover social phenomena. You cannot discuss Fairclough's views on CDA

without examining how he unpacks the social practice using three-tiered methods. The model views discourse as text, written or spoken, as discourse practice; it explores the text and its interpretations in the larger society. This level of the model is referred to as the “text dimension,” which involves analysing the language of the texts. It includes elements such as word choice, vocabulary patterns, grammar, and cohesion. This will be the first point of analysing open-ended questionnaires by looking at participants' responses and using them to unpack how these responses are a representation of the model's idea that language and its usage are a representation of the institution in which it is used.

The second level/lens is the discourse practice dimension, which specifies the nature of text production, distribution, and consumption in society. Discourse practice mediates between text and social practice. The focus is on analysing grammar and text structure by understanding how the environment influences the text's production and consumption. In other words, this study examines how the classroom influences, promotes, and limits engagement between students and staff members. The discourse practice dimension seeks to examine how the role one assumes within a discussion affects how people view, respond and understand the engagement. The final level/lens is the social practice dimension, which deals with social analysis and interpretation issues. The focus here is on power relations and ideological struggles that discourse (re)produces, challenges or transforms in some way. In relation to the study, this step aims to uncover and identify the power relations that exist within lecture halls, while also identifying the dominant ideologies at play and how these power relations and ideologies impact and affect classroom engagements. The three-tiered model is valuable in analysing interactions between students and staff members within lecture halls. It unpacks how discourse can represent the social life and social engagement of diverse ethnicities. Finally, the third lens allows us to analyse and interpret participants' encounters while identifying the social structures surrounding the interaction, such as cultural view, power distance and the repetitive nature of such encounters. Fairclough's three-tiered model is valuable in understanding both verbal and written discourses; it not only focuses on the text but also looks at its use, interpretation, and the social constructs it creates. This is a valuable ground of analysis that can yield in-depth insight into the impact of language within lecture classes.

2.4.2 3D model criticism and shortcomings

Critics of critical discourse analysis and the 3D model argue that the methodology lacks clarity and is heavily reliant on subjectivity. The model involves interpretation, so the analysis can be

highly subjective. People can apply it however they see fit, as there is no actual blueprint of how it should be applied. Henderson (2005) states that different researchers may arrive at different conclusions based on their ideological perspectives, making the findings less replicable than in more empirical research. Different renditions of the application of the theory exist, which impact the conduciveness of the theory/ method. On the other hand, Luke (1997) argues that CDA uses theoretical Eclecticism, which means that it relies on multiple theories to analyse discourse. It is grounded in critical and poststructuralism. The theory does have a single method of use, and this flexibility results in a lack of methodological rigour. The implication of using this theory and model is that the findings might be regarded as unreliable and subjective because of the various modifications of the model based on the subject to which it is applied. To mitigate these implications, I intend to acknowledge the limitations of the model, to use already existing sources that use the model to support my writing and findings, existing resources be it from different fields will be helpful in providing me with a blueprint that I can follow, as they provide theoretical justification to show that my analysis will be grounded in or inspired by existing discussions.

2.5 Conclusion

I would argue that there is considerable evidence to suggest that language inclusivity is essential in students' teaching and learning processes. It affects how they engage with one another and their ability to participate in learning-oriented activities and engagements effectively. Language, be it spoken or written, has its own rules that govern how the speaker and receiver understand and make meaning of the given stimuli. These rules can sometimes pose challenges for non-native speakers. Choosing an inclusive language for learning and teaching plays a vital role in aiding engagement between staff and students. Throughout the discussion, the importance of language inclusivity was highlighted not only for engagement purposes but also for better learning experiences and encounters. Students should be given lingual options so that they can participate from a point of understanding and access, rather than marginalisation and exclusion. Using English in multicultural and multilingual classrooms might be seen as a solution for bridging the challenges that arise from multicultural classroom interactions. The next chapter outlines the research methodology adopted in this study, including the research design, data collection methods, and procedures used to analyse participants' experiences of language in teaching and learning spaces.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used to investigate language use within lecture halls, facilitation sessions and tutorials on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. The study examines how language affects or enhances interaction between students and academic staff members within teaching and learning spaces. The research objectives are presented in detail, along with the theoretical justification for the research design and the decision to employ a pluralistic approach that combines phenomenological and critical discourse analysis qualitative methods. The group of participants and the process of developing the data-collection instrument are also described. Lastly, data analysis methods and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.1 Research Objectives

The goal of this study is to investigate the role language plays in enhancing and limiting interaction between students and academic staff members within teaching and learning spaces, such as lecture halls, tutorials and facilitation sessions. The study further seeks to explore the relationship between language, power, and interaction within teaching and learning spaces, including lecture halls, and how it manifests between students and academic staff members. Language plays a vital role in promoting interactions within teaching and learning spaces, so understanding whether it limits or enhances interaction between students and academic staff members is key to understanding better the role of language, especially in multilingual settings. The research objectives are as follows:

- Explore how English enhances or limits student and academic staff interactions within lecture halls, facilitation sessions and any other teaching and learning spaces?
- Investigate the relationship between language and power in the interaction between students and academic staff members in various teaching and learning spaces.
- Identify the linguistic dynamics that exist within the UFS Qwaqwa campus.

3.1.2 Contextualising the research objectives

The research objectives explore how the use of English as a medium of instruction both enhances and limits interactions between students and academic staff in lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces. They reflect a dual effect, focusing on how English is often positioned as a global lingua franca, which enables and promotes a common platform for communication. It provides users access to international scholarships and

prepares students for professional mobility. Rao (2019:73) states, “It has become a compulsion to learn English as most of the books of higher education are written in English. English has been widely used by students, teachers, and researchers around the world, as it is the primary medium in various fields of education”. Additionally, it is one of the languages in which information is stored in the form of books and journals, both in printed and electronic formats. However, at the same time, English can act as a barrier to equitable participation, as students with limited proficiency may feel excluded from discussions or unable to articulate their ideas fully. Interactions, understood here as the dialogic exchanges that shape teaching, learning, and knowledge construction, are therefore influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by broader socio-political dynamics of power, identity, and inclusion (Allen 2010:83). This dual role of English raises critical questions about access, representation, and epistemic justice in higher education. Conceptually, the study positions English as both a resource and a constraint, shaping the quality and inclusivity of academic interactions across diverse learning spaces.

3.2 Research Design

Various research designs and paradigms enable researchers to situate their studies within a clear theoretical framework that guides and focuses their overall approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:57). The following section provides a brief description of the pluralistic approach adopted in this study, further outlining the underlying research paradigm and the methodology employed.

3.2.1 Pluralistic approach

Hood (2015:24) states that using a pluralistic research approach provides a more comprehensive picture of the topic under investigation, and it allows multiple ways of responding and understanding a phenomenon. Pluralism refers to the use of diverse research methods within a given field of study, acknowledging that scientific inquiry can employ various qualitative approaches. This study uses Phenomenology and Critical Discourse Analysis. It aims to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences with language by linking their lived experiences with social structures and uncovering power dynamics. Phenomenology deals with human subjectivity and understanding/ uncovering the essence of a phenomenon, while CDA looks at ideology and power. Therefore, combining both methods is beneficial to this study because they offer a nuanced examination of the relationship between individual experience and broader sociocultural structures that influence interaction.

Phenomenology is centred on providing a detailed subjective account of how participants interpret and make sense of their lived experiences. CDA extends this analysis by placing the interpretations within wider discourses, ideologies, and power relations. Using both approaches ensures that participants' voices are highlighted and explored through various contexts. Phenomenology looks at the participants' lived experience context, while CDA acknowledges that participants' experiences of language are shaped by historical, cultural and institutional contexts. Finally, this choice in methodology and approach allows for a more refined understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, while capturing the subjective meaning participants attribute to their experience of language and how language can enable, restrain and silence individuals in teaching and learning spaces. Bhekhet and Zauszniewski (2012:3) discuss the concept of methodological triangulation, which refers to "using more than one kind of method to study a phenomenon" Using this approach is beneficial because it enhances understanding of the phenomenon in question and increases the validity of the data.

3.2. 2 Origin of Phenomenology

Phenomenology was conceived in 1913 by Edmund Husserl as a method of philosophy to describe the meaning of what is experienced as a phenomenon of consciousness. Husserl was interested in discerning what consciousness is. He assumes the view that consciousness is intentionality and is directed outside itself. Consciousness comes first; it is in the line of Descartes' (1637) "first I think, therefore I exist". Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, states, "The first thing we must do is to take the conscious life, completely without prejudice, just as it immediately presents itself to be." This means that phenomenology is about understanding one's experience without using any preconceived ideologies or stereotypes. You void yourself of any influential ideas and experience a text as it is presented. Through these ideas, he believed that one can access a transcendental ego, meaning a pure space of consciousness where reality and meaning are created. His work not only focused on describing individual experiences, but he also believed in revealing the essence of those experiences. This perspective made phenomenology both a descriptive and eidetic experience. Phenomenology is eidetic because it uncovers the essence of an experience, rather than just describing it. This is done through eidetic reduction, where one imagines variations of an experience and sets aside details that are not essential to find out what makes a phenomenon what it is (Belt 2021: 5407). Finally, he advocated for and emphasised the role of intersubjectivity and the real world, which he believed reflected how shared experiences and encounters shape meaning (Corona, Kovac, Mijares and Grimaldos 2016: 75).

Phenomenology-hermeneutics is a philosophical methodology that was coined by Martin Heidegger, who was Husserl's assistant. In 1927, he developed his own view on phenomenology that sought to discover the meaning of being or existence of human beings, through the description and understanding of their experiences or daily life. Heidegger argued that we cannot bracket all the presuppositions we have, meaning we are embedded in the world and cannot detach ourselves from our experiences with people, objects and situations. He used the term Dasein (being there) to describe human existence. For him, Phenomenology is about studying the way beings exist in the world instead of seeing them as detached observers (Shahbazian 2015:05).

3.2.3 Application of Husserl's Views of Phenomenology

This phenomenological research paradigm focuses on the experiences of participants ..These experiences provide a glimpse into how the participants perceive and engage with the world around them by describing their experiences and encounters with various phenomena (Donalek 2004: 172). This study employs the ideas, design and methods of a phenomenological study to narrate and map out the experiences of the participants. This phenomenological qualitative study describes the essence of language usage within teaching and learning spaces, such as lecture halls and facilitation classes. The phenomenon studied in this case is how language influences interactions within teaching and learning spaces between students and academic staff members. Using online questionnaires, participants share their views and experiences on how language has either limited or enhanced their interactions. The responses provided mapped out individual experiences within group settings and linguistic encounters, placing emphasis on individual encounters. Phenomenologists reject the view that knowledge is limited to empirical or statistical evidence; they hold that knowledge should encompass everyday human experiences and that when employing this approach, researchers must set aside any preconceived assumptions or biases. You focus on participants lived experiences as presented. In fact, they place urgency on subjectivity and individualism. Subjectivity and individualism are stressed through the description of mundane everyday experiences (Crotty, 1998 in Jackson, Ronald, Drummond, Camora and Sakile 2007:23). So, using a phenomenological approach is beneficial for this study as it is interested in exploring and unpacking the views of students and staff members regarding the influence of language on interactions within the teaching and learning spaces.

3.2.3 Application of the Critical discourse analysis approach

Critical discourse analysis, as a social and power practice, is a field of study that has a recognisable approach to the study of the social use of language in explicit political and social contexts. CDA pays special attention to the context in which language is used (Pešić 2022:96). It addresses social problems and power relations. Through discourse analysis, the link between text and society is mediated. It pays special attention to the context, analysing the relationship between texts, processes and social conditions. The concept of context is vital to CDA, as it encompasses social, political, and ideological contexts.

Discourses are socially doubly constructed, meaning they contribute to both sustaining and reproducing the social and political status quo, as well as transforming it. The social influence of discourses is that they are underpinned by ideologies, which give rise to issues surrounding power. Power is viewed in relation to the lack of equality between participants in discourse encounters. Power in discourse examines the unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. Power in discourse is viewed in two ways, as power in discourse and power behind discourse. Power in discourse examines the exercising and enacting of power; it involves powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants. While power behind discourse includes the power to shape and constitute the order of discourse dimensions of social orders, social institutions or societies. As well as the discourses and genres to which I have access. The primary element of power behind it is the concept of hidden power, according to Fairclough (1997:52), which suggests that power relations are enacted in subtle ways; people who are unequal in power are not co-present in certain social interactions. Meaning, powerful participants can exercise power over discourse through constraints on content (what is said or done)

3.3 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach is a detailed process that researchers use to gain an improved understanding of various research areas and social phenomena (Aspers and Corte 2019:139). Qualitative research incorporates social behaviour, discourse, and language. Flick (2014 cited in Rahman 2016:106) posits that “Qualitative research is interested in analysing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardised data and analysing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics”. This approach provides personal insight and in-depth responses. It highlights and strengthens subjective opinions. This

aligns with the objective of this study, which is to gather subjective views and experiences of participants and identify ways to effectively narrate those experiences. A qualitative approach is beneficial because it allows for the description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences, and interprets meaning through their actions. The advantages of this kind of approach are inclusivity and reliability. A qualitative study is inclusive because it asks open-ended questions that prompt detailed responses from participants, and there are an inclusive integration and addition of participants' experiences. Finally, Participants in a qualitative study can express their opinions and views on the matter, which are fully discussed, providing the researcher with a more precise understanding and insight into the phenomenon. Therefore, the basis of a qualitative approach is the expression of in-depth understanding and the realities of the participants, which is evident in the study through the in-depth responses provided and the detailed narratives that each respondent provided, drawing and mapping out their experiences of language within different teaching and learning spaces.

3.3.1 Research population

A research population refers to the total number of persons, events, organisational units, case records, or other sampling units concerning the research problem (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport, 2005). The population have common characteristics that align with the objectives of the study and are of interest to a researcher. The common characteristics of the respondents set them apart from other individuals. The research population for this study consist of students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The academic staff members consist of lecturers and facilitators, while undergraduate and postgraduate students represent the student population. The staff member sample is based on individuals who directly interact with students within the teaching and learning spaces. This population offers this study a comprehensive account of their insights and experience on how language limits or fosters interaction between students and staff members in lecture halls and other teaching and learning spaces. The study includes academic staff members from all racial and gender backgrounds, regardless of their teaching position. The reason for choosing academic staff members is that they can account for and retell their experience of how language has limited or enhanced their ability to interact with students within the classroom. The study also includes students regardless of level of study and faculty, the reason being that the study seeks to track the lingual experiences of students throughout the campus to see how they experience language within the classroom.

3.3.2 Sampling

According to McNealy (1999 in Koerber and McMichael, 2008:476), sampling is distinguished between “probability” and “non-probability” techniques. Vehovar, Toepoel, and Steinmetz (2016:327) refer to non-probability sampling as the absence of a probability sampling mechanism, meaning it deviates from probability sampling principles, such as randomly selecting participants. In addition, when using non-probability sampling, predefined criteria are used to select participants who meet the required requirements. The sampling criteria can range from age, gender, race, geographical location, etc. The study's set specifications are that participants are divided into two groups. The first group are that participants need to be registered students of the UFS Qwaqwa campus, spread out through the Humanities, Education, Economic and Management Sciences and the Natural and Agricultural Sciences faculty. The second group comprises academic staff members, including lecturers, facilitators, and all other academic staff who teach either postgraduate or undergraduate students.

There are multiple non-probability sampling techniques; however, this study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate identification and selection of participants who meet the specified criteria (Stratton 2021). The sample is defined based on their experience and ability to respond to the research question. For example, when testing the effectiveness of chemotherapy, one will need to interview people who underwent the therapy or are in the process of undergoing chemotherapy. This makes the sample purposive as there are given objectives, and those who do not meet them are instantly excluded (Stratton 2021:373). Purposive sampling is the best approach because Participants offer valuable, rich, and insightful responses due to their lived experiences. Furthermore, the sample includes students and staff members who feel comfortable enough to narrate their experiences. During the initial stages of the research, purposive sampling was used. I disseminated the questionnaire online using the UFS News platform; however, I did not reach the target sample for both students and academic staff members. To ensure that I reach the target number of sample, I employed the use of convenience sampling, where I used several available people to encourage participation and engagement of new people. Golzar, Noor and Tajik (2022: 73) state that “convenience sampling basically means that the researchers utilise a sample which is readily available, and they have access to, it can be applicable to almost any research”. I used the sample readily available by walking through campus and asking different students to participate in the study, asking different HODs and lecturers to share the links with their academic staff members and students. This approach helped ensure that the set target was

reached and the links were disabled, preventing further participation.

The sample size in qualitative research refers to the total number of people who will be used as respondents in the study. The size should provide sufficient feedback to lead to data saturation. The study aimed to recruit forty participants, divided into the following categories; twenty academic staff members, ten lecturers, and the remaining ten academic facilitators. Twenty students, ten undergraduate students and ten postgraduate students. However, due to the online nature of the questionnaire, the total number of participants increased to twenty-three academic staff members and twenty-five students. After reaching this number of participants, I disabled the questionnaires to ensure that there is no further engagement with the questionnaire. This site and the diversity it represent, as well as the population sample, provide quality differences that will highlight the rich lingual experiences of participants within the teaching and learning space. The sample size of forty-eight participants is acceptable for qualitative research because it allows for sufficient in-depth and diverse responses while remaining manageable for in-depth analysis. In a qualitative approach, the focus is on achieving data saturation, where no new themes or insights emerge from the data. A sample of forty-eight is large enough to reach saturation, as the participants come from varied cultural, linguistic, study, and teaching levels relevant to the study. Thus, ensuring that the voices of most academic staff members and students are evident. Representativeness is not achieved through large numbers but through the careful selection of participants who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives on the phenomenon of language usage within classrooms. The forty-eight participants in this study contributed to conceptual representativeness, as they reflect the variety of experiences, roles, and contexts within the study setting of a teaching and learning spaces. By including participants from different academic levels, disciplines, and linguistic backgrounds, the sample captures the range of viewpoints and interactions that exist in the teaching and learning environment. This diversity ensures that the findings represent depth of experiences rather than the frequency of responses, thereby enhancing the credibility and feasibility of the results.

3.3.3 Data collection

This study used open-ended questionnaires. Open-ended questionnaires provide a platform for participants to express their viewpoints on given subjects and offer a free range of responses, allowing them to expand on their ideas. “Open-ended questionnaires have many uses, most notably to discover what the masses think. These include market research, customer service

feedback, evaluations, and social science research” (O’Leary, 2014). O’Leary (2014) states that the strengths of using open-ended questionnaires lie in their ability to allow researchers to generate data that relates to their study and provide insights that might not be available otherwise. The questionnaire offers participants a chance to provide a wide range of answers; these types of questions provide respondents with spaces to articulate themselves and fully express their thoughts in writing (Hyman and Sierre 2016).

There are two separate questionnaires, one for academic staff members and the other for students. The questionnaires share similar themes and address questions related to the role language plays in both limiting and enhancing interaction between students and academic staff members. They, however, have minor differences here and there, as the experience of a student is different from that of an academic staff member. I used an online questionnaire as a data collection method to gather in-depth responses from participants about their lingual experiences within classrooms. I created the questionnaire on Microsoft Forms. I created a setting that made the questionnaire available only to students and academic staff members who use their UFS email addresses. Other personnel could not access the questionnaire; this is one of the things I confirmed through the piloting section of the study. Furthermore, to gain participants, I used the UFS Qwaqwa campus News platform to share the participant recruitment script. The script was shared only to the academic staff members' email address, while the student’s recruitment script was shared via to the Qwaqwa campus student emails only. Using an online open-ended questionnaire was beneficial because it offered participants the flexibility to respond at their convenience without any added pressure. These questionnaires are administered online, and participants can engage at their own comfort.

The themes that gave rise to the question asked in the questionnaire are language inclusivity, multilingualism, decolonisation of language in higher education, and the importance of language within interaction. These themes are evident in multiple studies that examine how the use of English can be a challenge for English second-language users and how, at times, it hinders ESL learning. For example, Bay Atlantic University published an article in 2024 titled *ESL Students Challenges: Overcoming Language Obstacles* which discusses the various challenges students who are not native English speakers experience such as language proficiency, communication, motivational and confidence issues. Through the article, we can infer that language inclusivity is a necessity, and acknowledging ESL struggles is crucial for the success of ESL students.

The questionnaire has three sections; section one is the icebreaker questions, which ease the respondents into the questionnaire. This section includes questions such as defining the concept

of language and choosing one's ideal language to use in teaching and learning. Section 2 focuses on obtaining information that will respond to the research questions. The question includes participants' recollection of instances where language has either limited or enhanced their ability to interact within lecture halls. However, the questions are not limited to addressing multilingualism in classrooms and the university's language policy. The third section is the final reflection, which poses questions regarding the UFS language policy and participants' views on the concept of decolonising language in higher education. The sections of the questionnaire were developed based on the need to respond to the 3 research questions of the study,

3.4 Justification of using open-ended questionnaires

Most studies that employ the use of a phenomenological approach use interviews and focus groups to gather data, while researchers using CDA utilise existing written documents, such as newspaper articles, speeches and policies. So, to combine and account for both styles, I opted for an open-ended questionnaire because it is a subjective written piece of text that provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and articulate their views at their own comfort level using their own vocabulary without the presence of the interviewer, whose presence at times might be seen as intimidating. Furthermore, open-ended questionnaires strike a balance between depth and breadth: while they do not allow for the same level of probing as interviews, they still generate rich qualitative data that can reveal patterns, themes, and meanings, while offering participants a greater sense of anonymity and freedom of expression. However, this approach has its limitations, such as participants not being able to fully express themselves in writing, which renders their responses invalid and incomprehensible, thereby preventing the data from being used in the study.

3.4.1 Sample of the questionnaire

As previously stated, there are two questionnaires, one meant for students and the other for academic staff members. The contents of the questionnaire are similar, with minor differences in the questions asked, as students and staff members have different experiences. The questionnaire focused on probing participants' experiences of language within various teaching and learning spaces and how English enhances or limits interaction between students and staff members. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: an icebreaker, research-related questions, and a closure section.

The icebreaker section was designed to ease participants into the questionnaire and gather their views. The questions were the same for both staff and students.

1. Define the word language.
2. If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to teach using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

The research-related section of the questionnaire aimed to address the main objectives of the research, and the questions were tailored slightly differently for staff and students.

Staff

1. How important is language and its usage in a classroom? (Please provide a detailed response.)
2. How has using English as a medium of instruction limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?
3. Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom?
4. Has the language you use to teach limited students' ability to interact with you or the content?
5. Narrate how the language you use to teach enhances/limits students' ability to interact with you or the content. (Please answer, supply details as to how the language used enhances or limits students' interactions with you and their understanding of the content.)
6. What do you think about the University's language policy?
7. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
8. How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?
9. Is the decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions desirable and feasible? (Please elaborate.)

Student

1. What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class? (Provided with detailed response)
2. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
3. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever enhanced your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
4. Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom? (If yes, please explain how inclusivity is fostered. If not, please explain why you think inclusivity is not fostered.)
5. What do you think about the University's language policy?
6. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?

7. What does decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions mean to you? Do you think it is desirable and/or possible?

The conclusion part of the questionnaire was the same for both students and academic staff members, focusing on unpacking the language dynamics evident in teaching and learning spaces. Through these questions, we get to understand how the participants viewed and understood the use of English.

1. Do you have any other final thoughts on the classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was collected using online questionnaires, and the collected responses were analysed using a qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. NVivo is used to help researchers organise, analyse and create visual data (Dhakal 2020:270). NVivo helps with producing meaningful data by effectively managing the uploaded resources or data. It provides researchers and users with a platform to create codes, maps and identify themes. This helps with organising and analysing data. The codes and themes developed were decoded using Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model. My reason for choosing this method lies in the fact that there is an interplay between the text and society, one is shaped by the other. The method employs intertextuality, the fusion of language with everyday social phenomena, such as power, race, gender, and others. The method can be applied to any social issue; researchers have used the model to analyse different social issues within various fields. For example, Stecher 2010 used Fairclough's three-dimensional model to create an intertextuality between linguistics and psychology. While Pietra and Wang 2021 used Fairclough's 3 D model to combine politics and linguistics, in a study titled *Enough is enough this cycle of violence must come to an end': Practical reasoning in the editorials during the extradition bill crisis of Hong Kong*. Therefore, the above examples demonstrate how the 3D model can be applied in various fields and how it provides researchers with a blueprint to understand how language can be used to reflect social structures that may be exclusionary, power struggles, and the significance of discourse in different fields of study. The model can be explained using the diagram below.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method used to study written and spoken language in relation to its social context. It aims to understand how language is used in real-life situations (McLeod 2024:01). This method of analysis focuses on how people express themselves verbally in everyday encounters, and it further looks at how language is used in different

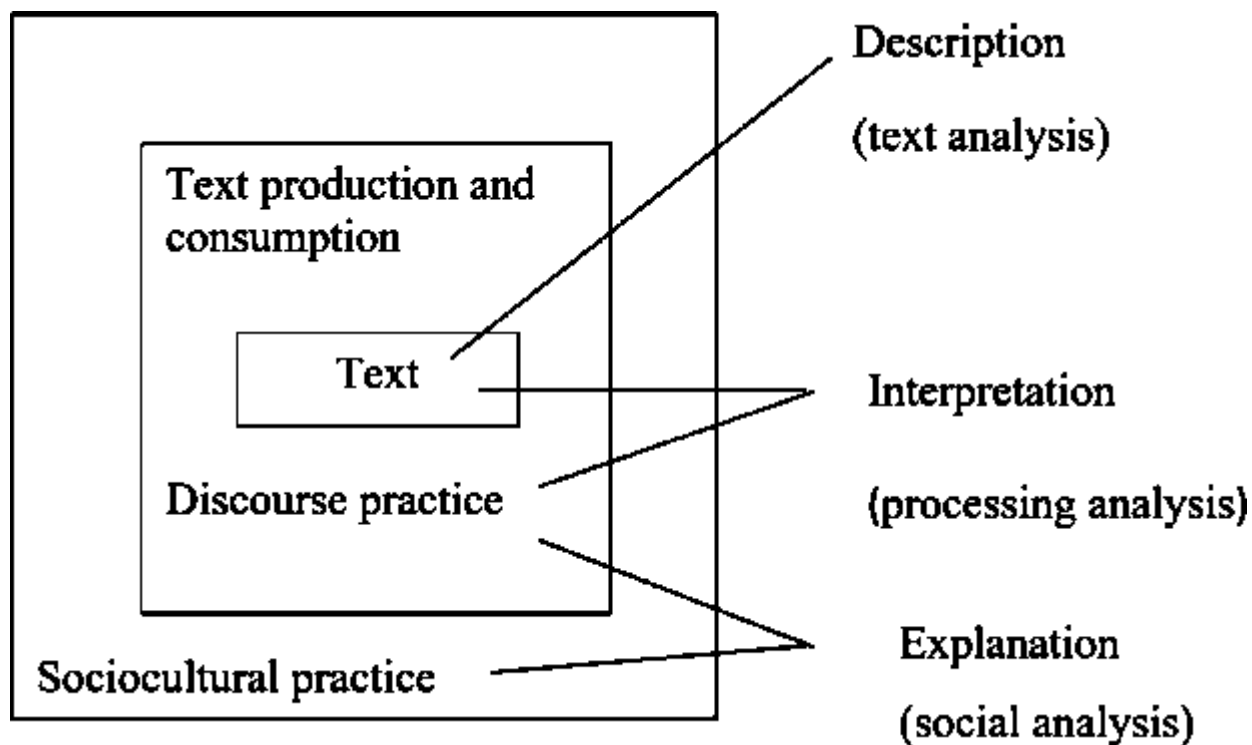
situations. Different people express themselves in different ways; some may have a straightforward approach, while others are more subtle and indirect. When using Discourse analysis, one does not only focus on language usage but also looks at the context in which it is used. Horowitz and Kilby (2019:23) state that the historical, cultural and social context that influences an interaction or communication piece plays a crucial role in discourse analysis. In a conversation, context shapes and gives meaning to the language used. They further make an example that “a chat with a police officer differs significantly from a casual conversation with a close friend, highlighting the importance of context in shaping language use”, meaning a chat with a police officer might be restricted as there are power struggles that exist, while a chat with a close friend might be relaxed and open.

Researchers of discourse analysis focus on how language creates and maintains social identities. By doing so, they look at how language choices contribute to identity formation. How one uses language to define and articulate their identity. Secondly, researchers of discourse analysis focus on how language maintains and creates power relations, which includes how language is used to challenge and reinforce power structures. They also look at how language reveals unspoken assumptions and biases. Finally, Discourse Analysis recognises that meaning is shaped by social and cultural factors. Therefore, understanding Discourse analysis as a data analysis method is pivotal, as it allows researchers a more in-depth analysis of language, which moves away from the surface meaning to uncover deeper social, cultural and political meanings embedded in communication and language. Discourse analysis reveals power relations, focusing on how language constructs, maintains, or challenges power in social contexts. Furthermore, it connects language to social practice, revealing how language shapes society and is, in turn, shaped by it. This is achieved through the elaboration of how ideologies, norms and identities are shaped, reinforced and contested through everyday life.

3.5.1 Two types of Discourse analysis

There are two primary approaches to using discourse analysis and these are the language-in-use approach and the socio-political approach. The socio-political approach looks at how language reflects normalised or suppressed power dynamics. The language-in-use approach focuses on the technical aspects of language, such as grammar, phonology, and syntax, and how these elements are used to convey meaning. This study employs the socio-political approach, which incorporates Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's 3-dimensional model as tools for analysing data.

Diagram 1 Fairclough's 3-dimensional model



Model found in the work of Zahid, 2017: 87

The diagram above of Fairclough's 3D model reflects the interconnectivity between the text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. It reflects how the exploration of language and its usage can never be an isolated approach. It is interconnected, and such sections overlap and link with the other. The model shows that the language used in a text is shaped by the way it is produced and interpreted, which in turn reflects wider social norms, power relations and ideologies. Texts not only mirror social structures but also challenge and reinforce them.

3.6 Introduction to the 3D model

The three-dimensional model of analysis owes much of its underpinning to Firth and Halliday's multilevel linguistic system. The main task of CDA is to explore the dialectical relationship between language and social practice. Fairclough's analysis goes through three phases. The early phase targets power and ideology (1989). The mature phase focuses on discourse and social change, and the third phase targets globalisation.

. Step 1: Description/ Text stage

The initial stage of this model is the description (Text) analysis stage, which looks at linguistic features such as word choice, grammar (transitivity and passivisation) and text structure. It focuses on analysing the language used in a text. In this stage, the object of analysis is the text,

whether spoken, written, or visual. The text analysis focuses on breaking down language to uncover meaning, commonality and differences. In this stage, uncover how language is closely related to the text, as language can be represented through text meaning that language enables text to be coherent and meaningful (Johnsen 2001:34). Paying the required attention on language enables us to analyse the text by deconstructing the word choices and placing them in word groupings to find similar ideas, common threads and lexical meaning. This stage further looks at how grammar structure and words can shape meaning. The stage zooms in on word choices, paying attention to the words used, whether they are positive or negative, emotional or neutral, and so on. It examines how the language used affects the recipient of the message.

Step 2: Discourse practice/ interpretation/text production and consumption stage

This stage focuses on identifying how power, ideology, and social relationships influence the creation and understanding of texts. The stage moves away from words and suggests that meaning is not only derived from words but can also be found in how people use and interpret them. This stage focuses on three important aspects: text production, distribution, and consumption. In the text production stage, we focus on who created the text, what power or ideology influenced its creation, and the decisions made in terms of word choice, tone, and other language features. The second part is the text distribution, how is the information or text delivered, is it available online, printed or verbal exchange. Furthermore, who controls the information shared. The third part of this stage is the text consumption, which focuses on who consumes the information and how the different audiences interpret the text based on different factors such as experiences, beliefs and background. In closing, the discourse stage does not only focus on how the text was created, but also on how it was made available to people and how people make sense of it (Bezer 2023).

Step 3: Social practice/ Explanation stage

This stage of the model examines broader social issues and contexts that impact the text and discourse. It examines how the text relates to social issues. The stage focuses on power relations and social structures, examining how the text reinforces, challenges, and reflects social and power structures within the community in which it is consumed. Furthermore, it examines how the text and language used support, reject, or question dominant ideologies. Finally, the stage reveals how texts help maintain or resist power structures in society. It helps us understand how language is used to uphold and challenge certain viewpoints and inequalities (Maposa 2015).

Application of the model to the study

The three stages are used in this study to analyse how language used in lecture classes, facilitation sessions, tutorial classes and other teaching and learning spaces can enhance or limit interaction between students and academic staff members. This model is applied to the responses received from the questionnaires. Stage one focuses on participants' responses to the text, and here we examine the language choices of participants and uncover hidden cues that may reflect each participant's perspective. Furthermore, I create a word bank where I place similar words together.

Using step 1, which is the text dimension, I will analyse the language used in the responses. Looking at the tone, sentence structure and word choices of respondents. When looking at the tone, we focus on whether the respondent used formal or informal language, whether they use emotional language and identify common themes or repeated phrases evident in the responses provided. From the process above, a word bank will be created, which will provide us with an overview.

Using step 2, I will look at who answered the questionnaire, focusing on the demographic biographical information section of the questionnaire, which looks at the level of study and the degree the students are pursuing. While for academic staff members, it looks at their job title and the level they are teaching. For example, are they teaching first years, postgraduates or senior students? In addition, the analysis looks at how different participants interpreted the questions and responded to them. Finally, dimension two analysis looks at questions the respondents might have misunderstood or omitted and what this means.

Using step 3, which is the explanation stage, I will focus on the implications of the responses received, what the responses reveal about the language, its usage and participants' experience of it within teaching and learning spaces. Finally, I will look at how the responses might reflect concerns related to social phenomena such as language inclusivity, decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions power dynamics, social inequalities, etc and whether the responses reflect an acceptance of the dynamics identified or challenge them.

3.6.1 Piloting the questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted with 6 participants and my supervisor to gather feedback on the user-friendliness of the questionnaire and to provide an overview of their experience. From this exercise, I received feedback from my supervisor to revise the questionnaire and include a participant's consent landing page, where participants provide consent before participating in the study. If the participant consents, the questionnaire will automatically load. If they do not consent, the study will automatically end. Furthermore, to the consent page, he suggested that

I attach the written consent for respondents to read before providing consent. This process was difficult because I did not have the knowledge in creating online questionnaires, but I managed to crack it. After resolving the technical issues mentioned above, I sent the links to the six pilot respondents; three gave their approvals, indicating that the questionnaire was easy to access and user-friendly. Two participants discussed the length, saying the questionnaire is too lengthy, and one struggled to access the link because they were not signed into their UFS accounts. From the feedback received, I managed to add a disclaimer that the links can only be accessed when using your UFS staff or student account and ensured that some questions require short answers instead of lengthy responses to combat the length issue.

3.7 Research Limitations

A limitation of the study is that some participants may not have understood the questions and chose not to answer. Another limitation is that the number was capped to 40, which meant not potential participants could engage with the questionnaires. . However, the participant intake number was extended to forty-eight participants . Having an online questionnaire made limiting participation challenging, as the study had a broad reach, and I could not always track the number of participants. However, I was prepared to work with any data received, even if it was below 50. I had intended to disable the participation link before its closing date if the number of participants exceeded fifty. Another limitation is having fewer volunteers, which prevents me from reaching the target number. This may not necessarily provide an overall indication of the linguistic interactions occurring on campus, due to the limited number of participants, as this is a Master's project. However, I am optimistic that more students and staff members will be interested and sign up for the study, and hopefully, the project can be built upon and enlarged after the success of this one.

3.8 Ethical consideration

This research recognises the ethical considerations inherent in studies involving human participants and is committed to upholding principles of fairness, transparency, and respect throughout the research process. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), ethical considerations are fundamental when conducting research. In line with this, the study ensured that participants' rights, dignity, and well-being were fully protected. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Recruitment scripts were distributed through the UFS News platform, clearly indicating that participants could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or need for justification. Informed consent was obtained through a consent form linked to the online questionnaire, which included a consent button on the questionnaire's landing page. Participants could only proceed once consent was formally provided. All relevant information about the study was communicated to participants in advance through the recruitment materials.

Given that research involving human participants may pose potential risks, such as emotional, personal, or social discomfort—appropriate measures were taken to mitigate these. Participants were provided with information about available support services on campus and assured that their views would not be misrepresented or used in a manner that could cause harm. The study did not offer any incentives for participation, and participants were informed of this beforehand to avoid any false expectations. Anonymity was strictly maintained: participants' identities remained undisclosed, and pseudonyms such as “Staff Participant 1” and “Student Respondent 1” were used when presenting findings. Confidentiality was also rigorously upheld, with all data accessible only to the researcher and supervisors. No third parties had access to the participants' responses. The confidentiality of all data was treated with the utmost care. This study received formal ethical clearance from the University of the Free State's Research Ethics Committee (Reference: UFS-HSD2024/187)

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology used to investigate participants' experience of language and its usage within lecture halls. It unpacked how language reflects social power struggles within teaching and learning spaces. A qualitative research design was employed, and the instrument used to gather participants' views was an online open-ended questionnaire, consisting of two questionnaires. One was created for academic staff members, and the other for students, which was administered online to fifty participants. Twenty-two were academic

staff members, and the other twenty-eight were undergraduate and postgraduate students of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. This method was appropriate for addressing the research questions and allowed for a deep exploration of language use in teaching and learning spaces, halls, and provided insight into how academic staff members and students experience language. The next chapter...

4 Introduction

This chapter discusses and presents the responses gathered from the open-ended online questionnaire distributed to students and academic staff members of the University of the Free State Qwaqwa campus. This study aimed to uncover participants' experiences of language within various teaching and learning spaces. This chapter presents the findings organised by research question and main themes that emerged from the data.

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

Data analysis is vital and should be conducted with utmost care, as it forms the core evidence of the study and provides a response to the phenomenon the study aimed to resolve or provide more data on. Data analysis provides evidence to the research questions and advances knowledge through adding new data to the field of study. The presentation of findings is structured discourse analysis, focusing on Fairclough's three-dimensional model. Each stage of the model is presented and linked with the data received via questionnaires.

4.1 Description of sample

The sample included forty-eight participants in this study. Twenty-five were students of the UFS Qwaqwa campus; the sample mentioned above involved both postgraduate and undergraduate students. The sample was diverse in that it included students from the Education, Humanities, Economics and Management Sciences, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences faculties. This study involved students from the first-year level to PHD level. The sample of

the academic staff members was also diverse, including heads of departments, senior and junior lecturers. It also included Academic facilitators and facilitators. The sample provided valuable insights that moved the analysis beyond surface-level observations to reveal the underlying motivations and lived experiences of the participants.

4. 2 Results

The following sections present the feedback provided by participants through the online questionnaire. The responses offer valuable insights into participants' experiences, attitudes and perceptions regarding language use, inclusivity, and interaction within the UFS Qwaqwa Campus teaching and learning spaces. The feedback reflects diverse perspectives from both academic staff and students, highlighting how English serves as a medium of instruction that influences communication, participation, and access to learning. Through their responses, participants also reveal the linguistic dynamics that shape classroom engagement and broader campus interactions. This section serves as an illustration of how participants interpret and experience language practices in their academic environment.

The questionnaire included two icebreaker questions, designed to ease participants into the survey. One of the questions asked was "What does language mean to you?". This question is broad; it lacks any specific details. It was intended to understand the raw, unfiltered responses from participants on what language means to them, and the aim was to further participants' general view of language.

The themes that arise from the question are as follows. The main recurring theme or definition that participants gave is that language is a means of communication; most participants viewed language as a communication tool.

Staff members are regarded as SP (Staff participants), and students are indicated as SR (Student responses)

Staff responses: Language is a tool of communication.

SP 1: A tool to communicate intent, meaning, and social standing.

SP 16: Language is the tool we use to communicate with each other.

SP 20: Language to me encompasses multiple meanings. It is a means of communication to convey meaning and a means to express thoughts.

SP 21: It means communication. A meaningful exchange of words between people who are in a conversation.

Student responses for language a tool for communication

SR 1: Means of communicating used by people, which consists of spoken and written words in a structured manner for conversational purposes.

SR10: It means communication.

SR 11: It means human communication and sharing of ideas using different meanings.

SR 16: It means certain words used to communicate.

SR 2: Mode of Communication

SR 20: Language is a way people communicate with each other using words to express what they feel.

The second theme that arises from the data is that language is a form of identity.

Staff responses

SP 6: To me, language means part of one's identity.

SP 12: Means of identity.

SP 19: To me, language is more than just words and sentences, but it is a form of communication, a carrier of culture and identity that shows our uniqueness in the world.

Student responses

SR 15: Language to me means identity.

SR 12: It means my identity.

The third theme evident in the responses is that language is a form of culture.

Staff responses

SP 10: As much it is considered as means of communication to many. To me it refers to how one carries themselves with the words they articulate to derive meaning either to life, their surroundings and the people they engage with whom come from different cultural, traditional and national settings. Language to me also means how certain words are constructed together to make meaning of the academic world to which we are involved in, additionally, it is the medium of instruction.

SP 12: Carrier of culture.

Reflection

The findings of the above questions reveal that language functions as more than a mere medium of communication; it is deeply intertwined with identity and culture. Participants view language

as an indicator of who they are; it reflects their social, cultural and personal background. Furthermore, the findings reveal that language serves as a key tool for creating and maintaining interaction in academic spaces. From a Critical discourse perspective, the responses provided construct and position language as more than a neutral medium of instruction; instead, language emerges as a central social resource through which communication, identity, and culture are negotiated. The lexicon used by participants, such as “*means of identity*,” “*mode of communication*,” “*carrier of culture*,” and “*home language*,” does not merely describe language as a practical classroom tool. Rather, it positions language as a means of communication that enables or restricts meaningful interaction between students and lecturers in a multilingual academic environment. At the same time, participants’ references, such as SP 12 stating that language is a carrier of culture, reveal how language use shapes self-perception and social belonging. Furthermore, SR 15 stated that language means identity, illustrating how language form’s identity within the university space. These expressions suggest that identity is continually negotiated through everyday linguistic practices, particularly in classrooms where certain languages are foregrounded over others. In addition, participants’ emphasis on their home languages as carriers of meaning, values, and familiarity highlights language as a form of culture, through which shared histories and ways of understanding the world are maintained. Together, these responses show that language in the academic context functions simultaneously as a communicative tool, a marker of identity, and a cultural resource, deeply embedded in students lived experiences of teaching and learning.

Research question 1

Student response

SR 25: Language is any form of communication that one uses to pass on a message or to be heard. This allows us to interact in different groups or spaces where diversity in terms of tribes as well as culture exists.

SR 18: Language is a combination of a lot of things, including history and our culture.

SR 14: It means diversity.

4.3.1 How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus

This research question aims to investigate the dual role of English as both an enabling and constraining factor in communication and interaction between students and academic staff across various teaching and learning environments. The above research question is the central focus of the study, examining how English both enhances and limits interaction within various teaching and learning environments. It examines how English, as the primary medium of instruction at the UFS Qwaqwa Campus, facilitates understanding, participation, and knowledge exchange among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The above research question was divided into three parts: the first one was, "How important is language and its usage in a classroom?" The second one was how English enhances interaction, and the final one was about how English limits interaction within different teaching and learning spaces. From the above question, various topics and subtopics emerged. Through these questions, we can investigate the ways in which the dominance of English may create barriers for those who are not fully proficient in the language, potentially limiting their engagement, confidence, and equal participation. The question, therefore, aims to investigate how language practices affect the quality, inclusivity, and effectiveness of academic interactions across various learning contexts.

Question: How important is language and its usage in a classroom?

From the above question, the following themes emerged.

Staff responses

Theme: Language as a gatekeeper to knowledge

SP 2: Language is important. I see students who struggle with English and therefore never really master important concepts. It is not that they do not have the aptitude to understand the concepts, it's just that they struggle with the terminology. That said, it is important that they can express themselves and their mastery of their subjects in English because they will need to do so in their careers. So, language has the potential to open opportunities, but also the potential to create barriers for our students.

SP 15: Without language proficiency a student would be seriously handicapped in social life and in the world of work. Along with numeracy and some form of moral education, it is crucial.

SP 19: It is very important because it makes or breaks a student. It is no doubt that most students believe that English is a measure of intelligence. Therefore, if English is the only language that is used in the classroom, some students tend to think they cannot have a successful academic journey.

Theme: English bridges barriers created by Multilingual setting

SR 16: Since English is a universal language and is the number one language used to communicate amongst different groups of languages. Its significance in a lecture class is to ensure that every student from a different language group understands the topic and lessons being taught.

SR 17: Since a lecture hall accommodates students from different backgrounds, with different home languages, English always comes into rescue when there is a language barrier in communications amongst students.

SR 18: The importance of using English is to ensure that everyone in a lecture room understands. In a lecture room we have different languages, and it becomes a barrier to communicate if others use their home language.

SR 20: In a classroom that has people who speak different languages, English can be used as a common language and will allow easy communication between students and lecturers.

Theme: Language creates mutual understanding

Staff responses

SP 20: Language plays a vital role in the learning process, mutual understanding between students and teachers is ensured by clear command/articulation from a teacher and clear understanding from the students. Good language use ensures progress.

SP 22: It is important because it can help students understand or not understand the subject at hand.

SP 23: Very important. Language drives engagement between instructors and students, engagement between students, and engagement with the content taught in class. Therefore, language influences understanding.

SP 9: Language plays a significant role in how well students understand content, as well as the extent to which they participate in class.

Theme: Language as a tool for assessment and academic success

SP 10: Language is important in the classroom as we use it to communicate or issue out assessments to students, through language students can derive meaning portrayed by the collection of words we refer to as language. The language used in class plays an integral part since students can ask questions in class to help them in completing their assessments.

Theme: Language, identity, and inclusion

Staff responses

SP 12: My understanding of the significance of language and its usage in the classroom is manifold. Language is central to classroom teaching and learning, serving as the primary tool for delivering content, fostering critical thinking, and building social relationships with my students. It shapes how students access knowledge, interact with peers (postgraduate students and other facilitators, junior lecturers, etc) and with lecturers, and develop cognitive and emotional skills. Effective, inclusive language use promotes equity, affirms learners' identities, and creates a supportive environment, while poor usage can lead to misunderstanding and exclusion. I also must point out that an international student who does not speak the local languages. Therefore, the use of English in the classroom setup has come in handy in achieving the above.

SP 14: It is very important considering that you cannot teach figures in class without communicating them or explaining them using a language that is understood by everyone.

Question: What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class?

From the above question, the following theme emerged. This question was meant for students.

The following themes that arose from students' responses

Theme: English links various cultures

Student responses

SR 6: As a global language, it bridges the gap between cultures, making it easier to engage with students from diverse backgrounds.

SR 2: Ensure that Communication is possible (sometimes effective communication) in situations where there are linguistically diverse interlocutors.

SR 14: English is a diverse language that accommodates everyone; it fosters communication amongst students and their educators, since we are from different cultures and speak different languages.

Theme: English creates a common understanding

SR 11: Makes it easy for everyone to understand because a lecture class has many people from different cultures and languages.

SR 12: We can understand what has been thought and it is the most used universal language.

SR 13: English is a language that everyone understands rather than everyone speaking their own.

SR 15: The significance of using English helps us to understand each other and have some form of understanding of the content presented even when we come from different cultures.

SR 22: The significance of using English in a learning environment is to cultivate a better conducive understanding and to accommodate and communicate well in class.

Theme: English as a Gateway to Academic and Global Opportunities

SR 21: We can understand this from several perspective because English is not the first language to most of the students, but we use it as a medium of instruction. And using English in our classes does not equip us as students only but it also prepares us for bigger opportunities and academic opportunities. it enhances our ability as students to engage internationally or collaborate.

SR 4: English is the global language we have as human, it is significant because it breaks barriers between cultures and native languages to foster a delicate and meaningful connection between people in their personal and professional lives.

Question: Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?

From the above question the following theme emerged

Theme: Language barriers and comprehension challenges

Staff responses

SP 4: In some cases, it does, especially when students are not fluent in English, it means that knowledge synthesis in a classroom environment is somehow limited.

SP 21: Every time. If I were to stick to English throughout my lesson, I doubt some of my students will understand the content.

SP 2: Oh yes. I have had many instances where students don't understand what I am saying because of language. I have had to learn to try to explain concepts in simple terms and in different ways to try to overcome this. I have also had students who bring their friends with them to my office to translate for them because their English proficiency is so poor.

SP 18: Many students struggle to engage with texts and learning materials that use academic English, which has an impact on classroom interaction. Sometimes it is difficult to clearly explain or discuss topics if students do not yet have the English academic vocabulary to do so. I think students may also be less likely to offer their opinions or discuss topics in depth, especially with the lecturer, if they are unsure of the language.

SP 11: Yes, the students' English leaves them struggling to articulate themselves on complex theoretical issues.

Theme: Reduced participation and confidence

Staff responses

SP 3: yes. some students are from rural areas and are less confident to express themselves in English.

SP 12: Yes — using English as the sole medium of instruction has, at times, created barriers for students who are more confident in their home languages, such as Isizulu, Sotho, Swati, IsiXhosa, Venda, Pedi, etc. Some learners struggle to express their ideas fully or ask questions, which limits meaningful classroom interaction. This can also affect their confidence and participation in class discussions. However, whenever I ask students to express themselves in local languages, more are willing to come out and share, even the shy-looking ones.

Question: Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom.

This question was answered by both students and staff members the question was the same for both participants.

Theme: Facilitating Cross-Cultural Communication

Staff responses

SP 14: Yes, it has. Out of all the 11 official languages, I know 3 so I cannot code-switch in class for emphasis in all these languages. However, English makes it easy because everyone understands the language, so it is better to communicate using it in class.

SP 16: Yes, it has. Since English is the lingua franca in South Africa, using English as the medium of instruction can allow students in a multilingual classroom to better understand each other and the lecturer. Using English as the primary language is simpler than everyone speaking all the languages that everyone else speaks and conversing in multiple languages at once. Still, even in classrooms where English is the main language, the use of other languages in the classroom should still be encouraged if students want to use them, especially in tutorial classes.

Theme: No language hasn't enhanced anything

Staff responses

SP 21: Lol! Enhanced? NO!

SP 2: It has created more barriers than it has opened opportunities.

SP 7: I believe that using English as a medium of instruction enables me to teach many students I would not have been able to if the medium of instruction were any other of, for example, South Africa's official languages. The universality of English enables one to teach across cultural and linguistic differences in a language that is mostly accessible to many students. Even students with a rudimentary grasp of English would be able to benefit from what I teach. Furthermore, English gives me an opportunity to interact with students outside of the classroom. I cannot communicate with each student in their home language, but communication via e-mail or discussions after lectures are easier when we share a common language. This also makes me more approachable, I believe.

SP 8: I would say yes and no. Because as much as the medium of instructions is English, some students in the first level of university cannot grasp the English language properly because they come from different backgrounds/ schooling system. So, in a way we

exclude them or rather they miss vital instructions in class thus impacting their academic journey negatively.

Theme: Access to Educational Resources and Knowledge

SP 1: Yes, for me, I would not have been able to teach them in Afrikaans (for example). And because I was trying to teach them academic literacy in English, it was important for them to hear the language and be forced to use the language, as it would in turn empower them when they had to write exams, essays, etc.

Students Responses

Theme: Facilitate cross cultural interaction

SR 1: Yes, when seeking assistance from fellow students who do not speak my home language, English always come in handy.

SR 19: Yes, it has improved my ability to talk with other students and lectures as it is a common language for communicating. It makes it easier to access study materials and understand them as they are written in English.

Theme: No English has not enhanced my ability interact within teaching and learning spaces

SR 9: No

SR16: No, it has never enhanced my ability because I'm scared to speak broken English in front of people.

SR 24: No, I sometimes do not see the necessity of speaking English, but I believe in expressing and interacting with people in my language.

Theme: English as a Tool for connection and mutual understanding in a diverse academic environment

SR 4: Yes, because most of the students use English to share ideas, and concepts to other people for understanding which makes everyone feel understood and comfortable.

SR 10: Yes, most definitely. English bridges language gaps that we have with different people so using it makes things much easier.

SR 18: Yes, it has enhanced my ability to interact with fellow students and the lecture. My communication skills using it has improved. I understand content better with it.

Theme: Help create fluency

SR 8: Yes, it has enhanced my ability as it helps me to speak English more fluently.

SR 5: As an international student, it enables one to access, engage and share information with diverse audiences.

SR 14: Yes, it has, it enhanced my linguistics skills, and I am now able to articulate myself well, especially in classroom debates.

SR 15: I believe it did, English makes it easy to interact with the content and helps us as students to be a unit and be in the same page unlike collaborating using our own home languages and never reaching common ground.

SR 20: Yes, using English as a medium of instruction has enhanced my ability to communicate with others because as much as the language is easily comprehended, there is still a lot that I am yet to learn about it, and using it while interacting with others is the best way to improve on it.

Reflection

The findings demonstrate that language plays a multifaceted and influential role within academic spaces. Firstly, language operates as a gatekeeper to knowledge, determining the extent to which students can access, interpret, and engage with academic content. At the same time, it serves as a medium for mutual understanding, fostering collaboration and shared meaning among diverse participants. Language also emerges as a tool for assessment and academic success, shaping how students demonstrate comprehension and competence in educational contexts. Beyond its functional role, language is closely tied to identity and inclusion, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and their position within academic communities. These findings highlight that language is not merely a communicative tool but a powerful determinant of access, achievement, and belonging within higher education. From a critical discourse perspective, these responses construct language—specifically English—as a gatekeeper that regulates students’ access to educational resources, cross-cultural communication, and opportunities for meaningful participation. The lexis used by participants, including expressions such as “*makes or breaks a student*,” “*handicapped*,” and “*measure of intelligence*,” is evaluative and high stakes, signalling that English proficiency is not merely helpful for communication but positions learners within a hierarchy of academic value. This language frames English competence as central to mutual understanding in multilingual classrooms, while simultaneously presenting limited proficiency as a language barrier that leads to comprehension problems and exclusion from classroom discourse. In SP19’s assertion that “English is a measure of intelligence,” the discourse reveals an underlying ideology in which linguistic ability is equated with intellectual capacity, thereby identifying English proficiency as a prerequisite for recognition as a legitimate knower. This positioning normalises English as the primary medium through which cross-cultural communication is

expected to occur, while obscuring structural constraints such as unequal prior schooling, mismatches between home and institutional languages, and entrenched linguistic prejudice. As a result, comprehension difficulties and communication breakdowns are attributed to individual deficiency rather than to systemic language arrangements, reinforcing unequal access to educational resources and limiting students' full participation in the academic environment.

4.4 Research question 2:

What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

This research question was divided into three subsections. The first subsection was created to understand the importance of language in interaction. This importance was gauged through the creation of a choice where participants get to state the language they would choose for learning and teaching. The question asked was.

If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to learn and engage in academic spaces using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

Table 1: The tables below reveal the languages students would like to use when learning and engaging in academic spaces, along with the reasons they chose those languages.

Table 1

Students' language choices	Reasoning for the choice
SR 1: English and my home language (Sesotho).	English to enhance my knowledge of the language and Sesotho to be able to easily understand what I am being thought.
SR 3: If I had to choose a language to learn and engage in academic spaces, I'd choose a language that facilitates global understanding and collaboration. Given the context, I'd choose a widely spoken language like: 1. English	The reasons for this choice would include: 1. Global connectivity: Facilitating communication and collaboration across cultures and borders. 2. Access to resources: Tapping into a vast pool of academic literature, research, and expertise. 3. Career opportunities: Enhancing opportunities for academic and professional growth globally.
SR 4: Russian	Because of how bold and commanding the language is, especially through Russian literature.
SR 5: English,	mainly because it is the language of commerce that allows one to access vast amounts of information and to collaborate on a global scale.
SR 6: I would always pick English,	it's easier to understand.
SR 7: Spanish.	I don't have a particular reason I just like it
SR 8: English,	I would choose English because it is the language that everyone can understand and interact with
SR 9: English	because most of the people speak and understand it
SR 10: Spanish	I find it interesting, the accent and its tone
SR 11: English	Most people can relate to the English language, and it is easy to learn
SR 12: French	because it's mostly spoken by the rich.
SR 13: IsiZulu	It is my mother tongue and It's easier to speak
SR 14: Spanish	because I like challenge and Spanish is not a simple language to learn, again I that one day it will come in handy, as I am interested in travelling.
SR 15: I would pick Afrikaans	because I simply love Afrikaans and back in high school, I never got to learn it.
SR 16: Tswana	because I'm Tswana and I speak Setswana fluently more than any other language

SR 17: I would choose either Sesotho or Zulu	because they are the most common and easier languages to learn to speak and understand.
SR 18: I could pick the language English	English because it is the only language that accommodates all of us as students who come from different backgrounds with different cultures and languages
SR 19: English	because it a language that people with different languages use to communicate and understand each other and it has a nice vocabulary of words. It is also easily understood by everyone around the world.
SR 20: English	Because it is widely spoken and understood, which makes it useful for communication.
SR 21: Sesotho	since this is my home language, I think it will better for everyone to learn everything in their own language to understand better and be able to answer questions because this will be their home language
SR 22: I would choose English	because it would be easy for all of us to communicate well verbally. Also, it would be making things easy for everyone to engage in academic spaces.
SR 23: I would pick sign language	because I haven't gotten the chance to do so and I have no experience in using it for communication. I love learning new things so I think that it would be cool to be in a world where people talk but not necessarily using their voices. As an introvert that would be ideal because it's less talking meaning less noise yet more communication, which is something I don't get to do currently.
SR 24: Tsotsi Taal	because I grew up in a township where we used different languages to form one language, and the Tsotsi taal (veal language or Gauteng) is gaslighted; however, during academics, it's hard for some students to understand something because they are used to communicating in that language. In lecture classes, it happens a student knows the answer but struggles to answer because they are not fluent in English or they are afraid of being judged for not speaking module C English. As a result, most students feel excluded and lastly.... having to come from a place where many languages are spoken and you arrive in Free State Qwaqwa, you are now questioned why you chose to do Sesotho because your ascent is different from theirs.
SR 25: I would pick Tswana or Sesotho	These are similar and interesting languages. I feel like they give you're the challenge of knowing as well as finding information on some things.

If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to teach using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why.

The table below reflects the language staff members would like to use when teaching and the reason why.

Staff responses

Table 2 reflects staff members' choice of language and the reasoning behind the choice.

Table 2

Staff Responses	Reasoning
SP 1: home language, Afrikaans, English	It depends on who I teach to I am most comfortable in my home language, Afrikaans, but due to its limitations in reaching more people, I would most probably choose English.
SP 2: I would be able to speak all the languages of my students	so that I can teach them in both English and their mother tongues. I would want to instruct them in English to prepare them for the globalised society but also be able to hear their thoughts and explain concepts to them in the language that resonates with their identities.
SP 3: Sesotho	it is my mother tongue. I can express myself to the fullest.
SP 4: IsiZulu	because it is my mother tongue. This will ensure accurate content delivery
SP 5: English	English because it is widely used
SP 6: I would pick a mix of Sesotho and English	mainly because SA is a diverse country using different languages for the purpose of learning and teaching, it also makes it easy for students to grasp certain content when spoken in their native languages
SP 7: English	Though not my mother tongue, it is a language I am passionate about. I love its inner workings, its linguistic and pragmatic oddities, its dialects and idiolects. I love its use in poetry, novels, drama, life writing; I love writing in it and using it to converse. And I love teaching others how to love it.
SP 8: I would pick Sepedi	which is my mother tongue. I think it does not limit how I can express myself and the extent to which I can do so.
SP 9: IsiXhosa	because it is my mother tongue and it is the language I understand the best and I can express myself properly.
SP 10: IsiZulu	the reason for this is because it is the language I was born into, it is the first language I knew, so everyone might say it is the language they inherit.
SP 11: English	because I teach English literature and I speak English
SP 12: I'd pick multiple languages	predominantly use my mother languages/vernacular
SP 13: English	it was the easiest for me to learn, and due to it being used globally I believe it was the easiest to

	learn among all the world's languages so people will be able to learn it a lot easier
SP 14: IsiZulu	Most people want to teach their kids English of which is okay, however they do not give Nguni languages the same respect as they give to English. So, I think continuing to teach a Nguni language will help the younger generation to see that our Nguni languages are also important
SP 15: English	
SP 16:	It's hard to imagine that, considering that most of the knowledge production is not in African languages. So, teaching in English is ideal considering the context provided
SP 17: I would teach in English and an African language, isiZulu or Sesotho	because those are widely spoken languages on the UFS campus where I teach
SP 18: isiZulu	It is my mother tongue, I feel comfortable in expressing myself in the language that I am familiar with.
SP 19: I would pick my own native language isiZulu	because I am best able to articulate my thoughts, my expertise and ideas in my language.
SP 20:	I just found this question funny because yet, language in a classroom can be a problem. Especially if the LOLT is different from the students' home language. In my ideal world, given the fact that I love to develop, deliver and share content, I would teach in a language that is the same as the students' home language. This would help clear any confusion that often arise because of language in a classroom.
SP 21: English	
SP 22	A mixture of languages to drive and promote understanding, because of the nature of our student population, which is diverse.

The second section of answering research question 2 focused on establishing how power is maintained and reinforced within interaction, so the approach to answering this was structured through two questions. It was found that power is embedded and enacted through the implementation and maintenance of policy. Furthermore, knowledge is power, so getting to know whether participants are familiar with the University's language policy or not.

What do you think about the University's language policy?

Staff responses

SP 1: I think it is a very good policy. It is flexible yet enables us to meet one another in the middle.

SP 2: I think it is important that the language of instruction is English because the

students need to leave university with proficiency in the language. I also think it is important so that students are treated unequally (for example in the case of modules being taught in Afrikaans). That said, I am very pleased that the university is beginning to embrace multilingualism in various contexts and particularly look forward to seeing it play out in tutorials.

SP 3: The university policy recognises four languages. The recognition of translanguaging will go a long way in enhancing teaching and learning.

SP 4: The university language policy is empowering teaching and learning by removing language barrier. Nevertheless, more still must be done in expanding the policy into assessments and other elements of teaching and learning.

SP 6: I have learnt that it allows the use of translanguaging which plays a huge role in students learning.

SP 7: I cannot say that I am familiar with it apart from the fact that I believe English is the general medium of instruction (apart from in other language subjects, like African languages, German, French, etc.).

SP 8: I like that it encourages multilingualism instead of only English, especially given the demographics of the QwaQwa campus.

SP 9: I think it is progressive now that the university is embracing a multilingual society and encouraging students, tutors, facilitators and lecturers to communicate in their native tongues in the classroom. It is a step towards the right direction and hopefully everyone will get to embrace it.

SP 10: The policy is well-structured, it enforces multilingualism in classrooms for most cases, however, it presents a challenge in modules that are English based (ENGL and GENL), so some elements of code-switching or Trans-lingual (Ing) can be practiced in this case.

SP 11: I am afraid I don't know anything about it.

SP 12: So far, they are trying. They should even incorporate more indigenous languages as well as Kiswahili.

SP 14: I think it is inclusive because it allows all modules to be taught in a language that is understood by every student, and it does not limit other languages in their respective modules.

SP 15: I have confidence in it.

SP 23: Great on paper, but there is a gap in implementation.

Student responses

Theme: I've never had of the policy

SR 1: I do not know anything about it.

SR 10: I don't know, I have never heard about it.

Theme: Language policy is inclusive

SR 2: It is still at a primitive state as far as multilingualism is concerned.

SR 11: I think it is good; however, some improvements must be done.

Theme: Diversity and fosters cultural inclusivity

SR 3: The university's language policy can have a significant impact on students, faculty, and staff. It fosters a diverse and inclusive environment.

SR 4: It is unique because it promotes multilingualism, and students get to learn other languages around campus.

SR 9: Honestly, I think it's okay. I really don't see the need to communicate in other languages. Knowing English and knowing how to articulate yourself in English puts you in a better position for job opportunities.

SR 13: I think it's good as it includes use of different language which creates communication in different languages and learning of other languages.

SR 16: It is good because it allows language inclusivity because everyone gets to embrace their own language there is no limitation to strictly use English when you are in school premises.

SR 6: I think the policy is great as it favours inclusivity and multiculturalism.

Theme: The UFS language policy is biased

SR 6: I think it's not fair because some of us are not majoring in Zulu only.

SR 20: I think it's fair because in our university we have multilingualism this means you can explain something that's written in English in your own language.

The exploration of the University's language policy, participants' ideal language preferences, and the relationship between language, power, and interaction reveals that language remains central to shaping teaching and learning experiences. The findings suggest that while the University's language policy aspires to promote multilingualism and inclusivity, its implementation remains limited, with English continuing to dominate academic communication. This dominance reinforces existing hierarchies of power, positioning those fluent in English as more authoritative and confident participants, while students who struggle with it often experience marginalisation or reduced engagement. When imagining an ideal

teaching context, participants expressed a strong desire to use indigenous languages such as Sesotho or isiZulu—languages that better reflect students’ cultural identities and enhance comprehension—while still acknowledging the practical and global significance of English. Overall, the study concludes that language, power, and interaction are deeply interconnected: language not only facilitates communication but also shapes access to knowledge, identity, and participation.

Reflection

From a critical discourse lens, these responses construct the language policy as an enactment of power, shaping who can participate fully in academic life and on what terms. Rather than functioning as a neutral administrative framework, the language policy operates as a regulatory mechanism that determines access to valued forms of knowledge, participation, and recognition within the university. The lexicon used by participants, such as “*diverse*,” “*fosters one community*,” and “*not fair*,” reveals competing interpretations of the policy and underlying power struggles over linguistic inclusion and exclusion. While SR5’s claim that “*it is diverse and fosters one community*”, the response reflects an institutional discourse of cohesion and unity. On the other hand, SR7’s response, “I think that is not fair because some of us are not majoring in Zulu only”, disrupts this narrative by foregrounding inequity and lack of choice. These contrasting evaluations reveal the underlying ideology that the policy does not simply describe language as helpful or useful; rather, it positions the five recognised languages as meaning-making languages in academic spaces. This positioning is reinforced by the assertion that “*English is inclusive*,” which reveals a powerful underlying ideology in which competence in English is conflated with intellectual worth. Such discourse normalises English as the standard against which students’ academic potential is judged, while obscuring structural factors such as unequal schooling, mismatches between home and institutional languages, and persistent linguistic prejudice. Crucially, the absence of genuine choice in selecting a preferred language of instruction further marginalises students whose linguistic repertoires fall outside dominant languages, limiting their agency and reinforcing asymmetrical power relations. In this way, university language policies both reflect and reproduce institutional power, presenting inclusion rhetorically while sustaining hierarchies that privilege certain languages and identities over others.

4.5 Research question 3:

What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

From the above research question, two questions were created to elicit and response.

Question 1: Discuss classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus.

Staff responses

Theme: Limitations embedded in the classroom dynamics

SP 10: The language dynamics reflect broader societal hierarchies. Students who are more proficient in English often dominate discussions, which is something we need to address.

SP 14: I think the classroom language dynamics are positive, but there is a need to be more mindful of students who struggle with English to ensure they are fully included in discussions.

SP 7: Overall, while English enables cross-cultural communication, attention must be paid to linguistic equity so that all students can participate fully and confidently.

Theme: Code switching and translanguaging

SP 4: I've observed that students often support each other by using their home languages in group work, which is helpful for understanding but can limit whole-class interactions in English.

SP 20: I encourage code-switching in small groups to enhance comprehension, but formal presentations and assessments still rely heavily on English.

SP 17: Overall, while English enables cross-cultural communication, attention must be paid to linguistic equity so that all students can participate fully and confidently.

Question 1: Discuss classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

From the above question these are the themes found

Student responses

Theme: Language Identity and Belonging

SR 20: Other lectures use their language when explain things in class which makes it hard for students with other languages to follow the lesson and understand. There

should be more usage of the inclusive language in teaching and learning so that everyone can understand and participate.

SR 17: I think as much as English is used as a medium of instruction, the Zulu language dominates in our campus and I have noticed that most of our lectures, the school staff included, tend to accommodate the Zulu language a lot more than the other languages.

SR 13: English helps as a common language that everyone can understand, even if it's not perfect for everyone. I think it's better to use English in class to avoid confusion, but staff should still be patient and supportive when students struggle and allow explanations in other languages when necessary.

SR 12: I think the way we communicate we could use more Of English than other languages because we come from different cultures and use different languages to communicate.

SR 7: I think Sesotho is the most prioritised language in a classroom environment, you will find a Sesotho student answering in Sesotho and no one will translate neither the lecture because it is believed that all students in that class understood what is said, but if other answers in their native someone must translate for others to understand.

Theme: Positive Perceptions of Classroom Interaction

SR 11: The interaction in classrooms is amazing; I personally wouldn't change anything.

SR 8: No, I don't have any thought because I think it is right the way it is.

SR 4: he language dynamic is perfectly suited for everyone and it promotes learning, growing and sharing knowledge within a classroom without creating a questionable experience.

Theme: The Need for Multilingual Flexibility in Classroom Interaction

SR 10: Yes, I think students shouldn't be forced to speak English, but they should interact with their languages since sometimes students fail to understand because of barrier.

Theme: Presence of Multiple Home Languages

Staff Responses

SP 5: By communicating in English, Sesotho and IsiZulu

SP 5: Yes, I usually use material or examples from different cultural contexts and allow students to share certain aspects of their language.

Student responses

SR 24 They should promote equality and multiculturalism because on the QwaQwa campus, they only focus on Sotho, English, and Zulu languages. What about others?

SR 23: Some lecturers do allow for other languages to be used in class while others do not. We are a very diverse campus which forces us to learn other languages to get a better understanding of what the other person is saying.

Question 2: How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?

From the above question these are the themes found

Theme: Encouraging Multilingual Expressions

Staff responses

SP 2: I allow students to discuss the content or certain difficult elements using any language of their choosing, but responses need to be provided in English, so that everyone understands.

SP 9: I like that it encourages multilingualism instead of only English, especially given the demographics of the QwaQwa campus.

SP 10: As a facilitator I have tried to speak my home language and other languages that I have known of in the classroom thus encouraging students to interact with me in their home languages as well given that we can all understand each other. So, it is a mixing of languages of some sort but, we rely on English to make most point across.

SP 11: Students can answer in Sotho verbally and a peer will translate.

Theme: Translanguaging and code-switching practices

SP 3: I am not proficient in any African language, so I see my own incompetence as a barrier to fully embracing language inclusivity in the classroom. What I can do is, if I see a student struggling to express themselves in English, I have them state what they are trying to say in their mother tongue and then ask other students to help them translate. This has benefited students in being able to express themselves in class.

SP 7: I have learnt that it allows the use of translanguaging, which plays a huge role in students' learning. I switch from one language to another to ensure everyone understands.

SP 12: I teach English. So, I foster language inclusivity in my classroom by creating a supportive environment where students, age, ethnicity, or colour, notwithstanding, feel free to express themselves in the languages they are most comfortable with when

necessary. I encourage code-switching (though not that much because I'm also limited in understanding the various languages) during discussions to help clarify ideas and ensure understanding, while gradually guiding students towards using academic English where appropriate. Additionally, I use visual aids and simplified explanations to bridge language gaps. I also acknowledge and celebrate the linguistic diversity in the classroom, integrating multilingual examples and encouraging students to share how concepts are expressed in their home languages. Sometimes, I ask different students from different ethnicities to make sense of each other's concepts in theirs and then do the same in mine as well.

SP 15: In my classes, I allow students to have group discussions using their home languages considering that everyone in the group understands the language, however, when presenting, they would use English to communicate with the whole class so that everyone may understand.

SP 19: I ask students to feel free in responding in their home language to peers who speak the similar language. Then we proceed to have discussions.

SP 22: When discussing in groups students are allowed to use their languages and report back in English.

SP 23: Using translanguaging strategies.

Theme: Developing academic language proficiency

SP 14: I strive to make everyone feel comfortable using the language they are most familiar with. I respect different languages and encourage learners to share their thoughts, even if their grammar isn't perfect. It's more important to be heard and understood than to speak perfectly.

Theme: I don't do anything to foster language inclusion

SP 6: I have not been doing any strategies for that.

SP 8: To be honest, I do not think that I do. It is challenging to teach academic writing and its conventions without using examples from academic writing which is in English. I try to use a variety of scholarship, primarily from African and South African authors, on African and South African issues in my instruction; many of these include colloquial terms. However, the decolonisation of academic writing has not yet come to the point where there are other academic writing conventions I could teach. I am, after all, beholden to the prescriptions of the UFS's style guides and writing norms.

Question 3: Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom?

Student response

Theme: No, language inclusivity is not fostered in classrooms

SR 2: No, because even though constitutionally all SA languages are official, English remains hegemonic in what defines a classroom experience at UFS and in many (if not all) SA universities.

SR 3: No, language inclusivity is not fostered:

SR 7: No because it is a fact that not everyone understands English and it is the only language used as a medium of instruction, learners are not given a chance to express themselves in their natives because if they do the next person will not understand, even if translated some information may be omitted or misunderstood.

SR 13: Only one language is used, strictly English, and students don't get to express themselves in their languages so No

SR 19: No, lectures sometimes use their own languages and allow learners who speak the same language as them to use their language in class this makes other learners to feel excluded as they happen not to understand what is being said and they don't even translate for them to understand.

SR 22: No because some lectures do not allow us to answer in our own language and this makes learning very difficult for us as students.

Theme: Developing academic language proficiency

Student responses

SR 5: Yes, it is, everyone in my classroom is in love with the English language, because of how it pushes us to learn and grow within our learning environment.

Theme: language inclusivity is only fostered in tutorials

SR 24: it is a 50/50 situation because other classes foster inclusivity (Tutorials) whereas in some lecture classes, inclusivity is not fostered.

Theme: Translanguaging and code switching as a form of language inclusivity

Student Response

SR 7: Yes, it is. Some Lectures now allow us to explain in our languages and if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English.

SR 17: Yes, it is, since the classroom accommodates students from different backgrounds speaking different languages, we are all allowed to express ourselves in our home languages, that way we somehow learn to speak or understand different languages.

SR 11: Yes, it is fostered because one can use their language to explain things they struggle to explain in English.

SR 23: It is because some lecturers allow students to ask questions in their languages then the lecturer will translate to the whole class what it means in English.

Reflection

The exploration of the above research question reveals that language inclusivity and classroom dynamics on the Qwaqwa Campus reflect the progress made in promoting inclusive learning spaces. Challenges remain, but English continues to dominate as the primary medium of instruction, often shaping participation patterns and access to knowledge. Although both students and staff recognise the importance of linguistic diversity, the degree to which inclusivity is fostered varies across classrooms. Some educators actively implement inclusive strategies such as allowing code-switching and creating supportive environments for multilingual expression, while others adhere strictly to English, unintentionally creating linguistic barriers. The classroom

Language dynamics thus reflect broader issues of power, identity, and access within the higher education sector.

From a critical discourse perspective, participants' responses reveal a tension between symbolic inclusion and structural dominance in the linguistic order of the classroom. While SR 7 frames multilingual practices as "*allowed*" by lecturers, the modal verb *allow* is ideologically loaded, positioning lecturers as authoritative gatekeepers who sanction when and how African languages may be used. The conditional nature of this inclusion, "*if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English*", constructs English as the ultimate language of validation and comprehension, relegating other languages to a transitional or auxiliary role. Multilingualism is therefore not normalised as an epistemic resource but tolerated only insofar as it culminates in English. In contrast, SR 2 explicitly names this imbalance by invoking the constitutional recognition of all South African languages while simultaneously highlighting English's hegemonic function in defining "*what counts*" as legitimate classroom discourse. The contrast between formal constitutional equality and lived linguistic practice exposes a discursive contradiction, where institutional language policy gestures toward inclusivity while

everyday pedagogic interactions reproduce linguistic hierarchies that privilege English. Collectively, these responses illustrate how language operates as a disseminator of power, shaping access to participation, knowledge production, and academic legitimacy within the university space.

4.6 Limitations based on the data

A key limitation of using an online questionnaire that I have found after analysing the data is that filling out the questionnaire was problematic for some participants; this was evident in the manner they answered some questions. Some participants provided vague answers that lacked depth. Some questions were not clear and left participants confused; instead of giving in-depth answers, since the questionnaire is open-ended, they provided closed-ended answers. Maybe having additional interviews would have provided more details in areas where participants provided vague answers that show a lack of understanding on what they needed to do.

4.7 Conclusion

the participants' responses tell that language functions as both a bridge and a barrier within higher education. English facilitates academic cohesion, access to global knowledge, and professional advancement, yet it simultaneously reproduces systemic inequalities. The multilingual realities present on campus present opportunities for transformation and learning through embracing linguistic diversity. The acknowledgement of diverse languages fosters inclusion, equity, and a sense of belonging. For language inclusivity to be realised, the institution must move beyond policy recognition to more intense practical, pedagogical, and policy-driven strategies that legitimise all languages as resources for learning and interaction. The findings from the students and staff questionnaire revealed that the use of English as a medium of instruction both facilitates and constrains interaction between students and academic staff within various teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. English functions as a unifying communicative tool that enables students and lecturers from diverse linguistic backgrounds to engage in academic discourse within a shared space. This shared language promotes inclusion across ethnic and cultural lines, allowing for mutual understanding and access to global academic resources.

Chapter 5: Mapping participants' experience of language

5 Introduction

The previous chapter was... This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the data analysed in Chapter 4. It presents the discussion and interpretation of the main findings. It aims to discuss the themes, link them to existing literature and apply the theoretical framework to the data. Furthermore, the chapter maps out participants' experience of language within the UFS Qwaqwa campus teaching and learning spaces and provides insight into the language dynamics that exist on campus. Moreover, this chapter aims to narrate and map out participants' experiences of language through the analysis of the responses they provided on the questionnaire. The chapter discusses the dual position language holds as both an enabler and a restrictor of meaningful interactions within teaching and learning spaces. These interactions include engagement with the content, as well as interactions between academic staff members and students. The chapter is further divided into three subsections, each aimed at answering and reflecting on the study's research questions. Each subsection begins with a discussion of the dual position that participants assign to English. It further applies the theory to the responses participants provided in the questionnaires. Finally, this chapter is structured as follows: it begins by summarising the key findings based on each research question. It then applies the data to Fairclough's three-tiered model to explore broader meanings and significance of the results within the context of language use, power relations, and inclusivity in higher education. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting the main insights drawn from the study and provides recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

5.1 Reflecting on the dual role of language.

Research question 1: How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

This research question focuses on uncovering how English enhances or limits students' and

academic staff members' abilities to interact within teaching and learning spaces such as lecture halls, facilitation sessions and others. The chapter aims to narrate how participants have experienced either limited or enhanced interactions due to the use of English.

English can enhance interaction in multilingual classrooms in several ways, depending on the space, context, and proficiency level one possesses or finds oneself in. Existing literature on the use of English in multilingual classrooms and how language enhances interaction points to the fact that “the interaction in the multilingual EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom needs a lot of help from the teacher. The teacher must find appropriate methods to teach using English. The teacher needs to adapt their teaching to accommodate minority language students” (Idris, Adliyah and Alfina 2020:382). These methods are discussed by Intarapanich (2013: 308-310), who conducted a study focusing on the EFL teaching methods and approaches used in English foreign language classes in the Lao PDR. The study reveals various methods teachers employ to foster learning in EFL classrooms. At the primary level, teachers provide learners with small amounts of English content, enabling learners and teachers to focus on correct pronunciation, grammar, and spelling-related activities. These teaching processes are done bilingually. The secondary-level findings reveal that teachers who use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Audio-lingual Method (ALM) focus their teaching on communication and discussion sessions, including dialogues. When EFL students have grasped the grammatical aspects of the language, the next phase is to develop language proficiency through discussions, role-playing, and other communicative methods. This suggests that the primary role of a lecturer or teacher in a multilingual classroom with ESL/EFL students is to ensure that effective teaching methods are developed, methods that meet the students' needs, and that these methods are used to facilitate learning. Furthermore, the role of a teacher is to ensure that students understand both the language used for teaching and learning and the content being delivered. So, in the context of the UFS Qwaqwa campus, where a classroom is a rainbow nation filled with a majority of African language speakers, lecturers can't employ bilingual approaches because the environment is multilingual, and the use of bilingualism will further perpetuate the subjugation of ESL students. This subjugation is maintained through making one's language seem inferior, as it is not represented in the teaching and learning space. In closing, the use of English in multilingual spaces should be viewed not only as a benefit but also as a challenge.

Based on research question 1, which focuses on participants' narratives about how language has both limited and enhanced their ability to interact in classrooms. Three questions were

formulated to help answer the research question. These questions were used to generate responses. See below for questions asked to students and those posed to staff members.

Staff questionnaire questions

1. How important is language and its usage in a classroom? (Please provide a detailed response.)
2. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?
3. Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom.

Student questionnaire questions

1. What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class? (Provided detailed response)
2. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
3. In what ways has English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom?

From the above questions, nine themes emerged in the responses given by both staff and student participants. The themes are as follows:

1. Language as a gatekeeper to knowledge
2. Language creates mutual understanding.
3. Language foster's identity creation and inclusion
4. English links various cultures
5. No language hasn't enhanced anything.
6. English creates a common understanding,
7. English bridges barriers created by a Multilingual setting,
8. English as a gateway to academic and global opportunities
9. Facilitate cross-cultural interaction, access to educational resources and knowledge,

The above themes were combined under a single umbrella theme titled "The Role of English in Creating, Challenging, and Maintaining Knowledge, Culture, Identity, and Global Connectivity."

The theme focuses on how English is a powerful tool that shapes the cultural, social, and academic realities of non-native speakers. The theme examines the ways in which English

contributes to the circulation and production of knowledge in teaching and learning environments. Furthermore, the themes look at how English can challenge existing cultural and linguistic identities by privileging certain languages over others. Finally, the theme recognises English as a tool that connects people from diverse global environments. Staff participants (SP) 13 best reflect the theme when stating that.

SP 13 “Yes — using English as a medium of instruction has enabled me to communicate with a diverse group of students in a common, widely understood language. Consider that I don't speak any South African languages. It allows access to a broader range of educational resources and materials, enriching classroom learning. Additionally, it prepares students for further studies and global opportunities where English is often the dominant medium”.

This response highlights the transformative power of English, not only as a medium for communication between diverse people but also as an enabler for gaining access to the global work, research, and learning environment. The theme suggests that language simultaneously enables global participation and knowledge exchange. Rao (2019:72-73) notes that the transformative power of English lies in its ability to be used in various societies and sectors, including education, business, and media. So, having proficiency is a benefit because it ensures access to a wider and more globalised environment.

In addition, the theme also examines how language challenges and reshapes cultural and linguistic identities in both empowering and restrictive ways. Xulu-Gama and Hadebe (2022: 293) questions whether there can be genuine democracy in South Africa when prevailing post-apartheid institutions continue to foster forms of knowledge that produce inequalities, which underprivilege the African majority. The authors suggest that language continues to be used to perpetuate inequality in South Africa, as it determines who can access information and education. As a result, using English in teaching and learning spaces creates in-groups and out-groups, which further perpetuates a sense of alienation. The in-group consists of those who understand the language, are confident in using it, and whose knowledge acquisition journey is not hindered by the language. On the other hand, the out-group refers to people who do not understand the language used in teaching and learning spaces, or those who are disadvantaged by the language, as it hinders their knowledge acquisition journey. In the case of the study, in-groups can be both academic staff members who are proficient in English and are comfortable teaching and learning using the language, and the out-groups are students and staff members who feel that English is a hindrance to their teaching and learning encounters. These ideas are evident in the study and are articulated by SP 2,15, and 19, who discuss how language can be

exclusionary to those who lack proficiency in it and how the lack of proficiency poses challenges for ESL students.

SP 2: Language is important. I see students who struggle with English and therefore never really master important concepts. It isn't that they don't have the aptitude to understand the concepts; it's just that they struggle with the terminology. That said, it is essential that they can express stuff and demonstrate their mastery of English subjects, as they will need to do so in their careers. So, language has the potential to open opportunities, but also the potential to create barriers for our students.

SP 15: Without language proficiency, a student would be seriously handicapped in social life and in the world of work. Along with numeracy and some form of moral education, it's crucial.

SP 19: Language is very important because it makes or breaks a student. It is no doubt that most students believe that English is a measure of intelligence. Therefore, if English is the only language that is used in the classroom, some students tend to think they cannot have a successful academic journey.

It is evident from the responses above that English fulfils a gatekeeping role when one lacks proficiency in it, because it limits their ability to interact with the content. Additionally, a lack of proficiency may impact how one socially engages with others within teaching spaces and the future work environment. Therefore, the use of English as the sole language of instruction and assessment further perpetuates inequality, as those who lack proficiency are perceived and might perceive themselves as lacking the competency to fully participate in the teaching and learning environments. Wijayanti (2024: 35) states that language proficiency becomes a prerequisite for epistemological access — the ability to acquire, produce, and share knowledge. Therefore, English is seen as an enabler to academic success and access to global markets and workspaces. It also a challenge for an ESL student who lacks the prerequisite language proficiency. Giang (2025:136) also states that “English proficiency has become an essential skill in both academic and professional environments, serving as a gateway to better career opportunities and global interactions. In the era of globalisation, proficiency in English is no longer a luxury but a necessity for individuals seeking to excel in international markets and academia”. Therefore, the lack of proficiency in English poses challenges; ESL students may feel excluded from global work and academic spaces, because these spaces are often positioned to require proficiency in English. In the context of this study, the above assertions reflect the challenges faced by some ESL students. Where proficiency in English means access, this implies that ESL students must work twice as hard to gain access to the globalised work

environment, and they are doubly marginalised. Firstly, by the language, and secondly, by the requirement to have proficiency in English. This view reflects one side of the dual role English plays. It showcases how exclusionary markers of the language are not only evident in the classroom through interactions, content and assessments, but the exclusion continues even outside teaching and learning spaces. These exclusionary factors are also evident in the labour market. Therefore, I argue that this reflects how globalisation reinforces English dominance and shapes who gets access to opportunities.

The role of English in fostering interaction is not always negative; at times, the use of English is positive and reaffirming. This is evident in Student Respondent (SR) 16,17,18,11 and 2 who speak about the positive side of using English in a multilingual space.

SR 16: Since English is a universal language and is the number one language used to communicate amongst different groups of languages. It's significance in a lecture class is to ensure that every student from a different language group understands the topic and lessons being taught.

SR 17: Since a lecture hall accommodates students from different backgrounds, with different home languages, English always comes into rescue when there is language barrier in communications amongst students.

SR 18: The importance of using English is to ensure that everyone in a lecture room understands. In a lecture room, we have different languages, and it becomes a barrier to communication with others.

The above three responses position English as a unifying language, a glue that connects people of diverse linguistic dynamics. SR16 response places emphasis on the idea that English is a “universal language”. It is a language used by people from diverse groups to ensure mutual understanding, as evidenced by the fact that “every student from a different language group understands,” indicating that English is perceived as a practical solution for enabling comprehension and facilitating equitable access to lecture content. In addition, SR17 reinforces this idea by highlighting English as the language that “comes to the rescue” when communication barriers arise. The use of rescue implies that multilingualism is a problem in a Multicultural setting, and thus English becomes the solution. This student's response reflects how students, at times, internalise the institutional language ideology that constructs English as the primary medium for academic success. The responses further reflect how students and staff members sometimes view linguistic diversity as something that complicates teaching and learning, suggesting that multilingual realities are not fully embraced but rather managed using English. Furthermore, SR18 further reveals how students see English as a mechanism to

“ensure that everyone...understands.” The repeated emphasis on understanding, communication, and overcoming barriers demonstrates that students recognise the limitations created by language diversity in lecture halls. As a result, English is perceived as the common ground that enables participation and knowledge exchange.

5.1.1 Application of Fairclough’s 3D/ tiered model

This section provides a deconstruction of the text. The text in this regard refers to the responses students and academic staff members provided when completing the online questionnaire used to gather data. The text is analysed using Fairclough’s 3D model, which is broken down into three dimensions: the textual dimension, the discursive dimension, and the social practice dimension. This was done to reveal and explore the hidden meanings contained in the transcript/ response.

5.1.1.2Text dimension

The text dimension is the first level of Fairclough’s model, which focuses on the text as both written and spoken languages. The text level aims to understand how language is used to convey meaning and how language reflects or reinforces certain ideologies. The key feature of text analysis includes lexical choices, which refer to words used in the text to reveal underlying ideologies and power struggles. The second feature is grammar and syntax, which focuses on sentence structure, including the passive and active voice, among others. There is also intertextuality, which reflects how the text references or incorporates other texts (Alassiri 2024:04).

When applying the text dimension to the responses participants provided on the questionnaire, the analysis focused on indicating the language of the discourse. This involves uncovering word forms, phrases, sentence structures, and grammar, revealing the ideologies and power relations that are evident in the language. However, for the purpose of this research, I focused only on lexical items. Dewangga, Budianto and Wijaya (2025:73), in a study titled “Fairclough’s Three Dimension Critical Analysis of Malcolm X’s speech at the Oxford Union debate”, apply the text practice dimension using positive and negative lexical items. They state that there are certain words or phrases in Malcom X’s speech transcript that can be classified as positive and negative lexical items. Positive lexical items refer to words or phrases that have positive connotations or give a good image to the subject, as evidenced in the use of phrases such as "freedom fighters", "brotherhood", and “better world.” Meanwhile, negative lexical items are forms of words or phrases that carry negative connotations or convey a bad image of the subject in the form of a certain group or class, such as "oppressor", "cold-blooded murder", "deceitful

methods", and "unwillingness." This study employs the use of positive and negative lexical items because this approach reflects the recurring theme evident in the chapter, namely, the dual role language plays in interaction. So, using positive and negative lexical items clearly outlines this duality by examining the words used by participants, which reinforce inclusion and exclusion criteria.

5.1.1.3 Positive and negative lexical choices

When analysing data using words/phrases that are repeated by multiple participants, these can be positive or negative phrases. Positive words or phrases are reaffirming and show mutual understanding. Examples of these words, as extracted from the questionnaire, are represented in the table below:

Table 3 presents the participants frequently used positive phrases and discusses the broader context that the phrases reflect. The table provides a glimpse in how some participants positively view the use of English in their teaching and learning spaces.

Table 3

Positive words or phrases	Type of words	Application
Language inclusivity	Abstract noun	Reflects how English promotes equality and acknowledges linguistic diversity. The phrase reflects inclusion and fairness
Means of communication	Descriptive noun	English is positioned as a tool that enables interaction, showing its instrumental role in social and academic exchange.
Mutual understanding	Relational/ emotional phrase	Highlights reciprocity and shared meaning, signalling collaboration and empathy among speakers.
Easily Understood	Evaluative adjective phrase	Suggests clarity and accessibility in communication, showing that English simplifies interaction.
English Bridges	Metaphorical phrase	A strong metaphor representing unity and connection — portrays English as a linking force across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Better understanding	Comparative phrase	Conveys improvement and intellectual progress; implies that English enhances comprehension and learning
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The table above clearly shows that words and phrases reflect how meaning is embedded in language. The words that speakers use reflect their own views and experiences of language within interactions and the world around them. Altun (2023:362) posits that language can be used to dominate narratives, sway public opinion, and manage large populations. This suggests that language plays a profoundly influential role in people's lives, defining and shaping how they react to and perceive the world around them. Furthermore, the language one uses reflects their experiences, which is evident when they use positive phrases to describe and recollect their experiences within teaching and learning spaces. Both academic staff members and students frequently used the phrases 'language inclusivity,' 'mutual understanding,' and 'English bridges' to reflect how language can be used to foster inclusivity and how it is already utilised across multiple linguistic platforms as a tool that promotes inclusion. These ideas are evident in SP 8 response stating that.

“I believe that using English as a medium of instruction enables me to teach many students I would not have been able to if the medium of instruction were any other of, for example, South Africa's official languages. The universality of English enables one to teach across cultural and linguistic differences in a language that is mostly accessible to many students. Even students with a rudimentary grasp of English can benefit from what I teach. Furthermore, English provides me with an opportunity to interact with students outside the classroom. I cannot communicate with each student in their home language, but communication via e-mail or discussions after lectures is easier when we share a common language. This also makes me more approachable, I believe.”

This response reflects how participants view the use of English as a lingua franca, but also as a tool that enables cross-cultural interaction, facilitating meaningful interaction both within and outside the classroom. Therefore, I argue that the experience of ESL or EFL students is not always shaped by negative, marginalising experiences; at times, the use of English in any multilingual classroom encounters provides space for meaningful, inclusive encounters and interactions that require and foster cultural sensitivity. Therefore, is evident that the use of positive words such as English bridges reflects the enhancing side of English, where it acts as a support system that connects students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Negative lexical choices

Refers to words and expressions that reflect resistance, struggle, and power imbalance. These words reveal discrimination, unfair preferences, hidden struggles, or inequalities that are embedded in the discourse

Table 3.1 presents the participants frequently used negative phrases and discusses the broader context that the phrases reflect. The table provides a glimpse in how some participants negatively view the use of English in their teaching and learning spaces.

Table 3.1

Negative Words/phrases	Type of words	Text Dimension
Language barrier	Metaphorical phrase	A powerful metaphor indicating obstruction and separation. It constructs English (or lack of proficiency) as a physical wall that prevents communication, participation, and inclusion. Reflects exclusionary discourse
Limited Access	Noun + modifier	It reflects a lack of access, which in turn reflects inequality and restrictions in accessing educational resources or opportunities. The adjective limited emphasises constraint, pointing to unequal linguistic power dynamics in academia.
Language bias	Abstract phrase	Reveal how one language (often English) is privileged over other languages. It signals social power imbalance and ideological dominance.

The analysis of the text dimension further utilises negative phrases to reflect on the position that some participants assign to their experience of using English in various teaching and learning contexts. The negative words found within participants' responses reveal how language reinforces social exclusion and marginalisation. This marginalisation and social exclusion are evident in the use of phrases such as *limited access* and *language bias*, which reveal that not all students have the proficiency to engage or learn in English, and the lack of proficiency limits their access to interactions within classrooms and engage with the content. Therefore, language restricts and hinders participants. Student respondent (SR) 10 state that

“Yes, sometimes I lack words to explain words or what I mean”. So, this reflects and laments how language, at times, hinders students. The response further reveals how language affect students' ability to respond to and successfully engage with the content just because they lack the skills to adequately express their thoughts in English. Therefore, negative words affirm the restrictive part of language.

5.1.2 Discourse Practice

This level of Fairclough’s model is the discursive and processing analysis level. This level focuses on how discourse originated, circulated, and was used within a social context. This level involves three functions of text: the construction of the text, its distribution, and its usage. The text highlights the relationship between participants. This level connects the text to its reception and production. It involves interpreting the process of how the text was created and understood by the audience. For example, this includes considering the author's intentions, the intended audience, and how the text is distributed and consumed, including any intertextuality (references to other texts).

The responses in this section were produced using four sections: 1. Examining how the text was produced. 2. Analysing how the text is interpreted and understood. 3. Examining how the text is distributed and reproduced. 4. Interpreting what these reveal about discourse.

- Examine how the text was produced.

The text was created by students and academic staff members, and it was created through the answering of online questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of language among students and academic staff members in various teaching and learning environments. Through the questionnaires, various themes were identified that reflected participants' experience of language within different teaching and learning spaces.

- Analyse how the text is interpreted or understood.

The interpretation section looks at how data is analysed and interpreted. I interpreted the data by drawing parallels between the data and the recurring themes that are evident in the response. The themes I mentioned are only two.

5.1.2.1 Theme 1: English reduces participation and confidence.

This theme focuses on how the use of English in teaching and learning spaces can sometimes be a stumbling block that affects the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of participants.

Staff responses

SP 3: Some students are from rural areas and are less confident in expressing themselves

in English.

SP 12: Using English as the sole medium of instruction has, at times, created barriers for students who are more confident in their home languages, such as isiZulu, Sepedi, siSwati, isiXhosa, Venda, and others. Some learners struggle to express their ideas fully or ask questions, which limits meaningful classroom interaction. This can also affect their confidence and participation in class discussions. However, whenever I ask students to express themselves in local languages, more are willing to come out and share, even the shy-looking ones.

SP 4: In some cases, it does, especially when students are not fluent in English, it means that knowledge synthesis in a classroom environment is somehow limited.

SP 21: Every time. If I were to stick to English throughout my lesson, I doubt some of my students will understand the content.

SP 2: Oh yes. I have had many instances where students don't understand what I am saying because of language. I have had to learn to explain concepts in simple terms and in different ways to overcome this challenge. I have also had students who bring their friends with them to my office to translate for them because their English proficiency is so poor.

Xuan Mai, Ngoc, and Thao (2024: 03) state that there are fundamental reasons for students' low participation in speaking activities in EFL classrooms, including their language proficiency, a lack of confidence, nervousness and shyness, a lack of motivation, cultural acceptance, hostile classmates' traits, and teachers' performance. Although English is often celebrated as a unifying language in multilingual lecture halls, it at times reduces students' participation and affects their confidence. For many students, English is an additional or second language, and limited proficiency can create anxiety about speaking, asking questions, or contributing to discussions. SP 12 validates these ideas and alludes to the psychological barrier that the use of English creates, making an uncomfortable situation that, in turn, results in a willingness to engage and participate actively in academic interactions.

According to Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital, the language of power gives social advantage to those who command it. In lecture halls, students who struggle with English may feel inferior or academically inadequate, even when their intellectual abilities match or exceed those of their peers. This creates unequal learning conditions, where some students dominate discussions while others remain on the margins. Over time, these dynamics contribute to lowered self-esteem, reduced motivation, and withdrawal from collaborative learning activities.

The above quote, Xaun Mao, is supported by SP 3, who states that some students are from rural areas and lack confidence in expressing themselves in English, which reflects that language use is deeply tied to issues of identity and access. Language is used to create social inequality, where rural students who are often educated in African languages that are not English are positioned at a disadvantage within an English-dominant academic culture. Their lack of confidence is not merely a linguistic limitation but a manifestation of the unequal distribution of linguistic capital within the education system. From a critical discourse perspective, this reflects how institutional practices privilege English as the legitimate medium of academic expression, reinforcing power hierarchies between urban and rural students. Such discourses contribute to the reproduction of linguistic inequality, where students from marginalised backgrounds internalise feelings of inferiority and silence, thereby limiting their participation in classroom discussions and academic discourse. Furthermore, Tosky King and Scott (2014:72) state that “There are fundamental reasons for students’ low participation in speaking activities in EFL classrooms, including their language proficiency, shortage of confidence, nervousness and shyness, lack of motivation, cultural acceptance, hostile classmates’ traits, and teachers’ performance. The above idea is clearly articulated through the student and staff responses, where participants discuss how English becomes a hindrance to interaction within classrooms, words such as less confident, create barriers, struggle and limit are used to describe and give context to the effects of monolingualism, these words signify the personal struggles students experience, and these struggles are not unique to students, staff members also use them to describe students encounters within teaching and learning spaces

5.1.2.1 Theme 2: English as a tool that fosters mutual understanding.

When discussing English as a tool that fosters mutual understanding, we examine how it serves as a means of connecting people in a diverse academic environment and how it is utilised to create a shared understanding.

Student responses

SR 4: Yes, because most of the students use English to share ideas and concepts with other people for understanding, which makes everyone feel understood and comfortable.

SR 10: Yes, most definitely. English bridges the language gaps that we have with different people, so using it makes things much easier.

SR 18: Yes, it has enhanced my ability to interact with fellow students and the lecturer. My communication skills have improved. I understand content better with it.

The above responses suggest that students and academic staff members perceive English as a valuable asset for facilitating interaction in multilingual settings. This idea is supported by the responses gathered, where multiple students pointed out that the classroom is a place where language, in this instance English, is used to generate joint meaning and promote inclusivity within a multilingual environment. English serves as a means of fostering interaction between people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, meaning is generated by looking at how participants value the use of English within a multilingual setting.

The production of this discourse reflects the experiences of lecturers and students within the UFS Qwaqwa campus and learning spaces, where English serves as the primary medium of instruction. Participants view and construct English as a neutral tool that facilitates communication and fosters mutual understanding among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This perception is produced within institutional and social contexts. The institutional context refers to the University and its policy that promotes English as the LOLT. The social context refers to various teaching and learning spaces where students engage with English, whether formally or informally. These contexts legitimise English as the only standardised language of academia and intercultural exchange.

The distribution of this discourse occurs through university policies, pedagogical practices, and everyday classroom interactions, which collectively reinforce English as the language of connection. However, from a critical discourse perspective, the interpretation of this discourse reveals both inclusionary and exclusionary dimensions. While participants view English as a unifying force, the discourse simultaneously normalises English linguistic dominance and marginalises local languages. This interpretation, therefore, highlights the inconsistency embedded in the idea that English unifies people from different linguistic backgrounds. One can conclude that English operates as both a bridge that connects and a gatekeeper that determines who can participate fully in academic communication, interaction, and learning.

5.1.3 Social Practice

This level of the theory focuses on how the text and discourse level relate to larger social structures, revealing underlying ideologies and power struggles. From the responses provided previously in the questionnaire, we can see that language has a dual effect on interactions and learning, promoting, and hindering at the same time. It promotes inclusivity and common understanding by offering people from diverse linguistic groups a shared language to use while learning and interacting. It also hinders when the very same people are excluded due to a lack of fluency in the language, which affects their learning and comprehension of the subject

matter. These ideas reveal broader limitations in social practice.

At the level of social practice, the text constructs English as a tool for connection and mutual understanding. Within this level, we reflect on the broader ideological and institutional structures within South African higher education. While participants view English positively as a language that promotes inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding, and negatively as a hindrance to the promotion of marginalised indigenous languages when applying these views to the broader social context, we see that participants' interactions operate within a context shaped by colonial legacies and global linguistic hierarchies. Colonial legacies that viewed English as a dominant language and imposed it forcefully. The dominance of English as the official medium of instruction perpetuates the ideology that English is the primary language used for knowledge creation and dissemination. This equates English proficiency with academic capability and intellectual legitimacy. Therefore, dualism in the academic environment is exercised both openly and subtly through language use, particularly English, which privileges lecturers and fluent English speakers while marginalising ESL students who are not fluent in the language.

5.1.4 Linking the Model

In the text level, participants' use of terms such as "*bridge*," "*necessary*," and "*accommodates*" portrays English as an enabling resource that facilitates understanding in a multilingual classroom. These specific word choices construct English as both a solution to communication challenges and an authoritative linguistic tool. At the discursive practice level, these meanings draw on and reproduce dominant academic discourses that institutionalise English as the primary medium through which teaching, learning, and assessment occur. By repeatedly circulating these ideas in classroom interactions, participants reinforce a discourse that frames English as the norm and other languages as supplementary. At the social practice level, this discourse contributes to broader ideological patterns within South African higher education, where English continues to function as a gatekeeping mechanism that privileges its speakers while marginalising indigenous language users. Through this movement from text to discourse to social practice, it becomes clear that individual word choices reflect and sustain institutional power relations, demonstrating how linguistic practices maintain existing hierarchies within the academic environment.

Furthermore, participants' use of negative lexical choices, such as "difficult," "confusing," "excluded," and "limited," signals their experiences of linguistic struggle within multilingual classrooms. These words emphasise constraint and loss, linguistically positioning students as

disadvantaged when unable to fully engage in English-dominated interactions. In addition, the discursive practice, such as lexical choices, draws on deficit-oriented academic discourses that normalise English proficiency as a prerequisite for meaningful participation, while framing multilingualism as a problem rather than a resource. Through repeated circulation in classroom talk and institutional narratives, these discourses become taken for granted and reproduced by both students and lecturers. At the level of social practice, this framing reflects and sustains broader power relations within higher education, where English operates as a gatekeeping mechanism that systematically marginalises speakers of indigenous languages. Consequently, individual expressions of difficulty are not merely personal challenges, but rather discursive manifestations of structural inequality, revealing how language practices perpetuate exclusionary norms within the academic environment.

In the text dimension, participants' use of positive and negative lexical choices reflects underlying attitudes toward English in the classroom. Words and phrases such as "*fosters interaction*" and "*enhances participation*" carry positive evaluative connotations, framing English as a facilitator of communication and engagement. Conversely, lexical items like "*reduces participation*" and "*hegemonic*" signal criticism and exclusion, constructing English as a barrier that limits students' full involvement. These evaluative lexis choices do not merely describe experiences; they encode judgments about the value and consequences of English, signalling the dangers involved in linguistic access. At the discourse dimension, these lexical choices shape how classroom interactions are enacted and interpreted. When English is positioned positively as a tool that "*fosters interaction,*" it legitimises certain communicative practices, encouraging students to engage in knowledge exchange. In contrast, when English is framed as *reducing participation*, it exposes the power asymmetries in interaction: students who lack proficiency are marginalised, silenced, or forced to rely on translation. The discourse surrounding English thus functions as a mechanism for negotiating inclusion or exclusion, structuring who can participate and who is positioned as a legitimate knower within academic spaces.

At the social practice dimension, these texts and discourse patterns reflect and reproduce broader societal structures. The hegemonic position of English in higher education reflects colonial legacies, in which English continues to dominate as the language of authority, knowledge, and academic legitimacy. Calls for the decolonisation of language highlight the tension between these entrenched hierarchies and the normative ideal of multilingual inclusion. The interplay of positive and negative lexical framing at the text level, and the resulting discourse patterns, thus both mediate and are mediated by historical and social forces, showing

how micro-level classroom experiences are connected to macro-level struggles over power, identity, and access to knowledge in postcolonial South Africa. Linking the three dimensions: The textual choices (positive/negative lexicon) encode evaluative stances that shape discursive practices (who participates, how interaction is structured). These practices, in turn, are situated within social practices that reflect larger power relations (colonial legacy, English hegemony, calls for decolonisation). Thus, the micro-level language use in classrooms is inseparable from the macro-level social and political forces, demonstrating how English functions simultaneously as a tool for inclusion and a mechanism of exclusion.

5.2 Research question 2

- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

According to social theorist Michel Foucault (1989:09), “power is not only about CEOs or politicians making rules for their subordinates. Instead, there are different forms and nuances of power that are exerted by all people in everyday situations, such as conversations with friends, lessons at school, and reading the newspaper or engaging in social media. Importantly, power in language is omnipresent and sometimes hardly perceptible.” This means that language carries power, but it is often subtle and normalised; we don’t always recognise it. Therefore, power is embedded throughout language. Power is not just about hierarchies; it shapes how people think, act, and interact with one another.

Norman Fairclough (1995:98) also discusses power, conceptualising it as asymmetric between participants in a discursive event. Like Foucault's ideas of power and interaction, Fairclough states that power is everywhere; it is not an institution, structure, or force that people possess. According to him, power is not possessed but practised through discursive events. For example, a lecturer does not possess power as an object, but power is embedded within their role as a knowledge barrier; their authority is maintained through discursive practices. This refers to how they speak, the academic language they use, and how they control who gets to speak and when. He identifies two major aspects of power in relation to language. He identifies power in discourse and power behind discourse. Power in discourse encompasses the exercise and enactment of power, where powerful participants control and constrain the contributions of those who lack power. Power behind discourse refers to the power to shape and constitute the order of discourse dimensions of social orders, social institutions, or societies; as well as which

discourses and genres are available and who has access to what. Fairclough further speaks of “Hidden power, which, implies the power relations that are enacted in unclear ways. The case of “hidden power” in discourse is when people who are unequal in power are not co-present in certain social interaction, so the effects of power are less obvious (e.g. power in mass media); power behind discourse is hidden power by its very nature: “the whole social order of discourse is put together as a hidden effect of power” (Fairclough 2015: 73). In addition, Yuan, and Bentler (2008:142) write about manifest and latent power relations. Manifest power is the clear, intended, and obvious, while latent power is the unintended, often unrecognised. The Manifest power refers to the authority academic staff members possess as fluent users of English, which enables them to wield discursive power. They are regarded as having access to knowledge due to their position and academic accolades. They get to decide what can be regarded as clear or correct communication. The latent power is exercised through the enforcing of monolingualism and the upholding of the idea that all teaching and learning should happen in English, which reinforces marginalisation and exclusion of indigenous languages and students who are ESL speakers who lack fluency and confidence in using English.

5.2.1 Application of Fairclough’s 3D/ tiered model

5.2.1.1 Text dimension

Power within a discursive event is embedded in the role and position that different participants assume. The institution's language policy also ensures that the inclusion and exclusion criteria are adhered to. This section uses participants' responses to questions regarding the language policy and its implementation. It looks at how the policy is used to reflect relevant power struggles and how power is revealed.

These are the questions used to elicit responses; the same question was asked for both students and staff members.

1. What do you think about the University’s language policy?
2. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces

5.2.1.2 Positive/negative lexical choices

Table 4 This table presents positive words used by students and academic staff to describe and speak about the UFS Language policy.

Table 4

Positive word/phrases	Type of word	Text dimension (Power
Encourages	Verb	Reflects a discourse of inclusion and motivation, where power is used positively to promote participation or engagement.
Embraces	Verb	Indicates acceptance and inclusivity
Promotes	Verb	Shows active support or advocacy
Addresses	Verb	Implies responsiveness, the speaker acknowledges and attends to others' needs or issues, signalling power used for dialogue and problem-solving

The responses above reflect how participants view the UFS language policy as a tool that promotes linguistic diversity within the institution. In addition, the use of words such as “addresses” and “Promotes” reflects how the policy embraces and acknowledges diverse linguistic identities, recognising that language is central to how individuals learn, participate, and interact in academic spaces. Furthermore, when narrating their experiences and views on the language policy, participants noted that the policy promotes inclusivity by creating a space for different languages to coexist, thereby reducing feelings of exclusion among those who are not fully proficient in English. At the same time, participants use words such as *addresses* to reflect the responsive nature of the policy in resolving and acknowledging the long-standing language inequalities by attempting to provide equitable access to academic content and opportunities for meaningful engagement through the creation of a policy that fosters and promotes multilingualism within the university.

Table 4.1 Reflects the negative perceptions

Table 4.1

Negative words		Type word	Text dimension
Biased		Adjective	Indicates unequal power distribution, it reveals institutional or linguistic dominance, such as privileging English over indigenous languages. It exposes how discourse normalises one viewpoint as “neutral” or “standard,” marginalising alternative voices
Unfair		Adjective	Highlights perceived injustice in language policy or academic practices.

In contrast to the more positive interpretations, some participants view the UFS language policy as biased because it only acknowledges the use of five languages: Sesotho, isiZulu, Afrikaans, English, and South African Sign Language. This approach is biased because South Africa has 12 official languages; acknowledging only 5 languages means excluding those who are not part of the in-group, which perpetuates bias. Therefore, from their perspective, this bias reinforces linguistic hierarchies in which English is privileged as the language of learning, participation, and academic success. As a result, participants feel that the policy creates an unfair learning environment for students who are less proficient in English, as they must work harder to access content, participate confidently, and express complex ideas. These students experience the policy as unequal in practice, despite its intentions to promote inclusivity. Thus, while the policy may appear progressive on paper, participants’ experiences reveal that its implementation continues to disadvantage those who rely on indigenous languages for meaningful learning.

5.2.1.2 Discourse practice

The responses in this section were produced using three sections: 1. Examining how the text was produced. 2. Analysing how the text is interpreted and understood. 3. Examining how the text is distributed and reproduced. 4. Interpret what these reveal about discourse.

How was the text produced?

The text was produced through the creation and answering of online questionnaires by students

and academic staff members at the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The responses provided are regarded as text because they detail participants' experience of language. To answer the second research question, two questions were posed and answered. Question 1: If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to learn and engage in academic spaces using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why? Question 2: What do you think about the University's language policy? The responses received from these questions are applied.

Analyse how the text is interpreted and understood.

The text was interpreted and understood through the analysis of the responses and the identification of themes evident in them. One of the themes found was.

5.2.1.3 Theme 1: The UFS Language policy is biased.

SR 6: I think it's not fair because some of us are not majoring in Zulu only.

The text, which is the above response from a student, is understood and interpreted through the analysis of the words used by the participants and how they reflect existing social structures. Using words such as “not fair” reflects an existing marginalisation and the lack of inclusion that people experience. Where they feel one language is privileged more than the other. The theme language policy is biased, which exposes how official policies often privilege the language, typically English, thereby reinforcing structural inequalities and silencing other linguistic identities. A biased policy represents an exercise of institutional power through language, where control over acceptable forms of communication determines who is heard and who remains invisible.

5.2.1.4 Theme 2: The language policy fosters diversity and cultural inclusivity; most student and academic staff members' responses reflect this theme.

SR 3: The university's language policy can have a significant impact on students, faculty, and staff. It fosters a diverse and inclusive environment.

SR 4: It is unique because it promotes multilingualism, and students get to learn other languages around campus.

SR 5: It is diverse, and it fosters one community.

SR 7: I think it addresses some cultural biases related to language and learning.

These responses are understood and interpreted by looking at the words used to generate meaning and create a shared understanding. Through the responses, students also see the benefit of the language policy, and they use words such as “it promotes” “It is unique and diverse”, “it addresses” to show how the policy also acts to bridge any form of inequality by creating learning spaces that are unique and address diverse linguistic needs of students. Smith

(2024: 01) states that

“Language diversity fosters inclusive learning environments. When educators value and incorporate diverse languages into curriculum and classroom activities, all students feel valued and represented. This inclusivity promotes a sense of belonging and encourages active participation in learning.”

The quote above relates to the responses students provided, which reveal how language usage is tied to power, ideology, and access within the educational space. Participants' use of language reflects inclusion and exclusion. The discourse of inclusivity positions language diversity within a classroom as a transformative tool that breaks and challenges the monopolisation of the language of instruction. It promotes the use of various languages within teaching and learning spaces. For example, when academic staff members value language diversity, they redistribute discursive power by allowing previously marginalised languages to participate in academic interactions. The recognition of five official languages, as stated in the UFS Language Policy (2022), reveals how language inclusivity embodies and promotes empowerment by acknowledging multilingual expression within different spaces. Language inclusivity challenges the dominance of a single language and creates opportunities for shared understanding.

3. Examining how the text is distributed and reproduced

The distribution and reproduction of a text refer to how the text, in this case, the responses received from the questionnaire, is shared and how the meaning is reshaped. The distribution of the text refers to who has access to it. Access to the questionnaire was limited to students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The text also refers to the responses participants provide, which narrate their experience, so those experiences are regarded as a written text. Thus, the distribution of the questionnaire becomes a reflection of inequality, as it reveals the disparities in access to the questionnaire and the conditions under which it is available, thereby highlighting existing power relations. For instance, the questionnaire is distributed through formal university digital platforms, which privilege participants who possess linguistic competence, digital literacy, and institutional access. This selective circulation reinforces the dominance of certain groups while excluding others, often along linguistic or socio-economic lines, as the text was only written in English, a limitation I acknowledge as a researcher.

4. Interpretation (what theme reveals about discourse)

Two major themes were identified: The UFS language policy is biased, and the language policy fosters diversity and cultural inclusivity. These themes reveal how the policy and language

shape power structures and ideologies. Power structures are reflected through who creates and distributes the policy versus those who access and use the policy. The response reflects how the policy is not neutral; it promotes different spectrums based on the space one finds themselves. The policy reflects teaching and learning spaces as spaces that promote equality and multiculturalism. The feedback participants provide indicates that most agree the policy is inclusive and fosters multicultural interactions. The themes further position language policy as a tool for unity, transformation, and social cohesion.

Additionally, the responses demonstrate how discourse and language can be employed to create both exclusionary and inclusive spaces. By stipulating the five official languages, the UFS language policy unintentionally excludes those who do not affiliate with the languages, as they feel unrepresented. Participants feel that the policy favours some languages over others. The theme highlights how English often remains the preferred or privileged language; however, the policy now acknowledges the use of IsiZulu, Sesotho, and South African Sign language, thereby marginalising speakers of African languages that are not recognised, which reproduces historical power imbalances.

Overall, these themes reveal that discourse, language, and the language policy are sites of ideological struggles, one where inclusivity and equity are promoted in principle but often contested in practice. It shows how language functions as both a symbol of transformation and a mechanism of control, shaping who has access to knowledge, voice, and participation within the university space.

5.2.1.3 Social Practice

This level of the model focuses on how discourse is connected to broader social structures and how it reflects cultural practices and power relations. This stage moves beyond the texts, which are the responses received from the questionnaire, to what the text reflects in the broader social scheme. This level examines how language reflects, reinforces, and challenges social realities. In this dimension, Fairclough (1996: 38) argues that discourse both shapes and is shaped by society. That is, language practices contribute to maintaining or transforming existing social structures such as class, gender, race, and institutional power, while also being influenced by them. Analysts using this dimension examine how a particular discourse (for example, a university's language policy or classroom interactions) is connected to broader social issues, ideologies, and historical contexts. The aim is to reveal how power and dominance are sustained through language and how certain groups' voices are privileged while others are marginalised.

These themes reflect the ideological positions within broader social and institutional power structures. They are not just statements about language policy, but participants struggle over whose languages are valued in higher education.

The language policy fosters diversity and cultural inclusivity.

This theme aligns with the notion of the need for transformation and inclusivity in post-apartheid South Africa. It speaks to the broader social call for decolonisation of language, where universities' monolingual approaches are challenged. The feedback promotes an image of equality, suggesting that not all languages and cultures can be recognised within the institution, but the higher education sphere has space for inclusivity, as some previously marginalised languages form part of the university's official languages. Furthermore, the text reflects that the institution is working toward decolonisation and social justice. In addition, discourse and language are reflected upon and seen as performative, meaning that discourse and language are used to maintain the university's legitimacy and alignment with national policies, such as the Language Policy for Higher Education (2002), which served as the basis for pushing all universities to work towards language inclusivity.

The social practice dimension exposes how language inclusivity reflects the silencing of languages not included as the official languages within the institution. Thus, the idea of language inclusion can sometimes mask social inequalities if English continues to be regarded as the sole language for teaching and learning, and previously marginalised indigenous languages are only used as remedial languages in tutorials and translanguaging efforts.

The UFS language policy is biased.

This theme is a challenge to the dominant institutional narrative that emerges from the lived experiences of students and staff who perceive the policy as privileging English while marginalising African languages which don't form part of the institutions official languages.

Through Fairclough's social practice lens, this theme reveals resistance to dominant power relations and exposes how institutional policies may perpetuate linguistic inequality and cultural exclusion despite claims of inclusivity. This theme is situated through a broader social context of postcolonial inequality, where English remains the language of academic and economic mobility, and indigenous languages are still devalued. This discourse, therefore, reflects a struggle for linguistic justice and epistemic inclusion, challenging the university to move beyond symbolic inclusivity toward genuine multilingual transformation.

5.2.1. 4 Linking the model.

In the text dimension, participants' use of positive lexical choices such as "*encourage*,"

“embraces,” “promotes,” and “addresses” constructs the language policy as supportive, inclusive, and proactive, signalling an evaluative stance that frames the policy as a tool for fostering linguistic diversity. In contrast, negative lexical choices like “biased” and “unfair” encode critique and disapproval, presenting the same policy as exclusionary and inequitable. These evaluative lexis choices do not merely describe the policy; they reveal how language is positioned as a resource that can either legitimise or marginalise participants within the academic space.

At the discourse dimension, these lexical choices shape the ways participants interpret and discuss the policy. Positive framing (“fosters diversity”) constructs classroom and institutional interactions as collaborative and empowering, implying that students from various linguistic backgrounds are recognised and supported. Negative framing (“policy is biased”) highlights discursive tension, exposing how the policy can restrict participation, privilege certain languages, and marginalise non-dominant speakers. In this way, discourse reveals the power relations embedded in policy implementation, showing how linguistic practices are negotiated, resisted, or normalised in everyday academic interactions. At the social practice dimension, these texts and discourse patterns reflect and reproduce broader societal structures and historical legacies. Positive representations of the policy resonate with aspirations for inclusive and decolonised education, while negative representations point to ongoing language hierarchies and systemic inequities, rooted in English hegemony and the colonial privileging of certain languages over others. Together, these dimensions illustrate how micro-level evaluations of policy (text), their enactment in interaction (discourse), and their connection to societal power structures (social practice) are deeply intertwined. The interplay between positive and negative lexical choices thus mediates the tension between the ideals of linguistic inclusivity and the realities of exclusionary institutional practices, reflecting the broader struggle over language, power, and access in higher education.

5.3 Research question 3

- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

This research question seeks to identify and explore the linguistic dynamics present in various teaching and learning at the UFS Qwaqwa campus. It explores how language functions as a social, academic, and communicative resource within a multilingual higher education

environment. The UFS Qwaqwa campus is situated in a linguistically diverse region, where languages such as Sesotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa and many more intersect in everyday interactions. This form of multilingual interactions produces complex linguistic dynamics, so this research question aims to uncover and narrate those dynamics.

From the above research question, three questions were created to elicit a response.

Question 1: Discuss classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus.

Question 2: How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?

Question 3: Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom.

From the above question, four themes were identified, namely,

- Language identity and belonging.
- Positive perception of classroom interactions,
- The need for multilingual flexibility in classroom interaction,
- Developing academic language proficiency.

5.3.1 Application of the theory

Text dimension focuses on the language aspects of the responses, examining the structure, word form, and meaning. The focus is on positive and negative words.

5.3.1.1 Text dimension

Positive/negative lexical choices

Table 5 discusses how positive lexical choices enable and highlight multilingual discussions.

Table 5

Positive word	Type of word	Text Dimension
Allowed	verb	Reflects permission and freedom to speak and engage using any language of choice
Accommodates	verb	Suggests flexibility and openness in communication practices.
Express ourselves	verb	Highlights empowerment and agency in classroom interactions.
Translate	Verb	Demonstrates cooperation and bridging of linguistic gaps.

The use of words such as “*accommodates*,” “*express us*,” and “*translate*” reflects a discourse of inclusion and linguistic empowerment. Within Fairclough’s text dimension, these lexical choices reveal a shift toward more democratic and participatory classroom practices. The language used portrays the lecturer not as an enforcer of English, but as a facilitator who enables mutual understanding across linguistic boundaries. This repositions multilingualism as a resource rather than a barrier, signalling a redistribution of communicative power and promoting equality in meaning-making within academic spaces.

Table 5.1 This table present negative words they are used by participants to narrate their experience of language.

Table 5.1

Negative Words	Type words	Text Dimension
1. Feeling excluded Not allowed Not everyone understands English	Negative expressions	reveals a discourse of exclusion and disempowerment
2. Misunderstood	Verb/ Adjective	Highlights communication breakdown and lack of mutual comprehension.
3. Difficult	Adjective	Emphasises the emotional and cognitive strain caused by monolingual instruction
4. Omitted	Verb	Demonstrates loss of meaning and exclusion from full participation in discourse.

The choice of words such as “*misunderstood*,” “*difficult*,” and “*omitted*” in the participants’ responses reflects a discourse of exclusion and linguistic struggle. These lexical items signal the challenges students face in expressing themselves when English is the sole language of instruction. Within Fairclough’s text dimension, such word choices highlight how communication barriers and meaning loss stem from language policy and classroom practice. The use of these negative term’s constructs English not as a neutral medium but as a gatekeeper to knowledge, reinforcing existing power imbalances between fluent and non-fluent speaker.

5.3.2 Discourse practice

This level of the model focuses on the process of communication, examining how a text, in this case, participants' responses to the questionnaire, is created, shared, and understood. Furthermore, the dimension helps reveal the power relations, institutional influences, and interpretive practices that shape what people say and how they say it.

The responses in this section were analysed using three sections: 1. Examining how the text was produced. 2. Analyse how the text is interpreted and understood.

The text was compiled from the responses collected in the questionnaire. The responses were produced by student and staff members who reflected on their experiences of language within the classroom.

1. Analyse how the text is interpreted and understood.

Meaning can be interpreted and understood by examining students' responses and how they reveal themes and underlying meanings. The themes are evident in the responses, and meaning is derived from the words used. Words carry meaning, and people assign different meanings to them.

When analysing the responses, we see how institutional practices influence the engagement of academic staff members and students within the classroom. English is the primary medium of instruction, making it a vital source of knowledge. Some students operate within an environment where English is normalised as the language of learning, and those who struggle with the language are seldom assisted or attended to. Students use words like these to share their experiences with language in the classroom: “not everyone understands English,” “we are not allowed.” This reveals how students interpret and reproduce the institutional power of English; they acknowledge it as a rule, even if they disagree with it.

From these themes, two major themes emerged.

5.3.2.1 Theme two: Lack of language Inclusivity

The data provides a different perspective on understanding classroom encounters and interactions. The data provides a different view that paints the classroom as a monolingual space that does not allow any multicultural interaction, hence the respondents below that the multilingual approaches and language inclusive strategies are not used within their teaching and learning spaces.

Student Respondent (SR) 7, 13, 19, 22 states that language inclusivity is not fostered within their teaching spaces.

SR 7: No because it is a fact that not everyone understands English and it is the only language used as a medium of instruction, learners are not given a chance to express themselves in their natives because if they do the next person will not understand, even if translated some information may be omitted or misunderstood.

SR 13: Only one language is used, strictly English, and students don't get to express themselves in their languages so No

SR 19: No, lectures sometimes use their own languages and allow learners who speak the same language as them to use their language in class this makes other learners to feel excluded as they happen not to understand what is being said and they don't even translate for them to understand.

SR 22: No because some lectures do not allow us to answer in our own language and this makes learning very difficult for us as students.

The findings reveal a strong perception and understanding among students, highlighting that language inclusivity is not effectively fostered within the various teaching and learning environments in which students find themselves. The participants express that English remains the sole medium of instruction, which is a disadvantage for ESL students who lack proficiency in the language. This is supported by SR7, who states that not everyone understands English, and the constant use of it as the LOLT restricts students' ability to express themselves freely. Furthermore, it is evident that even when translation is attempted, participants observe that meaning is often lost or distorted, leading to miscommunication and reduced understanding. native languages, which contribute to learning difficulties and feelings of alienation. Furthermore, SR19 identifies a form of intra-linguistic exclusion, where lecturers occasionally use their own local languages with certain students, thereby excluding others from discussions. Collectively, these responses suggest that monolingual practices and unequal language policies in classrooms perpetuate linguistic hierarchies and hinder the goal of inclusivity in higher education.

5.3.3 Social Practice Dimension

At the level of social practice, the responses point to broader ideological structures that sustain English hegemony in academia. The dominance of English maintains colonial legacies, where indigenous languages are devalued and positioned as inferior or irrelevant in formal education. This situation reflects a systemic form of latent power, where institutional policies indirectly marginalise non-English speakers and restrict their epistemic participation. Consequently,

language becomes both a symbol and an instrument of power, shaping who has access to knowledge and whose ways of knowing are legitimised within the academic space.

At the broader social level, the responses also challenge the ideological dominance of English in higher education. By integrating indigenous languages into teaching and learning, lecturers and students resist linguistic marginalisation and promote epistemic justice, valuing diverse “ways of knowing” and recognising multilingualism as a resource rather than a deficiency. This reflects a growing awareness of transformative language policy in post-apartheid South Africa, aligning with efforts to decolonise education and foster genuine inclusivity.

The findings reveal that language plays a vital role in shaping classroom interactions, facilitating access to knowledge and promoting inclusion at the University of the Free State Qwaqwa campus. English, as the dominant language of instruction, functions both as a bridge and a barrier to equitable participation and communication. While it enables cross-cultural understanding and provides access to academic and global opportunities, it also marginalises students who are not fluent in it, particularly those from rural areas and non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Many participants indicated that language inclusivity is unevenly practised. Some lecturers encourage students to use their home languages or explain concepts through translation, fostering inclusivity and mutual understanding. These practices help bridge linguistic gaps and promote collaborative learning. Conversely, other lecturers strictly enforce English-only communication, which limits student expression, reduces participation, and creates anxiety among English Second Language (ESL) speakers. This inconsistency highlights a tension between institutional language policy and actual classroom practice.

Using Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, the study uncovered both manifest and latent power relations within language practices. Manifest power is visible in the authority lecturers hold as fluent users of English, while latent power operates through the implicit enforcement of monolingualism, which privileges English and excludes indigenous languages. This dynamic reinforces historical and social hierarchies, sustaining the marginalisation of non-English speakers.

The study further found that participants view multilingualism as a potential tool for inclusion and transformation. Acts of translation, code-switching, and linguistic accommodation serve as small but powerful resistances against the dominance of English. These practices not only enhance understanding but also affirm students' linguistic and cultural identities.

5.3.3.1 Theme 1: Fostering positive classroom interactions by using translanguaging and code-switching techniques.

Translanguaging refers to the use of two languages and the use of more than two languages in teaching and learning (Childs 2016:24). It involves students mixing languages when responding to specific questions by drawing on the knowledge and vocabulary they possess. In other words, translanguaging refers to the seamless coexistence of different languages, where students choose which language to use based on the cultural and social contexts. Therefore, the use of translanguaging is a solution to challenges faced in multilingual classrooms. Salazar (2013:121) states that the lack of acceptance of learners' languages and “ways of knowing” can result in dehumanising experiences in classrooms. Furthermore, he states that the lack of acknowledgement of students from different linguistic backgrounds and those who differ from the dominant norms may lead to shame, alienation, or exclusion in the classroom, which is dehumanising because it denies them the opportunity to explore their full identity and lived experience within a classroom. Therefore, translanguaging can be used to foster positive classroom interactions. Similarly, Mazzaferro (2018:71) indicates that translanguaging motivates learners in the classroom in various ways. Such as creating a context for discourse, relating cultural and social backgrounds, and negotiating and constructing meaningful interactions. Therefore, the use of translanguaging is meaningful in the classroom, as it identifies the linguistic background of students and provides them with an opportunity to develop metalinguistic abilities.

Translanguaging can foster positive classroom interactions within teaching and learning spaces. These positive encounters are facilitated by both teachers and students through their use of student language repertoires to engage in meaningful intercultural conversations. For example, a lecturer or facilitator can present a lesson in English and may ask students to discuss the topic or answer questions using their own languages, which motivates learners to focus on meaning. Translingual practices have led to a paradigm shift in classroom discourse, rejecting monolingual theoretical orientations (Canagarajah 2012: 51) and shifting toward more inclusive strategies that foster inclusion and encourage participation with fellow students and the content. In addition, Translanguaging enables a teacher to reduce language monotony in the classroom, as it allows them to use more than one language. The language will be used to exchange connotations regarding the content taught in a language classroom. These views are supported by students and staff members who acknowledge and seek more usage of

translanguaging approaches as solutions towards the creation of positive learning environments.

Student Respondents (SRs) 7, 17, 11, and 23 affirm the use of translanguaging techniques in their teaching and learning spaces. When responding to whether language inclusivity is fostered in their classrooms, they responded and said yes.

SR 7: Yes, it is. Some Lectures now allow us to explain in our languages and if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English.

SR 17: Yes, it is, since the classroom accommodates students from different backgrounds speaking different languages, we are all allowed to express ourselves in our home languages, that way we somehow learn to speak or understand different languages.

SR 11: Yes, it is fostered because one can use their language to explain things they struggle to explain in English.

SR 23: It is because some lecturers allow students to ask questions in their native languages, and then the lecturer will translate what it means in English to the whole class.

The above responses reflect how academic staff members work to ensure that students' voices are included within the classroom using their preferred language.

Staff Participants allow the use of translanguaging and code-switching techniques, fostering peer discussion to create a language-rich environment. Staff participant (SP) 4, 20, 3, 7 and 15 states that

SP 4: I've observed that students often support each other by using their home languages in group work, which is helpful for understanding but can limit whole-class interactions in English.

SP 20: I encourage code-switching in small groups to enhance comprehension, but formal presentations and assessments still rely heavily on English.

SP 3: I am not proficient in any African language, so I see my own incompetence as a barrier to fully embracing language inclusivity in the classroom. What I can do is, if I see a student struggling to express themselves in English, I have them state what they are trying to say in their mother tongue and then ask other students to help them translate. This has benefited students in being able to express themselves in class.

The findings of both students and staff members reveal that language inclusivity is increasingly being fostered within the classroom, as both lecturers and students demonstrate openness to multilingual interaction. Students report that lecturers allow them to express themselves in

their native languages when they struggle to articulate themselves in English. This approach promotes positive interactions by reducing the shame associated with interacting within a classroom when one lacks proficiency in English, as well as the shame associated with interacting in one's mother tongue. Furthermore, the use of home languages is also accompanied by providing translations to ensure collective understanding. This approach enables students to utilise their linguistic resources to clarify complex ideas, thereby bridging issues surrounding comprehension. All in all, students and staff members, through their responses, highlight how translanguaging accommodates students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, encouraging interaction across languages and cultures, which fosters both understanding and respect for linguistic diversity. Such discourse signals a shift from rigid monolingual instruction to more inclusive pedagogical approaches, where multiple languages coexist as tools of learning rather than as barriers.

5.3.1 Linking the model.

In the text dimension, participants' use of positive lexical choices such as "*encourage*," "*allowed*," and "*accommodates*" constructs the classroom environment as inclusive and supportive, suggesting that multilingual practices are sanctioned and valued. Conversely, negative lexical choices such as "*feeling excluded*," "*not allowed*," and "*misunderstood*" encode experiences of marginalisation and disempowerment. These lexical selections are not neutral; they possess evaluative positions that frame English as enabling or restricting access to knowledge and interaction. At the discourse dimension, these lexical choices reveal how classroom interactions are structured and mediated. Positive framing aligns with practices such as code-switching and translanguaging, which allow students to participate fully, collaborate, and co-construct knowledge, reflecting an inclusive pedagogical ethos. Negative framing highlights tensions in the enactment of language policy, exposing how restrictive or biased policies can silence students and limit engagement, thereby reproducing hierarchical language practices. Here, discourse mediates the relationship between policy and practice, showing how language choice shapes who can participate, how, and to what extent.

At the social practice dimension, these text and discourse patterns reflect broader societal and historical power structures, including the hegemonic status of English, the lingering effects of colonial language hierarchies, and ongoing debates about the decolonisation of higher education. Positive lexical and discursive practices illustrate attempts to counteract exclusionary legacies through pedagogical flexibility, while negative evaluations expose persistent inequalities and institutionalised bias. Together, these dimensions show how micro-

level language experiences (lexical choices), their enactment in classroom interaction (discourse), and macro-level societal structures (social practice) are interconnected. The interplay between inclusionary and exclusionary language practices demonstrates how language both reflects and reproduces power, shaping students' access to participation, recognition, and knowledge within higher education.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that language use in the academic environment functions simultaneously as a bridge and a barrier to participation, knowledge access, and identity formation. Drawing on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, the findings reveal that English holds a dominant position, shaping classroom interactions and perpetuating tensions between inclusion and exclusion. While some lecturers and students adopt multilingual practices such as translanguaging and code-switching to negotiate meaning, English remains the default language of academic legitimacy. Consequently, monolingual norms are sustained, marginalising speakers of indigenous languages. Overall, the findings suggest that meaningful language inclusivity requires more than policy commitments; it demands the active validation of all languages as legitimate resources for learning, participation, and knowledge construction.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the overall conclusions drawn from the study. It outlines the study's significance and discusses the examination of the relationship between language, power, and inclusivity in the university's teaching and learning spaces. Furthermore, it links the previous chapters and provides a summary of the main findings in relation to each research question. In addition, the chapter discusses the study's implications and outlines its limitations. Finally, it offers recommendations for future research.

6.1 Aim

This study aimed to explore and track the use of language by students and academic staff members in teaching and learning spaces. It examined how language, in this instance English, limited or enhanced interactions within the teaching and learning environments. Furthermore, it explored how power is embedded and enacted through discursive language practices. Finally, the study outlined and mapped participants' experiences of language using Fairclough's 3D model.

6.2 The study is founded on the following research questions.

- How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

6.2.1 Conclusion

This study has examined the role of language in shaping interactions between students and academic staff across teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, with a particular focus on the use of English, power relations, and prevailing linguistic dynamics. In reflecting on the research questions, the findings suggest that English functions ambivalently: while it can enhance communication by providing a shared academic medium, it can also limit participation and meaningful engagement for students whose linguistic repertoires are not fully aligned with dominant institutional norms. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that language

is deeply implicated in power relations within educational spaces, influencing whose voices are heard, whose knowledge is legitimised, and how authority is negotiated in classroom interactions. The identified linguistic dynamics reveal ongoing tensions between monolingual practices and the multilingual realities of the campus, highlighting how institutional language choices may perpetuate exclusion despite commitments to inclusivity. Collectively, these reflections underscore the need for more responsive and inclusive language practices that recognise multilingualism as a resource rather than a barrier, thereby promoting equitable interaction, participation, and knowledge construction within higher education.

6.3 Summary of Research Findings

The study uncovered the duality embedded in language, which refers to how language and its use produce feelings of exclusion and inclusion in teaching and learning spaces. This duality reflects how participants perceive language as both a positive and negative indicator of their experience. Language and language use are portrayed as positive experiences and encounters that enable mutually inclusive encounters. Participants 23 and 9 said, “SP 23: Very important. Language drives engagement between instructors and students, engagement between students, and engagement with the content taught in class. Therefore, language influences understanding”.

“SP 9: Language plays a significant role in how well students understand content, as well as the extent to which they participate in class” “SR 25: Provided that this is a diverse institution. The English language accommodates every one of the students as it is most widely known. And English has become the most prominent language in the country as well as the world most interviews or jobs require English as a basic language”. These responses demonstrate how language facilitates students and staff members in creating meaningful interactions that are mutually beneficial and inclusive. These engagements are mutually beneficial because they bridge potential linguistic barriers and misunderstandings by facilitating and enabling interactions between diverse individuals using a common language, namely English. Therefore, English becomes a glue that links and joins people; it creates mutually beneficial encounters. On the other hand, the duality lies in the negative role effect of using English in multilingual spaces; the study uncovered how exclusionary and marginalising it is. Both students and staff members describe this negative duality, highlighting how language acts as a gatekeeper to knowledge acquisition and self-development. These ideas are evident in this response “SP 15: Without language proficiency, a student would be seriously handicapped in social life and in the world of work. Along with numeracy and some form of moral education, it's crucial”. “SP

19: It is very important because it makes or breaks a student. It is no doubt that most students believe that English is a measure of intelligence. Therefore, if English is the only language that is used in the classroom, some students tend to think they cannot have a successful academic journey”. The responses participants provided show how using English only can create barriers in the classroom for those who with limited proficiency in the language. In addition, the negative duality highlights how language can have a detrimental influence on participation, which in turn can affect students' confidence and willingness to engage with the content and the people around them. Thus, language use embodies a tension between empowerment and limitation, revealing how a single linguistic medium can both expand and restrict students' access to knowledge, identity expression, and meaningful academic engagement.

6.3.1 Fostering positive classroom interactions using translanguaging and code-switching techniques.

The study revealed that classrooms at the UFS Qwaqwa campus are diverse spaces that encompass people from different language communities, cultures, social classes, and religions, so there is a need for the creation of positive classroom interactions, which refer to interactions that are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and accommodating. With these in mind, the data revealed that teaching and learning spaces at Qwaqwa are sometimes a reflection of a positive classroom because both academic staff members and students utilise techniques that promote inclusive interactions and recognise the limitations that exist due to language barriers. These inclusive strategies include the use of translanguaging and code-switching techniques to ensure seamless knowledge creation and acquisition. Furthermore, these techniques encourage students to utilise their existing language repertoires to create meaning and understanding. SR 7 and 17 state that “ Some Lectures now allow us to explain in our languages and if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English” SR 17 “since the classroom accommodates students from different backgrounds speaking different languages, we are all allowed to express ourselves in our home languages, that way we somehow learn to speak or understand different languages”. The responses students provided reveal how translanguaging and code switching are used as transformative tools aimed at creating positive and inclusive learning environments. These spaces are inclusive because they allow students to draw on or use their linguistic repertoires to create meaning and confidently engage in lecture halls. In addition, translanguaging creates positive learning experiences because it allows students to shift fluidly between multiple languages, enabling them to unpack complex ideas, negotiate meaning, and engage consciously in the learning process. This makes them feel confident because the knowledge is accessible to them in a way they best understand. Furthermore, the

use of translanguaging fosters a sense of belonging, as students can utilise their own languages to create meaning, which validates the significance of home languages or indigenous African languages as tools that can create and promote academic discourse. Similarly, codeswitching has been used for decades as a strategic tool that fuses LOLT with home languages to make knowledge more accessible. SP 20 and 15 state that SP 20 “I encourage code-switching in small groups to enhance comprehension, but formal presentations and assessments still rely heavily on English”. SP 15 “In my classes, I allow students to have group discussions using their home languages, considering that everyone in the group understands the language; however, when presenting, they would use English to communicate with the whole class so that everyone may understand”. These responses demonstrate that some academic staff actively work towards fostering multilingualism using translanguaging techniques to create positive and reaffirming learning spaces that encourage and strengthen collaborative learning, tapping into students' existing knowledge to create a more enhanced understanding of the content. Therefore, this finding reveals that creating positive learning spaces requires acknowledging one's culture and language and using them to generate more intense engagement and participation in knowledge creation. On the other hand, students feel that the language policy is biased SR 6 states “I think it's not fair because some of us are not majoring in isiZulu” this reflect the biasedness student feel or experience when one language is privileged over the others. It is evident that the language policy acknowledging five languages created an exclusionary space for those who languages are not include.

6.3.2 The language policy fosters diversity and bias.

This finding illustrates the dual effect of having a language policy that is perceived as both inclusive and biased by different participants simultaneously. The UFS language policy of 2023 is perceived as inclusive, with participants noting that it promotes multilingualism. However, others view it as biased because it only recognises five languages as official languages of the institution. Participants feel excluded, while others acknowledge the recognition of the 5 languages as a huge milestone or achievement. Those who say the language policy foster diversity based their response on SR 4 stating “It is unique because it promotes multilingualism, and students get to learn other languages around campus” and SR 5 stating “It is diverse, and it fosters one community” and SR 7 also stating that “ I think it addresses some cultural biases related to language and learning”. The participants' responses demonstrate how the language policy promotes diversity by creating spaces or learning environments that acknowledge and respect linguistic and cultural differences. These differences are used as vital resources that promote inclusive learning. In addition, the policy

promotes multilingualism by allowing students to learn from a range of languages used or spoken. The findings also reveal how the policy plays a crucial role in dismantling cultural biases that are often evident in the learning process. Thus, the policy acknowledges the multilingual realities of students by using various methods to aid and promote multilingualism in both practice and effect.

6.3.1 Justification for the study

The relevance of the study lies in the need to understand how language shapes interactions within multilingual teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus. Furthermore, it explored how English is used as the primary language of instruction, despite the student and staff population being linguistically diverse and speakers of indigenous African languages. This linguistic imbalance has created tensions around inclusivity, participation, and access to knowledge. Therefore, it became necessary to explore how language use in classrooms enables or limits interaction, understanding, and academic performance. The study is further justified by its focus on the power relations embedded in language practices. By applying Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, the research offers insight into how institutional language policies and classroom discourse either reinforce or challenge social hierarchies. So, understanding these dynamics is vital in transforming higher education spaces to be more inclusive and equitable. Additionally, this study contributes to existing scholarship on language and education in post-apartheid South Africa by highlighting the lived experiences of both academic staff members and students. It extends current debates about multilingualism and the dominance of English in academia, offering evidence-based recommendations for developing language policies that reflect linguistic diversity, promote mutual understanding, and empower all students to participate fully in academic discourse.

6.4 Summary of the chapters

Chapter one focused on providing an overview or brief insight into the study. It provides a summary of language and language usage in a higher learning environment, and it provides a map that helps navigate the thesis. Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review that encompasses a range of topics, including language, discourse, language in education, multilingualism, and other relevant areas. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the literature surrounding language, interaction, and language inclusivity, and it further explores how multilingualism and various policies promote the adoption of multilingual approaches in diverse learning environments. Chapter three outlined the approaches and

methods used to gather data, reflecting how this study employs a pluralistic approach to integrate a critical discourse perspective with a phenomenological paradigm. The study employed online open-ended questions to gather data, utilising two sampling methods. Initially, purposive sampling was used; however, it did not yield enough participants. Consequently, convenience sampling was also employed to complement the purposive sampling approach. Chapter four focused on presenting the raw data and creating various themes from it. NVivo was used as a tool to analyse the data and draw parallels that help create themes and sub-themes. Chapter five mapped participants' experiences of language using a thematic approach, which aligns with phenomenology and Fairclough's 3D model, as well as Critical Discourse Analysis. These approaches uncovered the duality embedded in language and language use. Chapter 6 concluded the study and highlighted the importance of language inclusivity in teaching and learning spaces and made recommendations on how researchers can build on this existing research.

6.5 Recommendations

This study provides four recommendations for enhancing language inclusivity in various teaching and learning environments. The recommendations are as follows: 1. Promoting Multilingual teaching practices, 2. The creation of questionnaires in different languages, 3. Further Research on Language and Power 4. Strengthening the implementation of the language policy. The recommendations call for a shift from a monolingual to a multilingual paradigm, where linguistic diversity is viewed as an asset rather than a limitation. Implementing these suggestions will not only improve teaching and learning outcomes but also contribute to the university's broader goal of creating an inclusive, equitable, and socially just academic environment.

1. Promoting Multilingual Teaching Practice

The study recommends that academic staff members should support and encourage the use and integration of multilingual teaching strategies. These strategies should include the use of translanguaging and code-switching to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences. The use of English as the sole medium of instruction was found to create challenges for students whose first language is not English, particularly those from rural backgrounds. Many participants reported that they frequently struggle to articulate complex academic ideas or engage confidently in discussions, which impacts their learning experiences and performance. Consequently, there is a pressing need to promote teaching approaches that

acknowledge and utilise the rich linguistic diversity present within the classroom.

2. The creation of the questionnaire in multiple languages

The study recognised the limitations of using English, as the findings reveal that language plays a critical role in shaping how participants understand, interpret, and respond to research instruments. Therefore, the study recommends the creation of questionnaires in the four official languages of the UFS, as recognised in the language policy, so that participants can respond to the questionnaire in the language with which they are most comfortable. This highlights the need for future research instruments, particularly questionnaires, to be developed and administered in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity, clarity, and authenticity of responses. Creating questionnaires in multiple languages serves several key purposes. Firstly, it allows participants to engage with research questions in the language they are most comfortable with, which enhances the accuracy and richness of the data collected.

3. Further Research on Language and Power

This study also recommends that future studies investigate how language policies and practices perpetuate or challenge power dynamics in higher education institutions, particularly on rural-based campuses. Furthermore, the investigation can include studies that focus on comparative studies across campuses or other universities to provide insights into how linguistic inclusivity contributes to transformation and decolonisation and how these link with power and access.

4. Strengthening the implementation of the language policy

Finally, the study acknowledges that the UFS language policy promotes multilingualism and inclusivity; however, its implementation remains inconsistent. Although the University has a language policy aimed at promoting multilingualism and inclusivity, the findings of this study reveal a gap between policy formulation and actual implementation in classroom settings. Therefore, it is recommended that the institution strengthen the practical enforcement of its language policy to ensure that its objectives are reflected in teaching, learning, and administrative practices. To achieve this, the University should develop clear guidelines and monitoring mechanisms that ensure lecturers and departments adhere to the principles of linguistic diversity outlined in the policy. Regular audits and evaluations should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the policy's implementation and to identify areas where additional support or training is needed. Moreover, capacity-building initiatives should be introduced for academic staff to help them integrate multilingual approaches in their pedagogy. Workshops, seminars, and professional development programmes can equip lecturers with the necessary skills to manage multilingual classrooms effectively and to employ strategies such as translanguaging, code-switching, and the inclusion of indigenous languages in instruction.

6.6 Recommendation for future research

This study recommends that future studies focus on exploring broader linguistic dynamics by examining multilingual practices beyond formal classroom settings. These studies should examine how language influences interactions in less formal settings, such as tutorials, computer labs, and other spaces that promote teaching and learning. Furthermore, future research should also explore the relationship between language, power, and interaction, with a particular focus on how linguistic hierarchies shape academic identities and participation, and the studies should use classroom observations and in-depth interviews to gather data that reflect deeper insight on how power is enacted through language use during lectures, consultations, and assessments.

6.7 Closing remarks.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge surrounding Critical Discourse Analysis, multilingualism, and language in education. It interrogated the role of language in shaping teaching and learning experiences within the context of higher education. Furthermore, the study examined how English both enhances and limits interactions, and how language and power intersect in academic settings. Therefore, the study's findings affirm that language is not merely a medium of communication but a powerful social and academic tool that influences access to knowledge, confidence, belonging, and the overall quality of teaching and learning interactions. Finally, the study demonstrated that meaningful learning occurs when students can draw on their full linguistic repertoires, provided that academic staff members adopt inclusive practices that acknowledge multiple languages and learning styles. Initial in students' teaching and learning processes. It affects how they engage with one another and their ability to participate in learning-oriented activities and engagements effectively. Language, be it spoken or written, has its own rules that govern how the speaker and receiver understand and make meaning of the given stimuli. These rules can sometimes pose challenges for non-native speakers. Choosing an inclusive language for learning and teaching plays a vital role in aiding engagement between staff and students. Throughout the discussion, the importance of language inclusivity was highlighted not only for engagement purposes but also for better learning experiences and encounters. Students should be given lingual options so that they can participate from a point of understanding and access, rather than marginalisation and exclusion. Using English in multicultural and multilingual classrooms might be seen as a solution for bridging the challenges that arise from multicultural classroom interactions.

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Appendix A: Open-ended questionnaires for staff members

Staff questionnaire

Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: “A Reflection of the Participant's Experience of Language”

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information that will help unpack the importance of language in classroom interaction. The study aims to understand how language affects interaction within lecture halls between students and staff members and among students. The study further seeks to get a clearer understanding of participant's experience on how language has limited or enhanced their interactions with students within a lecture hall.

If you experience any emotional distress due to the nature of the study, please contact the student counselling and development office for assistance, they have pledge to assist and ensure the emotional well-being of participants, should the need arise. Please email them below for assistance
SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Biographical Information of Participant

Level of study you teach	
Current position i.e are you a lecturer, facilitator etc	

Ice breaker Question

1. Define the word language.
2. If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to teach using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

Research-related questions

3. How important is language and its usage in a classroom? (Please provide a detailed response.)
4. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?
5. Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom?
6. Has the language you use to teach limited students' ability to interact with you or the content?
7. Narrate how the language you use to teach enhances/limits students' ability to interact with you or the content. (Please answer supply details as to how the language used enhances or limits students' interactions with you and their understanding of the content.)
8. What do you think about the University's language policy?

9. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
10. How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?
11. Is the decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions desirable and feasible?
(Please elaborate.)

Closure

12. Do you have any other final thoughts on the classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

Appendix B Open-ended Questionnaire for students

Title: Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: “A Reflection of the Participants’ Experience of Language”

This questionnaire aims to gather information that will help unpack the importance of language in classroom interaction. The study aims to understand how language affects interaction within lecture halls between students and staff members and among students. The study further seeks to get a clearer understanding of participant's experience on how language has limited or enhanced their interactions with lecturers, content and fellow students within a lecture hall.

If you experience any emotional distress due to the nature of the study, please contact the student counselling and development office for assistance. They have pledged to assist and ensure the emotional well-being of participants, should the need arise. Please email them below for assistance
SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Biographical Information of Participant

Level of study	
The degree you are studying towards	

Ice breaker

1. What does the word “language” mean to you?
2. If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to learn and engage in academic spaces using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

Research related questions

3. What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class? (Provided detailed response)
4. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
5. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever enhanced your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
6. Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom? (If yes, please explain how inclusivity is fostered. If no, please explain why you think inclusivity is not fostered.)

7. What do you think about the University's language policy?
8. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
9. What does decolonization of language in higher learning institutions mean to you?
Do you think it is desirable and/or possible?

Closure

10. Do you have any other final thoughts on the classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

Appendix C: Participant recruitment script for staff members

Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"

Dear Participant,

I hope this e-mail finds you in good spirits. My name is Mpho Tsiloane. I am a Masters student at the University of the Free State studying in the English Department. I am contacting you with an invitation to participate in a research study titled **Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"**. This research satisfies the requirements of the Master of Arts (with specialization in English) degree. The purpose of the research is to understand the role of language (particularly English) in enhancing or limiting interaction between academic staff members and students within lecture halls.

Due to your important role in the academic setting, I would like to invite you to participate in this study, as your insights are invaluable to the research. Your participation in this study will involve completing an online questionnaire using a link that will be provided. When starting the questionnaire, you must first complete the informed consent form. The questionnaire consists of three sections. Section 1 focuses on biographical questions relevant to the study and an icebreaker. The questions include for example your job title and the level of study you teach. Section 2 focuses on the impact language has within lecture halls. Section 3 is the closure, where you provide your final remarks, recommendations and thoughts on ways in which multiple language-use can improve the lecture-hall experience for both academic staff and students alike. After reading each question in each section, please provide as detailed responses as possible that will accurately represent your opinion. Note that each question is meant to express your opinion; there are no correct or incorrect answers. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 or less minutes to complete.

The study has no risks, and your participation is entirely voluntary. There is no harm involved in the research, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you wish to. You do not need to disclose any identifying information, and information will be kept confidential, and the responses will only be used for academic purposes. If you are willing to participate, please click on the link provided, which will take you to the questionnaire. The study has received an ethical clearance (Ethical clearance Number: **UFS-HSD2024/1877**

If you have any questions you can contact me, Ms Mpho Tsiloane, via email at 2011084486@ufs4life.ac.za or my supervisor, Dr KM Ngara, at ngarak@ufs.ac.za.

In case you experience emotional distress, please email

Please contact SCD, they have all the necessary resources to assist and have pledged to help all participants of this study should they encounter emotional distress. For assistance, please email

SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

Link to participate:

[UFS Qwaqwa Campus Staff Questionnaire – Fill out form](#)

Appendix D: Student participation recruitment script

Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"

Dear Participant,

I hope this e-mail finds you in good spirits. My name is Mpho Tsiloane. I am a Masters student at the University of the Free State studying in the English Department. I am contacting you with an invitation to participate in a research study titled **Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"**. This research satisfies the requirements of the Master of Arts (with specialization in English) degree. The purpose of the research is to understand the role of language (particularly English) in enhancing or limiting interaction between academic staff members and students within lecture halls.

Due to your important role in the academic setting, I would like to invite you to participate in this study, as your insights are invaluable to the research. Your participation in this study will involve completing an online questionnaire using a link provided at the end. When starting the questionnaire, you must first complete the informed consent, by reading through the document, then provide consent through the checkbox.

The questionnaire consists of three sections. Section 1 focuses on biographical questions relevant to the study and an icebreaker. This includes the year of study the participant is in and the degree they are studying towards. Section 2 focuses on the impact language has within lecture halls. Section 3 is the closure, where you provide your final remarks, recommendations and thoughts on ways in which multiple language use can improve the lecture-hall experience for both academic staff and students alike. After reading each question in each section, please provide as detailed responses as possible that will accurately represent your opinion. Note that each question is meant to express your opinion; there are no correct or incorrect answers. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes or less to complete.

There is no harm involved in the research and your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you wish to. You do not need to disclose any identifying information, and information will be kept confidential, and the responses will only be used for academic purposes. If you are willing to participate, please click on the link provided, which will take you to the questionnaire. The study has received an Ethical Clearance Number:

Ethical Clearance number:
UFS-HSD2024/1877

Participation link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/fxSsSy7fgT>

If you have any questions, you can contact me, Ms Mpho Tsiloane, via email at 2011084486@ufs4life.ac.za or my supervisor, Dr KM Ngara, at ngarak@ufs.ac.za.

In case you experience emotional distress, please note that the student counselling and development department is ready to assist to ensure your well-being. They pledged to help participants who face emotional distress due to the nature of the study. If you experience emotional distress at any point please use the email below for assistance

SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

Appendix E: Ethical approval

Appendix F: Title approval

*Inspiring
excellence,
transforming
lives through
quality,
impact, and
care.*

THESIS SUBMISSION

**Title: Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student
Classroom Interactions on the University of the**

Free State Qwaqwa Campus: A Reflection on the

*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



Participants' Experience of Language"

Full names and surname: Mpho HopeTsilane

Submission date : 28 November 2025

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the (master's) degree with specialisation in English in the Department of English in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State.

Supervisor: Dr Kudzayi Ngara

Co-supervisor: Dr Nicolous Nyika

DECLARATION

I, Mpho Hope Tsiloane, hereby certify that the dissertation that I handed in for the Master of Arts University of the Free State, titled “Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language" is entirely original and that I have not submitted the same work for credit at any other institution. Furthermore, I affirm that no other scholar’s work has been used without proper citation and that every source that has been cited or used has been stated and acknowledged with full references.

Tsiloane MH

28/11/2025

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my daughter, Oratile Lethabo Tsiloane. I want you to know that when the time is right, the lord will make it happen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr K. Ngara, for his help throughout this journey. It hasn't been an easy one, but your support and patience mean a great deal to me. Furthermore, I would like to thank and appreciate my Co-supervisor, Dr N. Nyika from UKZN, for the guidance and redirection that made a huge difference. May God bless and keep you both. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my family for their unwavering support. A big shout-out to my little sister, Boitumelo Tsilwane; thank you for everything you do for Ora and me. This degree would not be possible without your support. In addition, I would like to thank my accountability group and transportation group. Your support and encouragement helped me through the most difficult times. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering belief in me and unwavering support. I pat myself on the back for not giving up even when the odds were stacked against me.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EFAL	English First Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
LOLT	Language of learning and teaching
SR	Student Respondent
SP	Staff participant
LIEP	The Language in Education Policy
Department of Basic Education	DBE
Foundation Phase	FP
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
LP	Language Policy
MEP	Multilingualism Education Project
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
UCT	University of Cape Town
NWU	North-west University
UFS	University of the Free State
MEP	Multilingualism Education Project

ABSTRACT

The term "language in education" refers to how teachers communicate with learners and the content they teach. Language in education encompasses the use of language as a tool for teaching and learning within the educational system. This encompasses the language of instruction and the understanding of the language of teaching and learning. The language in education concept also encompasses the development of a particular language and the language policies employed by the education department to ensure language inclusivity and multilingualism. Therefore, it is pivotal not to view language within the education system as a means of communication and content delivery, but as a tool aimed at fostering meaningful interactions between the student, the lecturer, and the content. The purpose of this paper is to uncover how the use of English can limit and enhance students' and academic staff members' ability to interact within teaching and learning spaces. It further seeks to map out and reflect on participants' experiences of language and how they reflect power within teaching and learning spaces. The study collected data using online questionnaires that sampled 27 students and 25 academic staff members from the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The study's findings reveal a dual effect that presents language as both an enabler of inclusive interactions and a reinforcer of marginalisation and linguistic inequality. Furthermore, the study revealed how translanguaging can be used to foster positive interactions within teaching and learning spaces. The study is significant because it responds to and addresses the need for multilingual teaching approaches and language inclusivity in higher learning institutions, using the voices of academic staff members and students at the UFS Qwaqwa to reflect on these needs.

Key concepts: Language inclusivity, Multilingualism, Linguistic inequality, translanguaging, Critical discourse analysis, Language in education

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2. Introduction

People perceive and interpret language in diverse ways; consequently, its meaning is constantly evolving. Language is not limited to the language one speaks, but encompasses the discourses and vocabulary used. Husain (2015:01) defines language as a “collection of words strung together in sentences, but each word having a separate identity and meaning. The words are brought together in special ways to give a highly systematic order from which we get meaning. Language is not random behaviour but is systematic, where certain orderings are accepted as having prescribed meanings”. Language functions as a mechanism of social cohesion, emerging through interactions among diverse groups and fostering a shared sense of belonging and meaning. At the same time, it serves as a defining marker of personal identity and plays a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Language can also be regarded as the primary basis of all communication and the primary instrument of thought. It brings together people of diverse social, political, and religious affiliations. Language is vital for the socialisation of people and ensuring that culture, knowledge, and way of life are passed from one generation to the next (Rivera-Sanchez and du Plessis 2020:31). For a society, family, or any social institution to thrive, there needs to be shared values, and language forms part of the core values of a society. Malinowski (2009:07) suggests that “language is a necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment, without which unified social action is impossible”. Thus, language is said to be at the core of humanity; it should be inclusive, reflect the population and provide a sense of belonging and unity. According to Ogli (2020:116), “Language is society's wealth”; it is the social currency people use to bargain and negotiate meaning. It is an essential factor that organises and unites people.

1.2 Background

South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual country with diverse languages spoken by diverse groups of people. South Africa has twelve official languages spoken in various parts of the country, so when students experience higher learning institutions, they bring experiences that reflect their cultural, linguistic, and personal encounters. These encounters are expressed and shared through language. Therefore, language in South Africa reflects a wealth of history. The twelve languages are isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Setswana, Sepedi, Siswati, Sesotho, English, South African Sign Language and Afrikaans. In essence, South Africa has been a multilingual country since the enactment of the Constitutional Act 108 of 1996 of the Republic of South Africa, granting official language status to eleven of these languages and sign language in 2023 .

1.2.1 Politics of Language in Apartheid and Post-apartheid South Africa

South Africa is a diverse country, and its diversity is reflected in its language, culture, and religion. Positive and negative factors align with the country's diverse identity, influencing how people perceive and respond to differences. Looking at South Africa's apartheid history, we can conclude that language has always been used to enforce and highlight negative stereotypes. This is reflected through the subjugation people experience due to language and skin colour. The apartheid system did not celebrate South Africa's linguistic diversity but promoted cultural superiority. Maphisa, Nkuna and Sebata (2022: 06) states that "Language is a contentious issue in South Africa. These contestations manifest themselves through resistance to the use of languages that were used to dominate and disempower. Afrikaans was used as a means of violent oppression of blacks during the apartheid era, and English was used as a means of oppression of Afrikaners under British imperialism and was heavily resisted by them". Therefore, the history of language in South Africa reflects a lengthy line of conflict, power dynamics and stratification. Language was used to subjugate and oppress people. The oppression occurred at various levels, including social, political, and geographical. During the apartheid era, Afrikaans was institutionalised as a dominant language and was imposed on Black South Africa as a tool of control and the same method of using language as a tool to subjugate was used by the British people. They used English to marginalise and oppress Afrikaners. These methods of marginalisation were met with resistance, and the 1976 Soweto Uprising and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902 are prime examples of resisting linguistic imperialism.

South Africa's colonial and apartheid past plays a huge part in understanding the disparities that exist within the country. Most people look at the socio-economic impact of apartheid and overlook how language played an important part in fostering interactions and alienation. Language has historically been a breeding ground for conflict. Colonisers impose their languages on the people they subjugate. Sometimes, new languages were created through the dissolution of empires, but these new codes can lead to further conflict and increased marginalisation (Nudelman 2015:40). Roberge (in Mesthrie 2002:75) states that there are three groups responsible for the development of the Afrikaans language, which are European settlers, indigenous khoi-khoi and enslaved people of African and Asian Provenance (from 1658) This echoes the idea that new languages are created and used through the dissolution and merging of new empires.

Afrikaans is linked with apartheid because it is the language the Dutch oppressors spoke. The apartheid law thrived on making Afrikaans a superior language; this law marginalised existing languages spoken by Black South Africans. These languages were given an inferior position within the apartheid system's social, political, and educational order. Van Niekerk (1998) notes that systems of dominance primarily inscribe themselves through language, meaning that language is one of the instruments used by powerful leaders, states, and individuals to force the powerless to conform to new languages while dismantling the influence of their traditional languages. This idea is evident through various apartheid laws, where black South Africans were forced to socialise, work and learn using Afrikaans as a medium, and those who refused were harshly punished. The punishment ranged from violent attacks to detainment and social exclusion. Thus, dominance was inscribed through language and its corrective measures. Consequently, some might bestow the characteristics of Afrikaans as an oppressor to English because, in modern-day English, it is used as a tool to marginalise and subjugate people who are not native speakers. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2015) coined the term *linguicism*, which refers to discrimination based on language, encompassing unfair treatment due to a person's accent, native language, dialect, or communication style. Linguicism is practised in various spaces, such as the classroom, where one is expected to engage using the LOLT, which is typically English, and failure to adequately express oneself can lead to being shamed or ridiculed. The shame and ridicule one experiences reflect the oppressive status English holds in our workplaces and educational institutions, where monolingualism is expected. Furthermore, Skutnabb-Kangas states that educational systems that enforce monolingual (English-only) instruction or assessment can produce "linguicism" discrimination based on language, leading to poorer outcomes for students whose home languages are not English. Therefore, higher learning

institutions that utilise monolingualism in multilingual spaces discriminate and marginalise those who are not native speakers because they are forced to engage with content and assessments in a language that is foreign to them and lack the free will to choose a language that they want to learn in.

The language history of South Africa reflects Scott's (2008) notion of power dynamics and its effects. Scott (2008) posits that power is achieved through the mainstream or the second stream of power. In the mainstream of power, investigators have been concerned with the actual exercise of power by a principal over a subaltern: power consists in making someone do something. In a second stream of power, attention has been given to a principal's capacity or potential to do something. From this latter point of view, the central significance of power is found in certain actors' ability to facilitate things. Mainstream power during apartheid was achieved by eradicating the use of Black languages in political and educational spaces; and by so doing, the apartheid government wanted to make Black South African languages be viewed as useless and meaningless. The creation of the Group Areas Act of 1950 enforced the segregation of different races to specific areas within urban locales. It also restricted ownership and the occupation of land to a specific statutory group. This meant that Blacks could not own or occupy land in White areas. The Act was another means of the Apartheid government to foster White superiority and to entrench the minority White regime at the expense of the Black majority (South African History Online 2020). Furthermore, the separation of people geographically by culture and language highlighted the apartheid regime's desire to weaken the collective power of Black South African languages. According to Simpson and Mayr (2007), power needs to be regarded as legitimate by people to be accepted. Power is legitimised through language; colonisers legitimise their power by disseminating and enforcing their language over the people they subjugate. Forcing black South Africans to learn, work and engage in public social spaces outside their designated homesteads in Afrikaans was the apartheid government's way of legitimising its power. Because of their political power and control of media, they influenced language and determined societal discourses in places where black people had limited control, such as workplaces, suburban areas and schools. This subjugation placed indigenous African languages at a disadvantage. Currently, Indigenous African languages are still at a disadvantage because they are still given a lower status within the teaching and learning environment and are not used as LOLTs. Linguistic imperialism is not a concept of the past; it remains evident in our everyday lives. It remains evident through the continued dominant status English has across various sectors. English continues to serve as a gatekeeping resource, determining who gains access to opportunities in employment, education, and professional

fields. Universities adopting English and marginalising studentAss' home languages is another form of linguistic imperialism, as publishing, digital platforms, and global industries primarily operate in English, reinforcing unequal power relations by valuing English-speaking participants and institutions over others. As a result, English continues to shape social, intellectual, and economic hierarchies, making linguistic imperialism a persistent feature of contemporary globalisation.

People seldom understand the power language yields; they rarely regard it as a tool that produces power, fuels debate or even causes conflict in a single space. People often underestimate the power of language as a social tool because, beyond conveying information, language actively shapes social reality, legitimizes authority, and constructs or contests power relations in discourse. For instance, critical discourse studies show that political actors use rhetorical choices to assert authority and influence public opinion, demonstrating how linguistic strategies can frame issues, evoke emotional responses, and reinforce power structures (Rajini 2025). In truth, language can operate in all these ways. Language has a profound influence on many aspects of human culture, including religion, politics, society, and economics. Banning specific languages or mandating one over another produced tension and anxiety, charges of isolationism, and even allegations of racism and discrimination. The creation of Bantu education reflects the immense power language possesses. Bantu Education was a system used by the apartheid government to maintain control and have influence over black South Africans using language. Bantu education was based on marginalising Black South Africans through the deprivation of access to good, equal and fair education (Rodney 2012: 11). To make the learning process hard and discourage the black youth from seeking an education, learning using Afrikaans was implemented. Elias and Tshibalo (2016:04) state that the powerless do not receive education through the medium of their mother tongue but are forced to use someone else's language, while others may use their native language as a medium of instruction. In this case, language is isolated from culture rather than being treated as a function of culture (Prah 2012:30). By creating the Bantu education system, the apartheid government hoped to shape and influence young black South Africans' minds using discourses that perpetuate the idea of white supremacy and Black inferiority status. Phillips (1999:22) posits that different strategies were needed to maintain this imbalanced system. Education, or a lack of it, is another strategy employed to provide Black people with lower-quality education so they could not hope to become the political or social equals of Whites.

The other strategy used to subjugate Black people was the creation of Bantustans. Bantustans

refer to areas designated by the South African apartheid government as “homelands” for the country’s African ethnic groups (Egero 1991:06). Black people were given homelands, which meant that whatever their culture was, they had to go to the shared land. Qwaqwa was previously a Bantustan established for the occupation of the Southern Basotho ethnic group. Qwaqwa is populated by the Basotho cultural group, and Sesotho is the primary regional language. However, due to industrialisation, migration, and education through the UFS Qwaqwa campus and the Maluti TVET colleges, people from various cultural groups and geographical locations migrated to Qwaqwa for multiple reasons, with education being one of them. The Qwaqwa community experienced an influx of diverse ethnicities, resulting in multilingual and multicultural interactions that altered the town's economic and educational landscape. According to statistics received from the UFS Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, there are 3,781 Isizulu students on campus, representing the highest student population, with 2,228 Sesotho and 277 IsiXhosa-speaking students (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2024). However, the student population is not limited to these ethnic groups. The mentioned groups are among the top three language groups on campus. Therefore, by accommodating these different ethnic groups within the communities, a more varied and inclusive approach is necessary, as students interact with diverse cultural groups that speak different languages and have different socialisation patterns.

1.2.2 Language in higher education

Language in higher learning spaces fosters conducive interactions and access to knowledge. Through language, students gain access to academic knowledge, research findings, textbooks, and other educational resources (Elias and Tshibalo 2016:03). However, most of the learners in Southern Africa do not receive education through the medium of their home language but only through their second language or third language which is English (Uys 2007:69). Student’s success in learning is measured by their ability to understand English and engage with content using English as a medium of instruction. A language of instruction is regarded as a tool that facilitates the learning of the content subjects (Kyeyune 2016:23). So, not having adequate comprehension of the language of instruction is problematic because lack of access means being excluded from the learning process. Students who are successful in education are those who have mastered the English language or those who manage to get by with limited comprehension of the language of teaching and learning, whereas failure is often attributed to a poor command of English, which hinders their understanding of the subject matter.

Higher education teaching and learning spaces are designed to foster creative thinking, openness, and facilitate learning among students and lecturers. The higher education environment and its learning processes in South Africa differ from those within the Basic Education System within the country. The higher education learning environment enables and promotes engagement and critical thinking. Trowler (2010) observed student engagement in three types of classrooms and found that engagement was the lowest in the lecture theatre. There are assorted reasons that affect interactions within lecture halls, such as shyness, lack of preparation, and language barriers. Therefore, to improve engagement, the above reasons should be examined to enhance students' ability to interact with others and create more effective learning environments.

1.2.3 Multilingual education

Multilingual education refers to a teaching and learning approach that stresses the importance of multiple languages acquisition alongside other academic subjects (Tan and Xun 2023:13). Multilingual education has its benefits and its challenges in teaching and learning spaces, which are faced worldwide. Numerous studies have examined and explored the positive and negative factors that both hinder and promote effective learning within multilingual classrooms. Furthermore, multiple studies discuss the experiences of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. This section examines the benefits and challenges encountered in multilingual classrooms across various countries. In a study conducted in Asia by Dosi and Papadopoulou (2020), which examined the impact of multilingual education on working memory in Chinese-speaking children. The findings revealed that multilingual education had a positive influence on the working memory performance of children learning in a multilingual setting. The study reveals that regular language switching, and exposure contribute to the development of cognitive abilities. Additionally,, a research study conducted in Europe by Poulin-Dubois et al. (2020) highlighted the influence of multilingual education on metalinguistic awareness. The study reveals that Multilingual children in European countries demonstrated higher levels of metalinguistic awareness, including an understanding of language structure and grammar, compared to monolingual children. Furthermore, a study conducted by Serafini, Rozell, and Winsler (2022) in the United States examined the cognitive flexibility of multilingual individuals. The research found that multilingualism has a positive impact on cognitive flexibility, enabling individuals to adapt their thinking strategies and switch between different

mental frameworks more effectively. The multicultural and multilingual environment of America promotes cognitive flexibility through exposure to diverse languages and cultures.

1.3 Purpose of the study and research objectives

The purpose of this study is to map out participants' experience of language by looking at how language limits or enhances students' and academic staff members' ability to interact within various teaching and learning spaces.

1.3.1 Research Problem

The UFS Qwaqwa campus staff and students interact in a linguistically diverse teaching and learning environment. English remains the primary medium of instruction supported within these spaces. This creates communication challenges for many students whose primary languages are indigenous African languages. As a result, classroom interactions may not fully support understanding, participation, or inclusion. Although the university promotes multilingualism, little is known about how staff and students experience language use during the teaching and learning process. The study, therefore, seeks to address the limited understanding of how linguistic dynamics shape classroom interactions and influence access to knowledge on the Qwaqwa Campus. Existing studies on multilingualism in higher education in South Africa tend to focus broadly on language policy, transformation, and national-level debates, with insufficient attention to the lived experiences of staff and students on specific rural campuses, such as Qwaqwa. Furthermore, little is presented about how linguistic dynamics within this campus context shape participation, identity negotiation, inclusion, and access to knowledge.

1.3.2 Research questions

- How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
 - What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

1.3.3 Research objectives

- To explore the relationship between language, power, and interaction within lecture halls between students and academic staff members and among students
- To analyse how English as a language of instruction enables or limits interaction between students and academic staff members within lecture halls.
- To identify the linguistic dynamics that exist within the UFS Qwaqwa campus.

1.4 Research design and methodology

Frost, Nolas, Brooks-Gordon, and Esin (2010:2-3) state that using a pluralistic approach is vital for exploring how different researchers make sense of the data received, as it provides multiple ways of understanding qualitative research. Furthermore, it provides multiple ways of generating meaning. Pluralism offers layers of interpretation and diverse perspectives, as well as participants' accounts of their experiences. The incorporation of multiple methods encourages creativity and innovation, thereby extending the scope and depth of the data. The study employs a combined phenomenological and critical discourse approach to gain a deeper understanding of how language influences interactions within teaching and learning spaces. Phenomenology is employed to explore participants' everyday lived experiences, allowing insight into their perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of language use. Viewed by some scholars as a methodological orientation, phenomenology effectively aligns with the core concerns of interpretive research. As a philosophical approach, phenomenology resists the notion that legitimate knowledge can only be generated through detachment from everyday human experience. Instead, it privileges subjective accounts of ordinary, lived realities, capturing how individuals make sense of their social worlds from their own perspectives (Crotty, 1998, cited in Jackson, Ronald, Drummond, Camora, & Sakile, 2007). In this study, a phenomenological approach is particularly appropriate, as it enables a nuanced exploration of students' and academic staff members' views on how language influences interaction and participation within teaching and learning spaces. Critical discourse analysis provides a lens for examining the underlying power relations embedded in these interactions.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a theory, methodology, and type of analysis used across various fields, including linguistics, sociology, and philosophy. CDA focuses on how language is used; discourses are found within language, and knowledge is created through these discourses (Fairclough 1995:25). CDA can be implemented with qualitative data collection methods, such as photo-elicitation interviews, archival data, and observations, to uncover power relations and social inequalities in those texts. CDA (Fairclough 1995:25) offers a methodology to penetrate beyond surface-level themes, understanding how language functions at the micro level and thereby bolsters understanding at the macro level. This micro–macro connection illustrates how discourses gain legitimacy at multiple levels, become dominant and embedded with power, and are perpetuated. The following studies illustrate how CDA provides alternative perspectives and insightful contradictions in sport contexts. In emphasising the power relations, this work demonstrates that critique must be present in interpreting and challenging the data.

A qualitative approach provides personal insight and in-depth responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:10). It highlights and strengthens subjective opinions. This aligns with the objective of this study, which is to provide subjective views and experiences of participants and find ways to enhance those experiences. A qualitative approach is beneficial because it allows for the description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences, and interprets meaning through their actions. The advantages of this kind of study are inclusivity and reliability. A qualitative study is inclusive because it asks open-ended questions that prompt detailed responses from participants, reflecting their experiences. Participants in a qualitative study can fully express their opinions and views on the matter, providing the researcher with a more precise understanding and insight into the phenomenon.

1.4.1 Sampling

Koerber and McMichael (2008:476) posit that sampling is distinguished between “probability” and “non-probability” techniques. Vehovar, Toepoel, and Steinmetz (2016:327) refer to non-probability sampling as the absence of a probability sampling mechanism, meaning it deviates from the principles of probability sampling, such as randomly selecting participants. The authors identified three non-probability techniques: purposeful, convenience, and snowball. This study uses a purposive sampling, which focuses on selecting participants who meet specific criteria and serve a given purpose to the study; however, not enough participants were received through the purposive approach, so a convenience approach was added. The fusing of

these two sampling methods was beneficial because it allowed your multiple portals of engaging with and analysing the data received.

1.4.2 Research site and population

A research population is the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records, or other sampling units concerning the research problem (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport 2005). The population shares common characteristics that are of interest to a researcher. The common characteristics of the groups distinguish them from other individuals, institutions, objects, and so forth. The research population for this study consist of students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The academic staff members will comprise lecturers, facilitators, and academic facilitators, while undergraduate and postgraduate students will represent the student body. The staff member sample is based on individuals who directly interact with students within the teaching and learning space. This population will be able to provide a comprehensive account of their insights and experiences on how language limits or fosters interaction between students and staff members in lecture halls. The study includes all academic staff members regardless of race and gender. The reason is that academic staff members can account for and retell their experience of how language has limited or enhanced their ability to interact with students within the classroom. The study also includes all students, regardless of level of study and faculty, as the reason is that it seeks to track the lingual experiences of students throughout the campus to see how they experience language within the classroom. Stuart Hall (in Gqola2001) suggests that identity is never complete but is defined, inscribed, and accessible through language. Therefore, the role of language is not limited to unifying, marginalising and subjugating. Language also plays a role in creating shared identities and ways of life. As a result, the absence of diversity and the marginalisation of one language over the other hinders people's ability to define and inscribe their identities publicly.

1.4.3 Sample size

The size in qualitative research refers to the number of people ~~and the number of people~~ you wish to respond to your instrument. This study consisted of forty-eight participants, divided into the following categories: twenty-three academic staff members, including facilitators, lecturers, academic facilitators and Jnr lecturers. Twenty-five undergraduate students, which encompasses both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This site and the diversity it provide qualitative differences that highlight participants' experiences within the teaching

and learning space.

1.4.4 Methods and Procedures

This study will employ a qualitative approach, and uses a pluralistic approach that fuses two or more methods for in-depth analysis and engagement with the data. There are pros and cons attached to every method of collecting data. The benefit of using the chosen methods and procedures is that they enable the researcher to explore social and organisational characteristics, as well as individual behaviour and its meaning; therefore, fusing phenomenology and Critical Discourse Analysis is vital because it enables an intricate analysis of experience and discourse. A pluralistic approach enhances the study's ability to locate and uncover intricate interactions in lecturing spaces and offers participants a chance to narrate their experiences. This study will use open-ended questionnaires. There will be two separate questionnaires, one will be created for academic staff members and the other for students. The questionnaires will have similar themes and questions, however with minor differences ~~here and there~~ as the experience of a student is different from the one of an academic staff member. The study will use an online questionnaire as a data collection method, to gain in-depth responses on participants' lingual experiences within classrooms. Using an online open-ended questionnaire will be beneficial because it offers participants the flexibility to respond at their own convenience without any added pressure. These questionnaires will be administered online, and participants can engage at their own comfort. They will be given a week to respond and send back their feedback. If feedback is not received after a week, a follow-up email will be sent to check if the participant is still willing to participate in the study. Overall, the aim of this research to uncover the role of language in fostering interaction between students and academic staff members within lecture classes at the UFS QwaQwa campus.

1.4.4.1 Open-ended Questionnaires

Open ended questionnaires, as an instrument for collecting data, involves asking a given subject to respond to a set of written questions. Open-ended questionnaires have many uses, most notably to gather insights into what the public thinks. These include market research, customer service feedback, evaluations, and social science research (O'Leary2014). O'Leary (2014) suggests that this research method has some obvious strengths: it allows the researcher to generate data specific to their research and offers insights that might otherwise be unavailable.

1.5 Data analysis

Once data is collected from participants' written responses, the responses will be analysed using

NVivo, and a thematic analysis will be conducted. To examine similar ideas, common threads, and responses to draw connections, this approach will address the phenomenological side of the research. Mouton (1996) posits that analysing data consists of two steps: first, reducing the data into manageable proportions, and second, identifying patterns and themes in the data. The data collected will be qualitatively analysed using Fairclough's three-tiered model (Fairclough 1989). The three-tiered model will examine participants' responses as social structures, discourse events and social events, meaning the lecture class is viewed as a social practice that can be analysed using this three-tiered model. The aim of the data analysis process is to understand how linguistic encounters and interactions manifest within a learning space such as a lecture class. Data extracted or collected during the analysis of the questionnaire will outline the linguistic dynamics around the campus and the possible limitations of such encounters.

2.6 Motivation for research

The motivation for this study stems from recognising and acknowledging that language is not merely a medium for communication but a powerful tool that fosters access, participation, and success within various higher learning institutions. So, at the University of the Free State Qwaqwa campus, English remains the dominant language of instruction, yet students and staff members come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, which creates challenges. Participants face challenges associated with language barriers and access. To some, English bridges the gap created by multilingual encounters, while for others, it fosters negative self-consciousness that affects confidence and engagement due to a lack of proficiency. Despite the UFS's efforts to promote multilingualism, there are very limited studies on how language limits or enhances interactions within teaching and learning spaces, so understanding the dynamics language produces in teaching and learning spaces is vital because it gives a voice to the lived experiences of students and academic staff members.

1.7 Chapter outline

Chapter one introduces the study. It provides a background and situates the study within broader discussions of language within higher learning institutions. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the research problem, research questions, and aim, and provides motivation for the study, which discusses the significance of exploring linguistic dynamics in staff–student interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa Campus.

Chapter two presents a review of the literature on the role of language and discourse. It looks

at multilingualism and multilingual classroom interactions. The chapter further explores linguistic diversity in higher education, language policies, and sociolinguistic perspectives relevant to classroom interactions and the various discourses surrounding these topics.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology used. It discusses and justifies the use of a pluralist approach and further discusses why combining phenomenology and critical discourse analysis is vital for the study. Additionally, the chapter addresses the qualitative design used, sampling, data collection instruments, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The chapter also describes Fairclough's 3D model of analysis, which serves as the theoretical framework employed. This theory is used to analyse language use and power relations in the classroom.

Chapter four presents the data received from the administered online questionnaires. It presents the received data and identifies themes to provide an understanding of the data.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the data received and discusses the findings emerging from the participants' experiences of language in classroom interaction, using Fairclough's 3D model to better understand and analyse the data. The chapter gives life to the themes identified and provides its placements within the broader social practice.

Chapter six concludes the study by summarising the key findings, presenting the implications for practice and policy, outlining the study's limitations, and offering recommendations for future research.

1.9 Ethical considerations

This research acknowledges the ethical concerns associated with research; therefore, it is committed to ensuring that fairness and full disclosure are consistently provided to participants. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), ethical considerations are pivotal when undertaking research; the following six points represent the crucial principles of ethical research. This paper acknowledges the ethical concerns aligned with using human participants and seeks to ensure that all participants and issues surrounding their well-being are considered. Participation in this study is voluntary. Adverts will be sent via different universities' mass media communication sites to attract and evoke interest from interested people who feel they can add value to the study. The advertisements will clarify that participants can withdraw from the study at any point with no questions asked. This will also be made clear even before the actual data collection process. Informed consent: participants will be asked to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to partake in the study. All necessary information regarding the study will be disclosed to participants prior to their participation. A study that uses human

participants has potential risks, Such as emotional, personal and social distress. These risks will be mitigated by providing participants with information about the necessary support structures available on campus and assuring them that their opinions will not be misquoted or used in any way to harm them. Furthermore, the study does not provide any incentive for participation; therefore, participants will be informed of this upfront to avoid creating false expectations. Anonymity: All participants will remain anonymous, and their identities will be kept private. When writing and reflecting on their responses, I will use pseudonyms such as 'Respondent 1' or 'Participant 2'. Confidentiality: The information shared by participants will be kept confidential and accessed only by my supervisor and me. No added individuals will have access to questionnaires. Participants' confidentiality will be treated with the utmost care. The results of the overall paper will be shared with participants, allowing them to see how their viewpoints were portrayed. Potential social, physical, or emotional harm will be prevented, and participants will be encouraged to speak up if they experience such harm. The paper acknowledges the need to obtain approval from the scientific and ethics committees, as well as approval from the University's management, to use students and staff members as participants. The necessary steps will be taken to ensure that ethical clearance is obtained.

2.1 Introduction

The focal point of this chapter is the unpacking of the influence language has on interactions. The chapter reflects on people's experiences of language within various teaching and learning spaces, examining the role that language and discourse play in multilingual classroom interactions. The study aims to understand the linguistic dynamics that exist between academic staff members and students during interactions in lecture halls, facilitation sessions, tutorials, and others. Additionally, the study aims to unpack the lingual dynamics, focusing on the following: an overview of language, discussing the distinct functions of language, discourse, the role of discourse in interaction, and language in education. The study further provides a historical account of language, defining and exploring the views of various authors, such as Noam Chomsky (1928) and Edward Sapir (1920), on language and how they conceptualise its use. In addition, the chapter explores assorted topics related to language to map out the role of language within multilingual classrooms. Furthermore, the topics are mapped out as follows: the importance of multilingualism and multicultural interactions, as well as the advantages of using English in a multilingual classroom. The chapter also examines the South African government's efforts to promote multilingualism, analysing the language policies of four different universities and assessing the practicality of these policies in promoting language inclusivity and multilingualism.

The role of language and discourse

2.1 The functions of language

Multiple theorists and linguists have defined language over an extended period. The meaning associated with language is not stagnant. It evolves and assumes various shapes and forms as it fits the society. Here is a representation of the various theorists' views of language. Edward Sapir (1920), who authored the book *Language in 1920*, described language as “serviceable”, meaning that language is not a passive tool. It can be used to fulfil various functions. Language can be used to meet the speakers’ various needs, and it is adaptable. Furthermore, he states that language is a “purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. These symbols are, in the first instance, auditory and they are produced by the so-called organs of speech” (Sapir

1920:07). Therefore, one can say that language is a powerful tool that shapes knowledge, culture, and political realities. Additionally, language plays a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of interactions and social relationships. Norman Fairclough (1989) regards language and its usage as a social phenomenon, and he states that one of the main goals of this phenomenon (language and its usage) is to foster collectivism and shared national identities. Fairclough (1989) posits that language is not merely a tool of communication but is deeply embedded in social practices; language both shapes and is shaped by society. Language is a social phenomenon because it can be used in various social contexts such as religion, politics, and education. In addition, Noam Chomsky (1957) defines language as a cognitive system that enables humans to produce and comprehend language. He argues that we are born with the innate ability to acquire language.

Language is a powerful medium for understanding the world and accumulating centuries-old human expertise. It is a repository of cultural values, a means of preserving people's socio-historical heritage. Furthermore, language plays a crucial role in understanding people's inner world. Language has multiple functions, and various language investigators discuss these functions (Barvina 2018:26). The first investigator I will examine is Geoffrey Leech (1974), who describes the five functions of language. He states language is informational, expressive, directive, phatic and aesthetic. It is informative because it provides added information and encourages discussions. In addition, language can serve an expressive function, conveying the feelings and attitudes of its originator. Furthermore, language has a directive function on the behaviour and attitudes of others. The most specific instances of the directive function are commands and requests. The fourth function of language is phatic. It has a sociological effect of creating, prolonging, and ending the conversation to establish rapport. Finally, language has an aesthetic function: "the use of language for the sake of the linguistic artefact and has no purpose. This aesthetic function can have at least as much to do with conceptual as with affective meaning" (Leech 1974:27). Furthermore, Brown and Yule (1988) identify two functions of language. The authors state that language plays a transactional and interactional function within interactions. The transactional function is primarily interested in the dissemination of factual or propositional information. Communication is primarily focused on the speaker informing the hearer of something or eliciting some action from them. Furthermore, Brown and Yule (1988) posit that "language enables man to utilise the knowledge of his/her forebears and the knowledge of other men in other cultures". The second function of language is the interactional view, which focuses on the use of language to establish and maintain social

relationships. Furthermore, this function focuses on how language is used to negotiate roles in relationships, foster peer solidarity, exchange turns in conversations and maintain face for both the speaker and the hearer. Halliday (1975) later coined seven functions of language; the instrumental function focuses on expressing wants, needs, and preferences. While the personal function looks at how language is used to express individuality, the interactional function focuses on the maintenance and development of social relationships, the regulatory function is used to control the hearer's actions, the representational function is used to explain and give clarity, and the heuristic function is used to uncover, find, or hypothesise information. The imaginative function is grounded in the idea that language is employed to entertain, explore, and create. Language plays various roles, but at its core is the ability to maintain linguistic relations and disseminate information. Therefore, one can deduce that language plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information, as stated by the authors. The authors employ various functions to illustrate the significance of language. However, there is a common thread that ties these functions together which is evident in which is the idea that language serves multiple purposes in communication. Finally, Halliday(2004) states that language is instrumental and interactional. The common thread is the notion that language is a tool used to give and receive information. It is used to relay and express thoughts, ideas and feelings. In conclusion, the functions of language play a vital role in helping us understand the position language plays in enhancing or limiting interactions between students and staff members, understanding of the functions of language deepens insight into its significant role in education and highlights the need for language practice that meaningfully represent students' identities and experiences. Language should enable students to access knowledge, participate fully in learning, and construct meaning without positioning them at a disadvantage. Consequently, the adoption of linguistic resources that fulfil these functions in inclusive ways is essential to ensuring equitable learning opportunities and fostering a sense of belonging within educational spaces.

In society, the traditional function of language is to facilitate verbal communication, but language serves a broader purpose than merely facilitating communication. Berlo (1960:20) notes that language can be understood from various perspectives. It can be understood from the perspective of the listener, speaker, topic, code and message. Understanding the variation of language from a listener's perspective means that language has a directive function; it not only prompts the listener to do something but also elicits a response. From the speaker's perspective, language serves as a means of disseminating information and expressing the speaker's attitudes and reflections. From the topic side, language functions as a reference. From a code

perspective, language functions as a metalinguistic tool and language are used to define and discuss language itself. Finally, language carries the message, passing information from one speaker to another.

There is a strong relationship between language and society. Malinowski (2009:07) suggests that "language is a necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment, without which unified social action is impossible". Language can thus be said to be at the core of humanity, meaning that language plays a fundamental role in human activity; it is crucial for sharing ideas, building relationships, and forming identities. It is used to foster communication and cultural preservation by passing information from one generation to the next. Language is central to social interaction in every society, regardless of location and time. Language and social interaction have a reciprocal relationship, meaning one influences the other. So, language cannot be separated from society. The idea that language cannot be separated from society is rooted in the theory of Sociolinguistics, which examines the connection between language and society (Remained 2000:18). It explores how people use language in various social contexts, situations, and encounters. The basic principle of Sociolinguistics is the acknowledgement of a constantly changing environment, which results in language not being uniform or constant. For example, how people engage with one another differs depending on the relationship, social status and social proximity between those engaging in the interaction. For example, A mother speaks differently to her kids based on their age and level of maturity; the same woman uses different registers and tones to engage with her lover, friends, and superiors. Therefore, language is varied and inconsistent. This inconsistency in tone, word choice, and register does not hinder socialisation among participants in a discursive encounter. It encourages and teaches linguistic diversity. This socio-situational variation is sometimes referred to as register and depends not only on the occasion and the relationship between the participants but also on the participants' region, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and gender (Crossman 2019). Therefore, understanding how language varies across social contexts provides a foundation for examining discourse, highlighting how language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for social action.

2.1.1 Discourse

Blommaert (2005:2) defines discourse as language in action and investigating it requires attention to both language and action. He further posits that discourse can become a site for

meaningful social differences, conflict, and struggle. Fairclough (1995:85) defines discourse as the practice itself, namely, social practice, which belongs to the dynamic multivariate process of interaction, including text production and consumption. Discourse is defined as “a serious speech or piece of writing on a particular subject” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001:388). In this general sense, it incorporates both the spoken and written modes, although, at times, it is confined to speech being designated as “serious conversation between people” (ibid). This restriction is also implied in the word when it is used as a verb. On the other hand, Reisigl and Wolak (2001:304) define discourse as a structured form of knowledge about social practices that may align with different ideological positions. Based on the various views presented in discourse, one can infer that discourse cannot be separated from social experience and real-life encounters. Discourse is tied to the social, cultural and political contexts in which it is used. Hence, Blommaert (2005) states that discourse is language in action, meaning it has a recurring and adaptive feature. Fairclough, on the other hand, argues that it is a social practice, while Reisigl posits that it is knowledge that shapes this social practice. The differences between the above views lie in the fact that Fairclough views discourse as an interaction of power and ideology. He views language as a reflection of society’s power structures and ideologies. On the other hand, Blommaert views discourse as an evolving tool that is shaped by who, when, and where it is used. Finally, Reisigl views discourse as a tool that influences action and perception. Therefore, discourse becomes a mirror, an active indicator of the ability to use language socially, culturally and politically to persuade, exclude, resist and form identities. The above-mentioned definitions of discourse share a similar approach, which is to link discourse with society. However, there are partial differences between the authors. Fairclough primarily focuses on discourse within a specific social or institutional context, examining how discourse can reflect existing power structures and how language reinforces these power structures within an institution or society. On the other hand, Blommaert examines discourse not only at a social or institutional level but also at a global stage; he discusses how discourse operates in global spaces and how it portrays global inequalities. While Reisigl and Wodak (2009) view discourse as knowledge that shapes and reflects social practices. Therefore, the use of discourse by participants in a discursive event is a recurring process of knowledge production that is linked to the culture, society, and politics of the institution. The use of discourse and discourse itself is relevant to this study because discourse plays a crucial role in representing students’ lingual experiences within social and academic contexts. Therefore, if students do not have access to or understand the discourse and language used in classrooms, they are deprived of the ability to engage effectively, they

are excluded and alienated from the social practice of learning, and in turn, they become withdrawn from the action. If they have access to the discourse through language and vocabulary, they get to create an environment that encourages active engagement.

We can draw inferences that discourse reflects social engagements and relations. We use discourse to give meaning to our interactions. A mountain is beautiful because someone identifies and regards it as such. For example Blommaert (2007: 118-119) posits that.

One speaks differently about cars or music than about the economy or about sex. In one instance, one can speak as an expert using a particular register, indexing membership of expert groups, in other instances, one can speak as a novice; one can shift from a very masculine voice on a particular topic (e.g. sex or cars) to a gender-neutral voice (e.g. when discussing the war in Iraq), each time also shifting registers, often even accents, pace, tone and rhythm using a declarative tone on one topic, a hesitant one on another.

An event becomes a problem as soon as it is recognised as such, meaning that language gives meaning to interaction. If one regards something as beautiful, they create a linguistic discourse that describes and expresses their feelings and views, and those who align with the view have the language to engage and interact. Blommaert (2007:35) problematises the long tradition of treating discourse in linguistic terms as a complex linguistic form more prominent than a single sentence. He challenges the conventional view that discourse can be fully understood by analysing linguistic elements like syntax, semantics, and cohesive devices. He suggests that a more nuanced consideration should be given to the social, political, and cognitive context in which language is used. The discourse used in an interaction indicates the relationship subjects have with one another. Therefore, the critical aspect of analysing interaction is to examine the language, diction, and tone used, but we do not look at these in isolation. We examine the context in which the language is used by focusing on the where, when, and why the interaction is happening. Secondly, we examine the power relations that shape and influence the interaction, considering who holds authority within it and how the language used reinforces or challenges existing power structures. Finally, understanding discourses and its relevance is important for this study because we look at the underlying ideologies that influence people's choice of words. This is done by looking at how discourse depicts the broader social beliefs, biases and norms. So, analysing discourse is crucial to answering the question of the role of language in fostering interactions between students and academic staff members in lecture

classes on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus

2.1.2 The role of discourse in interactions

Social theories of discourse describe how language and speech are embedded in interactions between people. Participants in the talk jointly construct and enforce social norms that tacitly define the expectations of the interaction (Wegner and Gonzalez-Howard 2018). Sociolinguists also commonly study dialect, which is the regional, social, or ethnic variation of a language. For example, English is the primary language in the United States. However, people who live in the South often vary in how they speak and the words they use compared to people who live in the North, even though they all speak the same language (Bhuri 2021: 52).

Therefore, language cannot be divorced from society; society has an influence on the language one speaks and the dialect that is generated. In South Africa, we have different languages and people; these two factors, integrated due to migration and industrialisation, have thus led to the creation of dialects. These dialects become a mirror of the diverse societies; we have different dialects based on the location where one finds themselves. The Sesotho spoken in the Free State differs from that spoken in Johannesburg. KwaZulu-Natal is an isiZulu-speaking province, but there are varying dialects of the language spoken in rural areas and cities. Therefore, one can conclude that the role of discourse in interaction is important because it is not only shaped by the language one speaks, but also by the different dialects that might produce differences in meaning. Understanding language is crucial for fostering engagement among diverse individuals. In conclusion, this paragraph argues that language functions as a social product, shaped by societal dynamics such as migration and geography, and that dialectal variations influence discourse, interaction, and mutual understanding in multilingual contexts.

2.2 Identify the linguistic dynamics that exist within the UFS Qwaqwa campus

The government has made multiple efforts post-1994 to enhance and create an inclusive education system. However, the rural education sector in South Africa continues to experience inequality that still exemplifies the legacy of apartheid. The Bantu Education Act (Act No. 47 of 1953) was implemented to create separate learning experiences between Black and White students. Phillips (1999:22) posits that many different strategies were needed to keep this imbalanced system of apartheid in place. Education, or a lack of it, was a strategy employed to provide Black people with lower-quality education than Whites, so they could not hope to become the political or social equals of Whites. The same experience Black students

encountered during apartheid is the experience Black learners are experiencing in democratic South Africa within rural areas. Learners within rural areas lack basic services such as water, study material and sanitation within schools. Their experience and lack of basic services affect access to quality education as they have to walk long distances to schools, attend schools with poor infrastructure and have limited learning materials.

The South African government has managed to use geographical areas as an exclusionary factor in education. The idea of using location as an isolation technique started during apartheid, Black people were given homelands, which were meant for diverse cultural groups. Qwaqwa For example was previously a Bantustan created to be occupied by the Southern Basotho ethnic group. Qwaqwa is populated by the Basotho cultural group. However, due to industrialisation, migration, and the establishment of the UFS Qwaqwa campus, previously known as the University of North, people from various cultural groups and geographical locations migrated to Qwaqwa for multiple reasons, especially education. The Qwaqwa community experienced an influx of diverse ethnicities, this diversity was influenced by students enrolled on the UFS Qwaqwa campus. Students from various ethnic groups enrolled in the program, and some chose to live off campus in private accommodations. In their pursuit of private accommodation, they were integrated into different communities. According to statistics received from the UFS Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (2024), there are 3,781 isiZulu-speaking students on campus, which is the largest student population, followed by 2,228 Sesotho and 277 isiXhosa-speaking students (Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, 2024). However, the student population is not limited to these ethnic groups. The mentioned groups are the top three highest language groups on campus. These numbers are like the number of African learners in public schools, where a majority are speakers of indigenous African languages, and the basic education system is exclusionary to them in more than one way. They are geographically excluded based on urban and rural locations; a learner in an urban area does not receive the same type of education as those in rural areas. Rural area learners are often excluded due to the limited availability of learning resources and inadequate learning resources. They are excluded in terms of infrastructure and educational quality. These experiences are like those of students in rural campus universities, where students from rural areas are geographically, culturally, and financially excluded from the learning environment experienced by those in urban areas. Therefore, cultural and geographical factors do have exclusionary elements that affect how one engages with learning.

2.2 Multilingualism and Multicultural Interactions

Multilingualism is understood in various ways. One definition conceptualises it as the teaching of a range of languages to provide learners with opportunities to develop a repertoire of relevant languages for communication. This approach is often framed within a language-for-specific-purposes orientation and typically does not consider learners' existing language profiles (Bickerton2004). A second understanding views multilingualism as the expansion of institutional language programmes to include the teaching of multiple languages to both staff and students, thereby enhancing an institution's capacity in languages that are valuable within a contemporary university context. This approach necessitates the deliberate development of a language policy and is implemented with varying degrees of commitment across institutions. A third, and less commonly adopted, perspective understands multilingualism as an institutional response to the multilingual and multicultural composition of staff and student populations. This approach acknowledges the challenges such diversity poses to long-established pedagogical practices and requires both learners and educators to reflect critically on their linguistic repertoires and develop effective strategies for drawing on them. It is this latter conceptualisation that aligns with the focus of the present study and highlights the pressing need for the inclusion of African indigenous languages within higher education learning spaces (Kelly 2015:72).

Like the rest of the world, South Africa experiences multilingualism in its classrooms, where learners from different ethnic groups who speak different languages are expected to learn and engage with the content provided in the same classroom. This poses a significant challenge to the education system. It is a challenge because the education system prioritises the use of the mother tongue within the foundation phase; this changes when learners reach the intermediate and secondary phases of learning. When the system changes to bilingualism, learners get to choose two languages, one as a home language and the other as a first additional language. A learner gets to pick their home language based on various reasons; one being based on the language they speak at home or feel comfortable learning in (Altun 2023). However, the challenge lies in the fact that English is required to be the learner's language of instruction post the foundation phase, which results in a shift from learning in their home language to learning and getting assessed in English. This makes language inclusivity a challenge because learning is expected to happen in English, except in language classrooms. Proficiency in English is difficult because learners who used their home language during their foundation phase learning are not properly exposed to using English, and when they start university, learning in English

and having a multilingual classroom becomes a challenge. The call for language inclusivity requires teachers and lecturers to be able to facilitate multilingual teaching and learning processes based on students' individual language proficiency.

Learners come from different parts of South Africa and other countries with different languages, behaviours and cultures. This meshing of languages in a multicultural classroom presents a challenge as to how best to incorporate the knowledge of various languages into the teaching and learning environment. Researchers argue that the only way to enhance learning in multilingual classrooms is to value and make use of the linguistic resources that learners bring to school (Micaella, 2015a; McKinney2017). Multilingual interaction involves inter-comprehension between the speaker and the listener (Garcia 2018). At the core of multilingual interactions are attitudes of openness, flexibility, and respect. Multilingualism is the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency. However, it has been realised in both the written and verbal communicative practices that proficiency in one language usually tends to dominate in a multilingual setup compared to the others. Multilingualism can also be regarded as the co-existence of several languages within a society (Okal 2014:03). These several languages can be official or unofficial, native or foreign, and national or international. Multilingualism allows a shuttle among semiotic features on different scales using various negotiation strategies (Okal 2014:05). Being open, willing to learn, and engaging creates room for successful interactions .

Multilingualism presents several challenges to inclusion, nationalism, and education. These challenges manifest at both the meso and macro levels and serve as portals of tension and conflict. Multilingualism poses a challenge at the meso level, affecting communities and institutions. For example, schools and universities are part of the meso level, and the mentioned institutions can be exclusionary by privileging the preferred LOLT, which in turn excludes speakers of the minority languages. If the LOLT of a school is Sesotho, learners who are not Sesotho speaking can either bear the brunt and learn in Sesotho, or they must look for alternative schools that have their preferred LOLT. Some might travel long distances to get to a school that can accommodate them. Monolingualism in teaching and learning spaces is perceived as a challenge to multilingualism because it highlights its exclusionary characteristics. Monolingualism in teaching and learning spaces often constructs multilingualism as a problem rather than a resource, thereby highlighting the exclusionary nature of such environments. By privileging a single dominant language as the primary medium

of instruction and interaction, monolingual practices tend to marginalise students who possess diverse linguistic repertoires.= These framing positions multilingualism as an obstacle to communication and academic success, rather than as a pedagogical asset that can enhance understanding and participation. Consequently, monolingual approaches may limit meaningful classroom interaction, restrict knowledge construction, and reinforce existing power hierarchies, as linguistic diversity is rendered invisible or treated as a deficit. Recognising multilingualism as a legitimate and valuable component of teaching and learning challenges these exclusionary practices and opens possibilities for more inclusive and equitable educational spaces.

At a macro level, government policy may be exclusionary because it advocates for multilingualism but is not fully equipped to implement it. Some schools in South Africa are Monolingual, meaning that learners engage in content-based learning using a single language, which might be problematic. Language proficiency is another challenge ESL learners experience in a multilingual learning environment . Area and Matocha (2002:454) defined language proficiency as the use of fluent speech in such a way that it effectively conveys intended meanings or messages. It encompasses the notions of grammatical correctness and communicative competence while considering learners' different levels of language development. Students sometimes lack proficiency in the primary language used for teaching and learning, which creates tensions surrounding inclusivity and othering. In a study they conducted, Mphasha, Nkuna and Sebata (2022:262) looked at the impact of English as a language of instruction in first-year modules and found that not all the students in higher education using English as the medium of instruction are coping. The study revealed that some of them do not understand it as the language of teaching and learning. The study provides a case study of first-year students at the University of Venda. The study posits that some of the students enrolled at the University of Venda are native speakers of South African indigenous languages who went through the public schooling system, and their proficiency in English varies; some have limited proficiency in English, while others are fluent. So, putting students with varying proficiency in the same class and expecting learning and knowledge acquisition to be inclusive is exclusionary. Some students are from disadvantaged schools where the main language of instruction was their home language, which in turn might affect their understanding of English and their exposure to the language, not all learners from public schooling systems struggle with English, some are proficient however there is a particular group of students that struggle with the language and it is a problem because English is mostly used in the lecture

room during academic activities. Furthermore, Kumalo (2022), in Joubert and Sibanda) states that having English as the only medium of instruction in contemporary South African Universities demonstrates a lack of diversity and reinforces the colonial violence of excluding the indispensable Other, thus further alienating them from South African higher education institutions. The lack of awareness about how monolingualism is exclusionary and the failure to recognise the implications of monolingualism for the experience of those who are not proficient in a language and are marginalised by it create a reluctance to learn, as education becomes inaccessible and tedious for the excluded. Kumalo (2022:116) speaks about the “disciplining effects when Blackness uses its mother tongue in the pedagogic space”. This refers to how Black students are constantly corrected when using their mother tongue in classrooms. Where institutions, schools, teachers and lecturers at times do not allow engagement or discussion in the indigenous language, thus making students feel that their mother tongue is not suitable for knowledge acquisition and dissemination, hence some liken intelligence to the ability to speak English.

2.2.1 Advantages of using English in a multilingual classroom

English has been described as an international language, a lingua franca, and a link language. It is a window to the rapid progress of technology and advanced scientific knowledge (Dash & Dash, 2007 in Aluko 2019:36). One could also agree with Brutt-Griffler (2017) that around the world, English has become a language of multilinguals. If well implemented in classrooms, it encourages high levels of engagement and academic achievement across the board. It allows students and academic staff members from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively. It fosters understanding and encourages collaboration as students and academic staff members get to learn using a common language and negotiate collective meaning. It equips students and staff members with the skill of being global citizens who can engage with a global community that has diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds. English promotes inclusivity as it is a common language that enables students to communicate and collaborate effectively. Furthermore, using English in a multilingual classroom promotes cultural exchange and advanced career opportunities. Proficiency in English enhances students' employability globally. Therefore, using English in a multilingual classroom does benefit students' learning and self-development (Omid ire 2019:38). As the benefits are glaring, the disadvantages are also paramount for English Second Language (ESL) learners. This is supported by Mondlane (1992:248 in Nell and Muller 2010), who postulate that non-English speaking students who are African mother-tongue speakers may experience challenges with understanding and engaging

with content. According to Kapp (2004:260-261), these students are often labelled as at risk or disadvantaged because of the linguistic, cognitive and social transition they must make when entering higher education, where most teaching staff are English proficient but lack proficiency in the students' mother tongue. These statements provide a caution when discussing the benefits of English as the benefits are not universal and inclusive. These benefits are context-specific and not all-encompassing of everyone who experiences English as a LOLT.

2.2.2 Government efforts to promote multilingualism

The post-apartheid South African government has attempted to create and foster language inclusivity in the country by promoting multilingualism, creating, drafting, and passing policies that stress and enforce language inclusivity and equality. The South African Constitution (1996) Chapter 1 Section 6 highlights the importance of previously marginalised languages and states that it "Recognises the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages". Section 6 of the Constitution provides the principal framework for multilingualism, the development of the official languages and the promotion of respect and tolerance for South Africa's language diversity. All this is factored in The National Language Policy Framework of 2003, which aimed to promote language equity and language rights as required by a democratic dispensation. The policy aimed to promote multilingualism in South Africa and understands that this requires efforts that do not discount the knowledge in societies with prominent indigenous languages. The government also, prior to the National Language Policy Framework of 2003, ~~the government~~ created the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education 2002, which was reviewed in 2020; the purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages in scholarship, teaching and learning and communication at South African higher education institutions. The aim of the policy is to promote multilingualism in institutional policies and practices of South Africa's public Higher Education institutions. Most importantly, the policy views the role of higher education as promoting and creating conditions for the development and inclusion of historically marginalised languages. Finally, the Language in Education Policy 1997 incorporates the principles of the above-mentioned policies by promoting the use of learners' first language and English as a medium of instruction in most schools. Through this language policy, the government wanted to implement language inclusivity in teaching and learning. The policy promotes and fosters the use of learners' first languages as an aid to rebranding Indigenous African languages as pedagogical languages.

The above-mentioned policies were created to ensure that all previously marginalized languages are included educationally, socially, and politically. However, it is important to note that the government created numerous language policies and interventions, but the above-mentioned are important for promoting multilingualism in the education sector. Understanding the government's effort to promote multilingualism and language inclusivity is beneficial for this study because it lays the foundation and highlights the importance of inclusive language in teaching and learning. It highlights the need for language, and the role language plays in creating and limiting dialogues. The policies give us guidelines on what institutions are expected to do to create language-inclusive teaching and learning spaces. The policies force universities and schools to acknowledge and include other South African indigenous languages in their curricula. The government understands that putting policies into play will push universities to move away from monolingualism, which does not represent the student and staff populace. Therefore, these policies cannot be ignored when trying to understand the relevance of language in higher learning teaching and learning spaces, which is the core objective of this study.

2.2.3 Language in education

The term "language in education" refers to how teachers communicate with learners and the content they teach (Stein 2017:05). Language in education encompasses the use of language as a tool for teaching and learning within the education system. This encompasses the language of instruction and the understanding of the language of teaching and learning. The language in education concept also encompasses the development of a particular language and the language policies employed by the education department to ensure language inclusivity and multilingualism. Finally, language in education also examines how language is utilised to promote access and equity in education (O'Connor 2016:06). Language in education is not just a concept referring to how language is used within the education system; it is also a policy .. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) refers to language in education as a process of planning, developing, and implementing the language arts curriculum, so that one is trained to acquire language skills that will facilitate their ability to cope with other life skills (Amadi 2014:1). In contrast, Stein (2022:207) states that "Language in education refers to the role of language in teaching and learning. It involves how language is used as a medium of instruction, how students acquire and develop language skills, and how language policies affect education systems". Therefore, one cannot fully understand the role of language in fostering interactions within lecture halls without examining the concept of language in education and its significance

in the educational context. The concept of language in education was developed through the creation of the Language in Education Policy of 1997, which recognises that diversity is not limited to language; it refers to the support of languages used for various purposes, including international trade, communication, religion, and education. However, the purpose for which the language is used is not limited to the previously mentioned; the policy does not exclusively focus on them. The language in education policy states that the language of learning and teaching must be one of the official languages of South Africa.

LiEP promotes the development of all twelve South African official languages and multilingualism. Through this policy of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) multilingual education is supported by providing education in all eleven official languages at the foundation phase (FP). Schools are expected to negotiate the languages of learning and teaching with parents. The choice of language for learning and teaching (LOLT) is determined by the language indicated as the preferred LOLT in the learner's registration document. This information enables the schools to determine the appropriate LOLT to be offered based on the learners' population (Sapere and Roberts 2017:12). However, this is applicable in the foundation phase only; when moving forward from intermediate to secondary phases, English is the outlined LOLT. Most learners who speak African languages in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, face threats to the quality of their teaching and learning when transitioning from the foundation phase to higher phases where English becomes the main LOLT. Since the mid-20th century, there has been concern about the linguistic mismatch between the language of instruction and the home language. Therefore, language in education is important not only as a concept but also as a theory, as it provides an outline of why language is crucial in teaching and learning spaces and why the correct implementation and inclusion of inclusive language policies are essential within multilingual learning environments.

2.3 How practical are the language policies

There are twenty-six universities in South Africa, but this project refers to four language policies; these policies are not specifically the focus of the research, but a reflection in order to provide an understanding of how different universities use language policies to foster language inclusivity. This choice is driven by interest and the aim of demonstrating how language policies shape the language culture of a university and how the chosen universities aim to promote the regional language and multilingualism. The chosen universities are associated with various regional languages spoken by many South Africans. The study cannot address all

universities, but the four will provide a clear picture of the language politics surrounding the call for language inclusivity. The universities used are the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Cape Town, the University of the Free State, and the North-West University. Different universities' language policies outline different objectives, but the central idea is to create language inclusivity. Every policy sets out how the University aims to achieve multilingualism. However, universities face challenges associated with implementing the language policy. Madiba (2013:387, cited in Turner and Wildsmit-Cromarly 2014) states that the progress universities make towards achieving multilingualism and language inclusivity, as outlined in their respective language policies, hinges on the institution's commitment and its lack thereof. Commitment is measured through active steps taken to bring the policy to fruition. On the other hand, a lack of commitment is evident in the stagnation and lack of change regarding language implementation, where policies are created, but few to no active steps are taken to ensure progress is achieved.

2.3.1 Looking at the different universities' language policies

Language policies are crucial for creating and fostering language inclusivity in higher education; these policies aim to bridge the gap created by using English as the sole medium of instruction. The policy aims to address language inequality and incorporate Indigenous African languages into teaching and learning. Some language policies empower Black students to use their mother tongues in their learning space; however, most still regard English as the only medium of instruction. These policies are derived from and influenced by the National Language policy. This part of the discussion looks at how different language policies are curated and whether they address language inclusivity issues. Most universities have a language policy that states how the institution aims to promote language inclusivity and recognition of previously marginalised languages. This section looks at the language policy of the following Universities: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the University of Cape Town (UCT), North-West University (NWU) and University of the Free State (UFS). I chose these universities because they all have different regional languages, and I find it interesting and intriguing to see how the language policies acknowledge and treat the regional languages. For UKZN, the regional language is isiZulu; for the UFS is Sesotho, NWU is Setswana; and UCT uses IsiXhosa and Afrikaans. Therefore, the study focuses on seeing how previously marginalised Indigenous languages are accounted for by different universities in their language policies, The University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN) created its language policy in 2006 and

later revised it in 2014 and 2018. The policy strives to achieve language inclusivity and promote multilingualism. However, bilingualism is the focus of the policy. This means that the university seeks to achieve bilingualism before accounting for the multilingual part of the policy. It seeks to ensure that isiZulu is well established and incorporated within the university as English is. So, the focal point is teaching and enhancing the status of isiZulu within the university's teaching and learning programs, official communication channels, and marketing. The policy encouraged the use of isiZulu as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). The institution created a language board in 2011; its purpose was to ensure that isiZulu is well integrated as an LOLT. "The board recognised the need to develop and promote proficiency in the official languages, particularly English and isiZulu" (Language policy of The University of KwaZulu-Natal 2014: 06). The aim of the board was the development of isiZulu by ensuring that teachers and students have the necessary resources and mechanisms to teach and learn the language. The university does not, unlike some, regard isiZulu as a remedial language for tutorial classes or as a code-switching or translanguaging method to be used during teaching and learning. It enforces the use of the language and states that it will provide training for students and staff members who do not have proficiency in either English or isiZulu. In 2014, isiZulu was introduced as a compulsory subject for all non-African language-speaking students who wish to graduate from the institution. Even if the policy is leaning more toward bilingualism and not multilingualism; however, it aims to establish at a later stage other African languages such as isiXhosa, Sesotho, and Swahili after successfully integrating isiZulu (Language policy of The University of KwaZulu Natal 2014: 06). The bilingual approach is important as a first step in ensuring language inclusivity and recognition because isiZulu is the language spoken by most people living in KwaZulu Natal (KZN), so recognising and advancing it as a language of teaching and learning is vital.

The language policy of North-West University (NWU) was adopted on June 23, 2022, to pursue and provide for a fair and functional multilingual environment. The policy recognises these four languages (English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, and Setswana) as mediums for communication, teaching and learning, engagement, and understanding. The policy does not reduce the status of previous LOLTs, which are English and Afrikaans, but seeks to promote and elevate the status of Sesotho and Setswana to ensure inclusivity, as the language (Setswana) is the regional language (The language policy of NWU 2023:1-3). The policy has been newly implemented and suggests many guidelines for ensuring language inclusivity and the recognition of previously marginalised Indigenous languages. The language policy also created a language

policy plan. This plan stipulates the role of faculties, departments, and the University Management Committee in implementing and promoting multilingualism. The language plan provides guidelines for ensuring that different university stakeholders adapt and include the policy in pursuing language inclusivity.

The University of Cape Town's language policy of December 2024 views language as a resource that can be used to foster an inclusive teaching and learning environment. The university recognises English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans as official university languages; the University also recognizes Kaaps, South African Sign Language (SASL), Neu, and Khoekhoegowab and is committed to their development. Funds are made available to ensure the development of the above-mentioned languages. The policy does not state that English is the primary medium of instruction; this is the approach: "Teaching and learning at the university will be informed by the dual principles of promoting South African Indigenous languages as well as access to academic literacy in English. The university will empower educators and students to work collaboratively to draw on their multilingual repertoires for teaching and learning" (UCT Language Policy 2024). The policy further states that IsiXhosa will be used as a language of teaching and learning and assessment alongside English. The policy provides remedial assistance to undergraduate students who do not have proficiency in any of the South African Indigenous languages in their grade 12 results, enabling them to take a course in IsiXhosa communication. It also accounts for the translation of PhD thesis into the marginalized South African language. The policy also states that the university's official languages will be used in written, oral, and internal communication. Finally, The UCT language policy will be implemented at university and faculty level. Faculties and support structures will develop implementation plans that address research, teaching, learning, assessment, and communication. Plans should cover short-, medium-and long-term strategies.

2.3.2UFS language policy

The UFS language policy (2023) remains committed to promoting multilingualism, as articulated in Section 29(2) of the South African Constitution, and is aligned with the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020). To maintain this commitment and stipulation of the national policy, the UFS language policy recognises the use of five languages within the institution in different capacities. The languages used are English, Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiZulu, and South African Sign Language. ~~However,~~ English remains the sole language of instruction in teaching and learning spaces however, the policy strongly

emphasis the promotion of multilingualism which requires or pushes lecturers to work towards ensuring that their classrooms are multilingual. In addition, the university offers language modules in Sesotho, Afrikaans, and isiZulu. These modules deviate from using English as a LOLT. It is within these lecture rooms that students and lecturers are exempt from using English. The university employed various strategies to ensure that the other four languages are used, even though they are not LOLT. For example, South African Sign Language is now developed as a module that students can take as part of their curriculum. Afrikaans, Sesotho and isiZulu were developed years ago as core modules that students can enrol in as part of their curricula. However, the policy encourages the use of isiZulu in engagement within tutorials through codeswitching or translanguaging to promote engagement and participation in modules where the LOLT is English. The institution is committed to promoting the use of Sesotho in academic spaces, as it is the regional language of the Free State. By equipping students with the language, a smoother transition and socialisation within their environment will be ensured. The new policy does have modifications and showcases the institution's need for language inclusivity., However, African languages still serve a remedial role, being used in tutorials for translanguaging purposes. The language policy also states that five recognised languages will be included in social and cultural communication, marketing communication, and signage. In addition, Sesotho and isiZulu are still being developed and re-intellectualised as academic languages, articles, master's, and PhD projects written in these languages are transcribed to ensure inclusive access. . Active steps on how this will be done are detailed in the policy, where collaboration between departments, institutions and faculties is recommended. The Academy of Multilingualism was established to serve as the custodian of language policy, overseeing its development, amendment, and implementation. The academy has been collaborating with the African Languages department on the UFS Qwaqwa campus to develop a language corpus that will facilitate the translation of research articles and dissertations submitted to the department, ensuring access and availability on the library's online platforms and systems. Over fifty papers, dissertations, and articles have been translated and are available for public use. This research seeks to understand how this policy and its language stipulation help enhance or limit interactions between staff and students within lecture halls.

The four previously discussed universities can be regarded as committed to incorporating African languages into their teaching and learning. The commitment of UKZN is based on its policy stipulation, which moves isiZulu from being an indigenous language that needs to be acknowledged to being an inherent requirement for non-native speakers. The policy states that students and staff members will have to learn conversational isiZulu to participate and function

not only within the institution but also outside, as it is the regional language. Understanding the basics will make students and staff members engage in seamless interactions. UCT has recently, in their approved 2024 language policy, opted for a similar route of requiring undergraduate students whose NQF 5-7 education does not include a marginalised South African indigenous language to take up an IsiXhosa communication module. This shows commitment to ensuring fair access to learning spaces, as translanguaging has been made a core part of teaching and learning because IsiXhosa has been adopted as a LOLT. Non-native speakers of isiZulu and isiXhosa will benefit academically from learning these languages because it increases their language repertoire and provides them access to Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural sensitivity, and personal growth. Madiba (2013) believes a language develops through usage. If African languages are sufficiently developed and used as LOLT, the gap that language policies seek to address will be bridged. Some of the language policies evaluated by this study do not discuss how marginalised languages will be incorporated into the everyday operations of the university. The policies merely state the need for inclusivity and the recognition of previously marginalised African languages but provide no clear specifications about how and when these languages will be included as LOLT. The language policies stipulate that the languages will be used in official marketing materials, tutorials, and other relevant contexts as needed. The general idea I gather from the policies is the acknowledgement of the existence and importance of the African language. While others are going as far as implementing and ensuring equal usage of the regional language. Universities such as UCT are going as far as to create a language development plan. The plan aims to create activities that will promote language inclusivity, some of which are projected through the Multilingualism Education Project (MEP). The MEP is responsible for highlighting multilingualism on campus; it has created projects such as the UCT Mother Tongue Celebration and the IsiXhosa Literacy and Performance Competition. This competition aimed to promote the use of isiXhosa in writing and performance; the advertisement for the competition was written in isiXhosa. The UFS has developed a language corpus for subjects such as mathematics, Sesotho, and isiZulu, allowing students and staff members to refer to it during discussions, thereby enhancing the understanding of concepts. Therefore, one can conclude that strides in creating language-inclusive spaces at the above-mentioned universities are indeed visible.

Most universities face challenges in facilitating knowledge creation and acquisition using students' native languages. There are several reasons why universities experience challenges with incorporating the mother tongue as a language for learning and teaching (LOLT). The first

problem lies in the idea that mother tongue languages are regional languages only relevant to a specific group of people, which in turn affects the student's employment prospects because the job market is global and requires proficiency in English. Secondly, universities' competitiveness in the wake of globalisation is another challenge. Universities are making concerted efforts to attract high-calibre students and staff members; with the best, the university can improve its ability to generate funds for research, enhance its national and global ranking, and compete both globally and nationally. The current university landscape is English-oriented. It does not make provision for vernacular graduates. Job applications are completed in English, and research grant applications require proficiency in English to be filled out. Therefore, it becomes problematic for universities to train students in the vernacular when the global, or national job market does not create space for mother tongues (Nyika 2015:04). This struggle is created by the institution's inability to incorporate the mother tongue because of the fear of losing the relevance of English as it is the lingua franca and the feeling of not equipping students with the relevant skills and linguistic capabilities to participate in the modern economy and world of work. This restriction thereby creates a feeling of alienation and vulnerability in students. The lack of inclusion creates boundaries between students and their learning process. This creates a lack of confidence, and the students feel alienated and vulnerable as they are omitted. The lack of confidence hinders students in the learning process due to their inability to incorporate their mother tongue. One finds confidence in knowing that they can share ideas and express themselves in any language of their choice. Another challenge for universities is the re-adaptation and definition of existing Western theories and the need to find space for new indigenous African forms of knowledge that have been developed for and in the African context (Kaschula: 2013). The new indigenous African form of knowledge refers to a postcolonial view of African knowledge production, which debunks the westernised perception of what knowledge is, but depicts and narrates knowledge through the African lens, by Africans for Africans using African languages. However, looking at the Language policies, South African universities are working on translating and creating a corpus for different African languages that will help bridge the gap in knowledge production in African languages. =Universities are going as far as translating research articles and theses, which is a significant step toward recognizing African languages as legitimate languages of knowledge production. This growing acknowledgment of linguistic diversity and the power dynamics involved in knowledge dissemination provides a relevant context for examining language and power, a focus central to Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Norman Fairclough is one of the most prolific scholars who writes and engages in critical discourse analysis (CDA). The field was developed in the 1970s from critical linguistics. El-sharkawy (2017:03) states that “the orientation of CDA was developed by neo-Marxist and post-modernist approaches of social theorists”, such as Foucault (1972) and social linguists, such as Pecheux (1975), who helped understand ideology in relation to discourse, which becomes the primary instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted, and reproduced. CDA focuses on language use and its reproduction. Norman Fairclough is one of the critical key founders of CDA, and he defines it as

a systematic analysis of the relationship between discourse practices, texts and socio-cultural practices (Fairclough 1997). He states that language is not neutral, it reflects and perpetuates inequalities and power dynamics that exist within the society or institution.

The basis of his argument lies in the idea that language does not exist in isolation; it is determined by the society, the relationship between the people involved in the social practice and the power relations that exist at the time of use. He argues that language mirrors society; hence, Fairclough defines “language use in speech and writing a form of 'social practice', meaning a dialectical relationship exists between discourse, society and social events such as (language and politics)” (Fairclough 1997:215). For example, he explains that there is an interconnected and mutually dependent relationship between language and politics. He states that discourse shapes politics and vice versa. Discourse and politics shape and influence each other as they work in conjunction to create a seamless social practice. Political discourse and jargon help us understand the political landscape of a country while politics help place meaning on the jargon used in the field.

Critical discourse analysis is a dynamic process that involves the production, consumption, and analysis of texts. It addresses social problems as a form of intervention in social practices and relationships, bridging the gap created by discursive power relations. Critical discourse analysis reflects society and culture, focusing on social realities such as inequalities and discrimination that are embedded in language or language use. Hence, Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258) state that discourse is socially constitutive and socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups. Language is constitutive in two senses: it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and, from another perspective, contributes to transforming it. Critical discourse analysts consider

the field to be “a true multidisciplinary” as it accounts for the intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture” (Van Dijk 1993a: 253).

Critical discourse analysis has various versions, and theorists focus on different aspects of the theory. Critical discourse analysis looks at the opaque and transparent relationship of control, discrimination, power and dominance and how it manifests in language (Habermas 1977:259). The theory examines how social inequality is expressed, signalled, and legitimised through discourse and language. CDA is considered critical because its focus is not to be merely descriptive, as this is only the initial stage of the analysis. Instead, its focus is to understand the interconnection between language and society. Thus, there is an explanatory nature to CDA, which aims to understand social phenomena through the analysis of discourse (KhosraviNik, 2015).

Describing CDA as a social practice means that a connection exists between the discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) that frame it. Thus, the linguistic encounters of students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus within different teaching and learning spaces constitute a social practice. The encounter is a social practice because the UFS Qwaqwa campus has a diverse group of students and staff members who bring forth social experiences and language proficiency and limitations that depict their social, economic and cultural backgrounds. It provides hidden cues that prompt the creation of social norms and identities. The classroom becomes a space where language is not neutral but assumes different forms and manifestations. Power is embedded in the language used on campus; power determines the social practice and how participants of the practice engage with it. For instance, some students may be encountering multicultural and multilingual interactions for the first time on campus and, as a result, may now gain access to the power embedded in classroom interactions. As a result, their experiences provide an overview of how language reflects and reproduces social relations; every interaction briefly depicts the participant's social, cultural, and educational background. The representations of these lingual encounters are affected by social values, favouring some views of reality to the detriment of others. By studying these encounters, the study will also identify the linguistic and social structures between students and staff members. Critical discourse analysis is a broad field of study, so this study will focus on using Fairclough's 3D model as a method of analysing data to understand and unpack the linguistic encounters of students and staff members.

2.4.1 Fairclough's 3D model

Fairclough's three-tiered model for analysis of discourse (1992, 1995a) is an essential first step toward analysing language and power in diverse types of texts. It is a valuable tool for analysing both spoken and written encounters. The model is vital because it helps us understand how language can help uncover social phenomena. One cannot discuss Fairclough's views on CDA without examining how he unpacks the social practice using three-tiered methods. The model views discourse as text, written or spoken, as discourse practice; it explores the text and its interpretations in the larger society. This level of the model is referred to as the "text dimension," which involves analysing the language of the texts. It includes elements such as word choice, vocabulary patterns, grammar, and cohesion. This will be the first point of analysing open-ended questionnaires by looking at participants' responses and using them to unpack how these responses are a representation of the model's idea that language and its usage are a representation of the institution in which it is used.

The second level/lens is the discourse practice dimension, which specifies the nature of text production, distribution, and consumption in society. Discourse practice mediates between text and social practice. The focus is on analysing grammar and text structure by understanding how the environment influences the text's production and consumption. In other words, this study examines how the classroom influences, promotes, and limits engagement between students and staff members. The discourse practice dimension seeks to examine how the role one assumes within a discussion affects how people view, respond and understand the engagement. The final level/lens is the social practice dimension, which deals with social analysis and interpretation issues. The focus here is on power relations and ideological struggles that discourse (re)produces, challenges or transforms in some way. In relation to the study, this step aims to uncover and identify the power relations that exist within lecture halls, while also identifying the dominant ideologies at play and how these power relations and ideologies impact and affect classroom engagements. The three-tiered model is valuable in analysing interactions between students and staff members within lecture halls. It unpacks how discourse can represent the social life and social engagement of diverse ethnicities. Finally, the third lens allows us to analyse and interpret participants' encounters while identifying the social structures surrounding the interaction, such as cultural view, power distance and the repetitive nature of such encounters. Fairclough's three-tiered model is valuable in understanding both verbal and written discourses; it not only focuses on the text but also looks at its use, interpretation, and the social constructs it creates. This is a valuable ground of analysis that can

yield in-depth insight into the impact of language within lecture classes.

2.4.2 3D model criticism and shortcomings

Critics of critical discourse analysis and the 3D model such as Widdowson and Schegloff argue that the methodology lacks clarity and is heavily reliant on subjectivity. The model involves interpretation, so the analysis can be highly subjective. People can apply it however they see fit, as there is no actual blueprint of how it should be applied. Henderson (2005) states that different researchers may arrive at different conclusions based on their ideological perspectives, making the findings less replicable than in more empirical research. Different renditions of the application of the theory exist, which theory/method's conduciveness. On the other hand, Luke (1997) argues that CDA uses theoretical Eclecticism, which means that it relies on multiple theories to analyse discourse. It is grounded in critical and poststructuralism. The theory does have a single method of use (Fairclough (2001), and this flexibility results in a lack of methodological rigour. The implication of using this theory and model is that the findings might be regarded as unreliable and subjective because of the various modifications of the model based on the subject to which it is applied. To mitigate these implications, I intend to acknowledge the limitations of the model, to use already existing sources that use the model to support my writing and findings, existing resources be it from different fields will be helpful in providing me with a blueprint that I can follow, as they provide theoretical justification to show that my analysis will be grounded in or inspired by existing discussions.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I would argue that there is considerable evidence to suggest that language inclusivity is essential in students' teaching and learning processes. It affects how they engage with one another and their ability to participate in learning-oriented activities and engagements effectively. Language, be it spoken or written, has its own rules that govern how the speaker and receiver understand and make meaning of the given stimuli. These rules can sometimes pose challenges for non-native speakers. Choosing an inclusive language for learning and teaching plays a vital role in aiding engagement between staff and students. Throughout the discussion, the importance of language inclusivity was highlighted not only for engagement purposes but also for better learning experiences and encounters. Students should be given lingual options so that they can participate from a point of understanding and access, rather than marginalisation and exclusion. Using English in multicultural and multilingual classrooms

might be seen as a solution for bridging the challenges that arise from multicultural classroom interactions.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used to investigate language use within lecture halls, facilitation sessions and tutorials on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. The study examines how language affects or enhances interaction between students and academic staff members within teaching and learning spaces. The research objectives are presented in detail, along with the theoretical justification for the research design and the decision to employ a pluralistic approach that combines phenomenological and critical discourse analysis qualitative methods. The group of participants and the process of developing the data-collection instrument are also described. Lastly, data analysis methods and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.1 Research Objectives

The goal of this study is to investigate the role language plays in enhancing and limiting interaction between students and academic staff members within teaching and learning spaces, such as lecture halls, tutorials, and facilitation sessions. The study further seeks to explore the relationship between language, power, and interaction within teaching and learning spaces, including lecture halls, and how it manifests between students and academic staff members. Language plays a vital role in promoting interactions within teaching and learning spaces, so understanding whether it limits or enhances interaction between students and academic staff members is key to understanding better the role of language, especially in multilingual settings. The research objectives are as follows:

- Explore how English enhances or limits student and academic staff interactions within lecture halls, facilitation sessions and any other teaching and learning spaces?
- Investigate the relationship between language and power in the interaction between students and academic staff members in various teaching and learning spaces.
- Identify the linguistic dynamics that exist within the UFS Qwaqwa campus.

3.1.2 Contextualising the research objectives.

The research objectives explore how the use of English as a medium of instruction both enhances and limits interactions between students and academic staff in lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces. They reflect a dual effect, focusing on how English is often positioned as a global lingua franca, which enables and promotes a

common platform for communication. It provides users access to international scholarships and prepares students for professional mobility. Rao (2019:73) states, “It has become a compulsion to learn English as most of the books of higher education are written in English. English has been widely used by students, teachers, and researchers around the world, as it is the primary medium in various fields of education”. Additionally, it is one of the languages in which information is stored in the form of books and journals, both in printed and electronic formats. However, at the same time, English can act as a barrier to equitable participation, as students with limited proficiency may feel excluded from discussions or unable to articulate their ideas fully. Interactions, understood here as the dialogic exchanges that shape teaching, learning, and knowledge construction, are therefore influenced not only by linguistic competence but also by broader socio-political dynamics of power, identity, and inclusion (Allen 2010:83). This dual role of English raises critical questions about access, representation, and epistemic justice in higher education. Conceptually, the study positions English as both a resource and a constraint, shaping the quality and inclusivity of academic interactions across diverse learning spaces.

3.2 Research Design

Various research designs and paradigms enable researchers to situate their studies within a clear theoretical framework that guides and focuses their overall approach (Creswell & Creswell 2018:57). The following section provides a brief description of the pluralistic approach adopted in this study, further outlining the underlying research paradigm and the methodology employed.

3.2.1 Pluralistic approach

Hood (2015:24) states that using a pluralistic research approach provides a more comprehensive picture of the topic under investigation, and it allows multiple ways of responding and understanding a phenomenon. Pluralism refers to the use of diverse research methods within a given field of study, acknowledging that scientific inquiry can employ various qualitative approaches. This study uses Phenomenology and Critical Discourse Analysis. It aims to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences with language by linking their lived experiences with social structures and uncovering power dynamics. Phenomenology deals with human subjectivity and understanding/ uncovering the essence of a phenomenon, while CDA looks at ideology and power. Therefore, combining both methods is beneficial to this study because they offer a nuanced examination of the relationship between individual

experience and broader sociocultural structures that influence interaction.

Phenomenology is centred on providing a detailed subjective account of how participants interpret and make sense of their lived experiences. CDA extends this analysis by placing the interpretations within wider discourses, ideologies, and power relations. Using both approaches ensures that participants' voices are highlighted and explored through various contexts. Phenomenology looks at the participants lived experience context, while CDA acknowledges that participants' experiences of language are shaped by historical, cultural and institutional contexts. Finally, this choice in methodology and approach allows for a more refined understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, while capturing the subjective meaning participants attribute to their experience of language and how language can enable, restrain and silence individuals in teaching and learning spaces. Bhekhet and Zauszniewski (2012:3) discuss the concept of methodological triangulation, which refers to "using more than one kind of method to study a phenomenon" Using this approach is beneficial because it enhances understanding of the phenomenon in question and increases the validity of the data.

3.2. 2 Origin of Phenomenology

Phenomenology was conceived in 1913 by Edmund Husserl as a method of philosophy to describe the meaning of what is experienced as a phenomenon of consciousness. Husserl was interested in discerning what consciousness is. He assumes the view that consciousness is intentionality and is directed outside itself. Consciousness comes first; it is in the line of Descartes' (1637) "first I think, therefore I exist". Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, states, "The first thing we must do is to take the conscious life, completely without prejudice, just as it immediately presents itself to be." This means that phenomenology is about understanding one's experience without using any preconceived ideologies or stereotypes. You void yourself of any influential ideas and experience a text as it is presented. Through these ideas, he believed that one can access a transcendental ego, meaning a pure space of consciousness where reality and meaning are created. His work not only focused on describing individual experiences, but he also believed in revealing the essence of those experiences. This perspective made phenomenology both a descriptive and eidetic experience. Phenomenology is eidetic because it uncovers the essence of an experience, rather than just describing it. This is done through eidetic reduction, where one imagines variations of an experience and sets aside details that are not essential to find out what makes a phenomenon what it is (Belt 2021: 5407). Finally, he advocated for and emphasised the role of intersubjectivity and the real world, which he believed reflected how shared experiences and

encounters shape meaning (Corona, Kovac, Mijares and Grimaldos 2016: 75). Phenomenology-hermeneutics is a philosophical methodology that was coined by Martin Heidegger, who was Husserl's assistant. In 1927, he developed his own view on phenomenology that sought to discover the meaning of being or existence of human beings, through the description and understanding of their experiences or daily life. Heidegger argued that we cannot bracket all the presuppositions we have, meaning we are embedded in the world and cannot detach ourselves from our experiences with people, objects and situations. He used the term Dasein (being there) to describe human existence. For him, Phenomenology is about studying the way beings exist in the world instead of seeing them as detached observers (Shahbazian 2015:05).

3.2.3 This study uses Husserl's views of Phenomenology

This phenomenological research paradigm focuses on the experiences of respondents. These experiences provide a glimpse into how the participants perceive and engage with the world around them by describing their experiences and encounters with various phenomena (Donalek 2004: 172). This study employs the ideas, design and methods of a phenomenological study to narrate and map out the experiences of the participants. This phenomenological qualitative study describes the essence of language usage within teaching and learning spaces, such as lecture halls and facilitation classes. The phenomenon studied in this case is how language influences interactions within teaching and learning spaces between students and academic staff members. Using online questionnaires, participants share their views and experiences on how language has either limited or enhanced their interactions. The responses provided mapped out individual experiences within group settings and linguistic encounters, placing emphasis on individual encounters. Phenomenologists reject the view that knowledge is limited to empirical or statistical evidence; they hold that knowledge should encompass everyday human experiences and that when employing this approach, researchers must set aside any preconceived assumptions or biases. You focus on participants lived experiences as presented. In fact, they place urgency on subjectivity and individualism. Subjectivity and individualism are stressed through the description of mundane everyday experiences (Crotty, 1998 in Jackson, Ronald, Drummond, Camora and Sakile 2007:23). So, using a phenomenological approach is beneficial for this study as it is interested in exploring and unpacking the views of students and staff members regarding the influence of language on interactions within the teaching and learning spaces.

3.2.3 This study uses a Critical discourse analysis approach

Critical discourse analysis, as a social and power practice, is a field of study that has a recognisable approach to the study of the social use of language in explicit political and social contexts. CDA pays special attention to the context in which language is used (Pešić 2022:96). It addresses social problems and power relations. Through discourse analysis, the link between text and society is mediated. It pays special attention to the context, analysing the relationship between texts, processes and social conditions. The concept of context is vital to CDA, as it encompasses social, political, and ideological contexts.

Discourses are socially doubly constructed, meaning they contribute to both sustaining and reproducing the social and political status quo, as well as transforming it. The social influence of discourses is that they are underpinned by ideologies, which give rise to issues surrounding power. Power is viewed in relation to the lack of equality between participants in discourse encounters. Power in discourse examines the unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. Power in discourse is viewed in two ways: as power in discourse and power behind discourse. Power in discourse examines the exercising and enacting of power; it involves powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants. While power is behind discourse includes the power to shape and constitute the order of discourse dimensions of social orders, social institutions or societies. As well as the discourses and genres to which I have access. The primary element of power behind it is the concept of hidden power, according to Fairclough (1997:52), which suggests that power relations are enacted in subtle ways; people who are unequal in power are not co-present in certain social interactions. Meaning, powerful participants can exercise power over discourse through constraints on content (what is said or done)

3.3 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach is a detailed process that researchers use to gain an improved understanding of various research areas and social phenomena (Aspers and Corte 2019:139). Qualitative research incorporates social behaviour, discourse, and language. Flick (2014 cited in Rahman 2016:106) posits that "Qualitative research is interested in analysing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardised data and analysing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics". This approach provides personal insight and in-depth responses. It highlights and strengthens subjective opinions. This

aligns with the objective of this study, which is to gather subjective views and experiences of participants and identify ways to effectively narrate those experiences. A qualitative approach is beneficial because it allows for the description of participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences, and interprets meaning through their actions. The advantages of this kind of approach are inclusivity and reliability. A qualitative study is inclusive because it asks open-ended questions that prompt detailed responses from participants, and there are an inclusive integration and addition of participants' experiences. Finally, Participants in a qualitative study can express their opinions and views on the matter, which are fully discussed, providing the researcher with a more precise understanding and insight into the phenomenon. Therefore, the basis of a qualitative approach is the expression of in-depth understanding and the realities of the participants, which is evident in the study through the in-depth responses provided and the detailed narratives that each respondent provided, drawing and mapping out their experiences of language within different teaching and learning spaces.

3.3.1 Research population

A research population refers to the total number of persons, events, organisational units, case records, or other sampling units concerning the research problem (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport, 2005). The population have common characteristics that align with the objectives of the study and are of interest to a researcher. The common characteristics of the respondents set them apart from other individuals. The research population for this study consist of students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The academic staff members consist of lecturers and facilitators, while undergraduate and postgraduate students represent the student population. The staff member sample is based on individuals who directly interact with students within the teaching and learning spaces. This population offers this study a comprehensive account of their insights and experience on how language limits or fosters interaction between students and staff members in lecture halls and other teaching and learning spaces. The study includes academic staff members from all racial and gender backgrounds, regardless of their teaching position. The reason for choosing academic staff members is that they can account for and retell their experience of how language has limited or enhanced their ability to interact with students within the classroom. The study also includes students regardless of level of study and faculty, the reason being that the study seeks to track the lingual experiences of students throughout the campus to see how they experience language within the classroom.

3.3.2 Sampling

According to McNealy (1999 in Koerber and McMichael, 2008:476), sampling is distinguished between “probability” and “non-probability” techniques. Vehovar, Toepoel, and Steinmetz (2016:327) refer to non-probability sampling as the absence of a probability sampling mechanism, meaning it deviates from probability sampling principles, such as randomly selecting participants. In addition, when using non-probability sampling, predefined criteria are used to select participants who meet the required requirements. The sampling criteria can range from age, gender, race, geographical location, etc. The study's set specifications are that participants are divided into two groups. The first group are that participants need to be registered students of the UFS Qwaqwa campus, spread out through the Humanities, Education, Economic and Management Sciences and the Natural and Agricultural Sciences faculty. The second group comprises academic staff members, including lecturers, facilitators, and all other academic staff who teach either postgraduate or undergraduate students.

There are multiple non-probability sampling techniques; however, this study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate identification and selection of participants who meet the specified criteria. The sample is defined based on their experience and ability to respond to the research question. For example, when testing the effectiveness of chemotherapy, one will need to interview people who underwent the therapy or are in the process of undergoing chemotherapy. This makes the sample purposive as there are given objectives, and those who do not meet them are instantly excluded (Stratton 2021:373). Purposive sampling is the best approach because Participants offer valuable, rich, and insightful responses due to their lived experiences. Furthermore, the sample includes students and staff members who feel comfortable enough to narrate their experiences. During the initial stages of the research, purposive sampling was used. I disseminated the questionnaire online using the UFS News platform; however, I did not reach the target sample for both students and academic staff members. To ensure that I reach the target number of sample, I employed the use of convenience sampling, where I used several available people to encourage participation and engagement of new people. Golzar, Noor and Tajik (2022: 73) state that “convenience sampling basically means that the researchers utilise a sample which is readily available, and they have access to, it can be applicable to almost any research”. I used the sample readily available by walking through campus and asking different students to participate in the study, asking different HODs and lecturers to share the links with their academic staff members and students. This approach helped ensure that the set target was reached and the links were

disabled, preventing further participation.

The sample size in qualitative research refers to the total number of people who will be used as respondents in the study. The size should provide sufficient feedback to lead to data saturation. The study aimed to recruit 40 participants, divided into the following categories: 20 academic staff members, 10 lecturers, and the remaining 10 academic facilitators. Twenty students, ten undergraduate students and ten postgraduate students. However, due to the online nature of the questionnaire, the total number of participants increased to twenty-three academic staff members and twenty-five students. After reaching this number of participants, I disabled the questionnaires to ensure that there is no further engagement with the questionnaire. This site and the diversity it represent, as well as the population sample, provide quality differences that will highlight the rich lingual experiences of participants within the teaching and learning space. The sample size of forty-eight participants is acceptable for qualitative research because it allows for sufficient in-depth and diverse responses while remaining manageable for in-depth analysis. In a qualitative approach, the focus is on achieving data saturation, where no new themes or insights emerge from the data. A sample of forty-eight is large enough to reach saturation, as the participants come from varied cultural, linguistic, study, and teaching levels relevant to the study. Thus, ensuring that the voices of most academic staff members and students are evident. Representativeness is not achieved through large numbers but through the careful selection of participants who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives on the phenomenon of language usage within classrooms. The forty-eight participants in this study contributed to conceptual representativeness, as they reflect the variety of experiences, roles, and contexts within the study setting of a teaching and learning spaces. By including participants from different academic levels, disciplines, and linguistic backgrounds, the sample captures the range of viewpoints and interactions that exist in the teaching and learning environment. This diversity ensures that the findings represent depth of experiences rather than the frequency of responses, thereby enhancing the credibility and feasibility of the results.

3.3.3 Data collection

This study used open-ended questionnaires. Open-ended questionnaires provide a platform for participants to express their viewpoints on given subjects and offer a free range of responses, allowing them to expand on their ideas. “Open-ended questionnaires have many uses, most notably to discover what the masses think. These include market research, customer service feedback, evaluations, and social science research” (O’Leary 2014). O’Leary (2014) states that

the strengths of using open-ended questionnaires lie in their ability to allow researchers to generate data that relates to their study and provide insights that might not be available otherwise. The questionnaire offers participants a chance to provide a wide range of answers; these types of questions provide respondents with spaces to articulate themselves and fully express their thoughts in writing (Hyman and Sierre 2016).

There are two separate questionnaires, one for academic staff members and the other for students. The questionnaires share similar themes and address questions related to the role language plays in both limiting and enhancing interaction between students and academic staff members. They, however, have minor differences here and there, as the experience of a student is different from that of an academic staff member. I used an online questionnaire as a data collection method to gather in-depth responses from participants about their lingual experiences within classrooms. I created the questionnaire on Microsoft Forms. I created a setting that made the questionnaire available only to students and academic staff members who use their UFS email addresses. Other personnel could not access the questionnaire; this is one of the things I confirmed through the piloting section of the study. Furthermore, to gain participants, I used the UFS Qwaqwa campus News platform to share the participant recruitment script. The script was shared only to the academic staff members' email address, while the student's recruitment script was shared via to the Qwaqwa campus student emails only. Using an online open-ended questionnaire was beneficial because it offered participants the flexibility to respond at their convenience without any added pressure. These questionnaires are administered online, and participants can engage at their own comfort.

The themes that gave rise to the question asked in the questionnaire are language inclusivity, multilingualism, decolonisation of language in higher education, and the importance of language within interaction. These themes are evident in multiple studies that examine how the use of English can be a challenge for English second-language users and how, at times, it hinders ESL learning. For example, Bay Atlantic University published an article in 2024 titled *ESL Students Challenges: Overcoming Language Obstacles* which discusses the various challenges students who are not native English speakers experience such as language proficiency, communication, motivational and confidence issues. Through the article, we can infer that language inclusivity is a necessity, and acknowledging ESL struggles is crucial for the success of ESL students.

The questionnaire has three sections; section one is the icebreaker questions, which ease the respondents into the questionnaire. This section includes questions such as defining the concept of language and choosing one's ideal language to use in teaching and learning. Section 2

focused on obtaining information that will respond to the research questions. The question includes participants' recollection of instances where language has either limited or enhanced their ability to interact within lecture halls. However, the questions are not limited to addressing multilingualism in classrooms and the university's language policy. The third section is the final reflection, which poses questions regarding the UFS language policy and participants' views on the concept of decolonising language in higher education. The sections of the questionnaire were developed based on the need to respond to the 3 research questions of the study,

3.4 Justification of using open-ended questionnaires

Most studies that employ the use of a phenomenological approach use interviews and focus groups to gather data, while researchers using CDA utilise existing written documents, such as newspaper articles, speeches and policies. So, to combine and account for both styles, I opted for an open-ended questionnaire because it is a subjective written piece of text that provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and articulate their views at their own comfort level using their own vocabulary without the presence of the interviewer, whose presence at times might be seen as intimidating. Furthermore, open-ended questionnaires strike a balance between depth and breadth: while they do not allow for the same level of probing as interviews, they still generate rich qualitative data that can reveal patterns, themes, and meanings, while offering participants a greater sense of anonymity and freedom of expression. However, this approach has its limitations, such as participants not being able to fully express themselves in writing, which renders their responses invalid and incomprehensible, thereby preventing the data from being used in the study.

3.4.1 Sample of the questionnaire

As previously stated, there are two questionnaires, one meant for students and the other for academic staff members. The contents of the questionnaire are similar, with minor differences in the questions asked, as students and staff members have different experiences. The questionnaire focused on probing participants' experiences of language within various teaching and learning spaces and how English enhances or limits interaction between students and staff members. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: an icebreaker, research-related questions, and a closure section.

The icebreaker section was designed to ease participants into the questionnaire and gather their views. The questions were the same for both staff and students.

3. Define the word language.

4. If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to teach using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

The research-related section of the questionnaire aimed to address the main objectives of the research, and the questions were tailored slightly differently for staff and students.

Staff

1. How important is language and its usage in a classroom? (Please provide a detailed response.)
2. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?
3. Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom?
4. Has the language you use to teach limited students' ability to interact with you or the content?
5. Narrate how the language you use to teach enhances/limits students' ability to interact with you or the content. (Please answer, supply details as to how the language used enhances or limits students' interactions with you and their understanding of the content.)
6. What do you think about the University's language policy?
7. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
8. How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?
9. Is the decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions desirable and feasible? (Please elaborate.)

Student

1. What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class? (Provided with detailed response)
2. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
3. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever enhanced your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
4. Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom? (If yes, please explain how inclusivity is fostered. If not, please explain why you think inclusivity is not fostered.)
5. What do you think about the University's language policy?
6. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
7. What does decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions mean to you? Do you

think it is desirable and/or possible?

The conclusion part of the questionnaire was the same for both students and academic staff members, focusing on unpacking the language dynamics evident in teaching and learning spaces. Through these questions, we get to understand how the participants viewed and understood the use of English.

2. Do you have any other final thoughts on the classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was collected using online questionnaires, and the collected responses were analysed using a qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. NVivo is used to help researchers organise, analyse and create visual data (Dhakal 2020:270). NVivo helps with producing meaningful data by effectively managing the uploaded resources or data. It provides researchers and users with a platform to create codes, maps and identify themes. This helps with organising and analysing data. The codes and themes developed were decoded using Fairclough's 3-dimensional Model. My reason for choosing this method lies in the fact that there is an interplay between the text and society, one is shaped by the other. The method employs intertextuality, the fusion of language with everyday social phenomena, such as power, race, gender, and others. The method can be applied to any social issue; researchers have used the model to analyse different social issues within various fields. For example, Stecher 2010 used Fairclough's three-dimensional model to create an intertextuality between linguistics and psychology. While Pietra and Wang 2021 used Fairclough's 3 D model to combine politics and linguistics, in a study titled *Enough is enough this cycle of violence must come to an end': Practical reasoning in the editorials during the extradition bill crisis of Hong Kong*. Therefore, the above examples demonstrate how the 3D model can be applied in various fields and how it provides researchers with a blueprint to understand how language can be used to reflect social structures that may be exclusionary, power struggles, and the significance of discourse in different fields of study. The model can be explained using the diagram below.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method used to study written and spoken language in relation to its social context. It aims to understand how language is used in real-life situations (McLeod 2024:01). This method of analysis focuses on how people express themselves verbally in everyday encounters, and it further looks at how language is used in different situations. Different people express themselves in different ways; some may have a

straightforward approach, while others are more subtle and indirect. When using Discourse analysis, one does not only focus on language usage but also looks at the context in which it is used. Horowitz and Kilby (2019:23) state that the historical, cultural and social context that influences an interaction or communication piece plays a crucial role in discourse analysis. In a conversation, context shapes and gives meaning to the language used. They further make an example that “a chat with a police officer differs significantly from a casual conversation with a close friend, highlighting the importance of context in shaping language use”, meaning a chat with a police officer might be restricted as there are power struggles that exist, while a chat with a close friend might be relaxed and open.

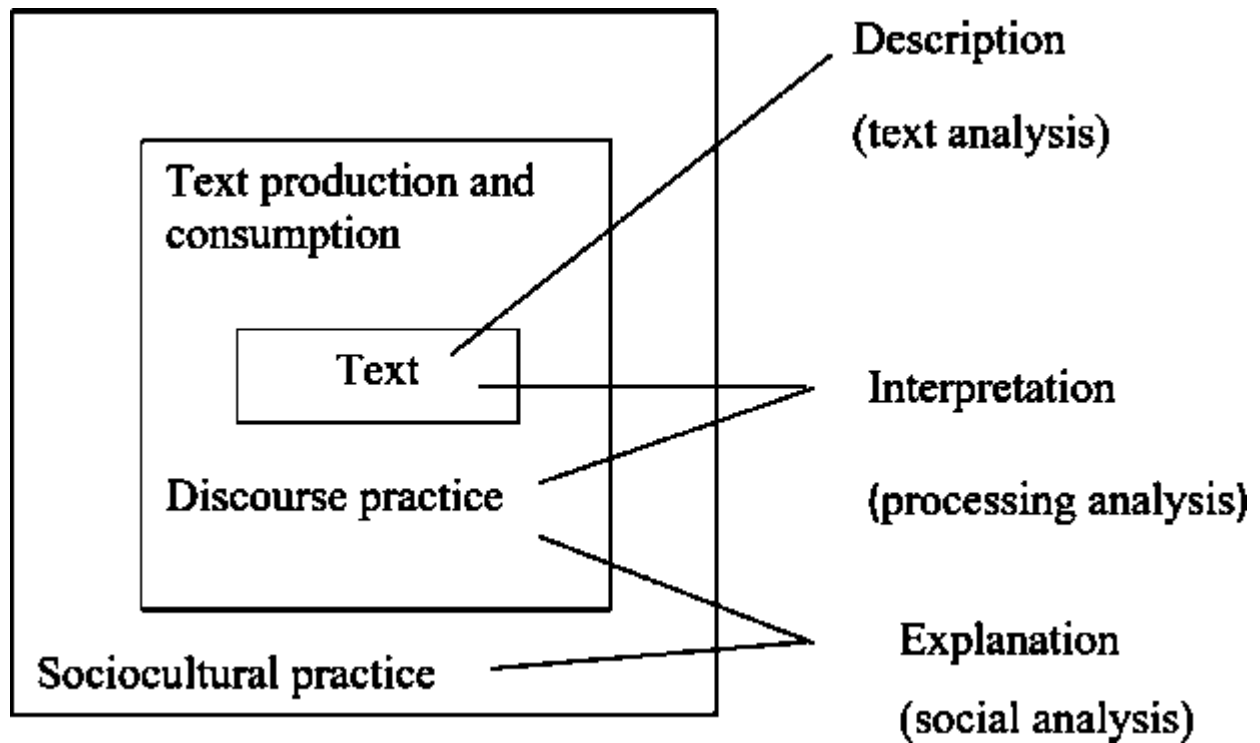
Researchers of discourse analysis focus on how language creates and maintains social identities. By doing so, they look at how language choices contribute to identity formation. How one uses language to define and articulate their identity. Secondly, researchers of discourse analysis focus on how language maintains and creates power relations, which includes how language is used to challenge and reinforce power structures. They also look at how language reveals unspoken assumptions and biases. Finally, Discourse Analysis recognises that meaning is shaped by social and cultural factors. Therefore, understanding Discourse analysis as a data analysis method is pivotal, as it allows researchers a more in-depth analysis of language, which moves away from the surface meaning to uncover deeper social, cultural and political meanings embedded in communication and language. Discourse analysis reveals power relations, focusing on how language constructs, maintains, or challenges power in social contexts. Furthermore, it connects language to social practice, revealing how language shapes society and is, in turn, shaped by it. This is achieved through the elaboration of how ideologies, norms and identities are shaped, reinforced and contested through everyday life.

3.5.1 Two types of Discourse analysis

There are two primary approaches to using discourse analysis: the language-in-use approach and the socio-political approach. The socio-political approach looks at how language reflects normalised or suppressed power dynamics. The language-in-use approach focuses on the technical aspects of language, such as grammar, phonology, and syntax, and how these elements are used to convey meaning. This study employs the socio-political approach, which incorporates Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's 3-dimensional model as tools for analysing data.

Diagram 1 Fairclough's 3-dimensional model

Figure 1



Model found in the work of Zahid, 2017: 87

The diagram above of Fairclough's 3D model reflects the interconnectivity between the text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. It reflects how the exploration of language and its usage can never be an isolated approach. It is interconnected, and such sections overlap and link with the other. The model shows that the language used in a text is shaped by the way it is produced and interpreted, which in turn reflects wider social norms, power relations and ideologies. Texts not only mirror social structures but also challenge and reinforce them.

3.6 Introduction to the 3D model

The three-dimensional model of analysis owes much of its underpinning to Firth and Halliday's multilevel linguistic system. The main task of CDA is to explore the dialectical relationship between language and social practice. Fairclough's analysis goes through three phases. The early phase targets power and ideology (1989). The mature phase focuses on discourse and social change, and the third phase targets globalisation.

. Step 1: Description/ Text stage

The initial stage of this model is the description (Text) analysis stage, which looks at linguistic features such as word choice, grammar (transitivity and passivisation) and text structure. It focuses on analysing the language used in a text. In this stage, the object of analysis is the text,

whether spoken, written, or visual. The text analysis focuses on breaking down language to uncover meaning, commonality and differences. In this stage, uncover how language is closely related to the text, as language can be represented through text meaning that language enables text to be coherent and meaningful (Johnsen 2001:34). Paying the required attention on language enables us to analyse the text by deconstructing the word choices and placing them in word groupings to find similar ideas, common threads and lexical meaning. This stage further looks at how grammar structure and words can shape meaning. The stage zooms in on word choices, paying attention to the words used, whether they are positive or negative, emotional or neutral, and so on. It examines how the language used affects the recipient of the message.

Step 2: Discourse practice/ interpretation/text production and consumption stage

This stage focuses on identifying how power, ideology, and social relationships influence the creation and understanding of texts. The stage moves away from words and suggests that meaning is not only derived from words but can also be found in how people use and interpret them. This stage focuses on three important aspects: text production, distribution, and consumption. In the text production stage, we focus on who created the text, what power or ideology influenced its creation, and the decisions made in terms of word choice, tone, and other language features. The second part is the text distribution, how is the information or text delivered, is it available online, printed or verbal exchange. Furthermore, who controls the information shared. The third part of this stage is the text consumption, which focuses on who consumes the information and how the different audiences interpret the text based on different factors such as experiences, beliefs and background. In closing, the discourse stage does not only focus on how the text was created, but also on how it was made available to people and how people make sense of it (Bezer 2023).

Step 3: Social practice/ Explanation stage

This stage of the model examines broader social issues and contexts that impact the text and discourse. It examines how the text relates to social issues. The stage focuses on power relations and social structures, examining how the text reinforces, challenges, and reflects social and power structures within the community in which it is consumed. Furthermore, it examines how the text and language used support, reject, or question dominant ideologies. Finally, the stage reveals how texts help maintain or resist power structures in society. It helps us understand how language is used to uphold and challenge certain viewpoints and inequalities (Maposa 2015).

Application of the model to the study

The three stages are used in this study to analyse how language used in lecture classes, facilitation sessions, tutorial classes and other teaching and learning spaces can enhance or limit interaction between students and academic staff members. This model is applied to the responses received from the questionnaires. Stage one focuses on participants' responses to the text, and here we examine the language choices of participants and uncover hidden cues that may reflect each participant's perspective. Furthermore, I create a word bank where I place similar words together.

Using step 1, which is the text dimension, I will analyse the language used in the responses. Looking at the tone, sentence structure and word choices of respondents. When looking at the tone, we focus on whether the respondent used formal or informal language, whether they use emotional language and identify common themes or repeated phrases evident in the responses provided. From the process above, a word bank will be created, which will provide us with an overview.

Using step 2, I will look at who answered the questionnaire, focusing on the demographic biographical information section of the questionnaire, which looks at the level of study and the degree the students are pursuing. While for academic staff members, it looks at their job title and the level they are teaching. For example, are they teaching first years, postgraduates or senior students? In addition, the analysis looks at how different participants interpreted the questions and responded to them. Finally, dimension two analysis looks at questions the respondents might have misunderstood or omitted and what this means.

Using step 3, which is the explanation stage, I will focus on the implications of the responses received, what the responses reveal about the language, its usage and participants' experience of it within teaching and learning spaces. Finally, I will look at how the responses might reflect concerns related to social phenomena such as language inclusivity, decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions power dynamics, social inequalities, etc and whether the responses reflect an acceptance of the dynamics identified or challenge them.

3.6.1 Piloting the questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted with 6 participants and my supervisor to gather feedback on the user-friendliness of the questionnaire and to provide an overview of their experience. From this exercise, I received feedback from my supervisor to revise the questionnaire and include a participant's consent landing page, where participants provide consent before participating in the study. If the participant consents, the questionnaire will automatically load. If they do not consent, the study will automatically end. Furthermore, to the consent page, he suggested that

I attach the written consent for respondents to read before providing consent. This process was difficult because I did not have the knowledge in creating online questionnaires, but I managed to crack it. After resolving the technical issues mentioned above, I sent the links to the six pilot respondents; three gave their approvals, indicating that the questionnaire was easy to access and user-friendly. Two participants discussed the length, saying the questionnaire is too lengthy, and one struggled to access the link because they were not signed into their UFS accounts. From the feedback received, I managed to add a disclaimer that the links can only be accessed when using your UFS staff or student account and ensured that some questions require short answers instead of lengthy responses to combat the length issue.

3.7 Research Limitations

A limitation of the study is that not all students and staff members can participate; the study has forty participants. Having an online questionnaire made limiting participation challenging, as the study had a broad reach, and I could not always track the number of participants. However, I was prepared to work with any data received, even if it was below 50. I had intended to disable the participation link before its closing date if the number of participants exceeded fifty. Another limitation is having fewer volunteers, which prevents me from reaching the target number. This may not necessarily provide an overall indication of the linguistic interactions occurring on campus, due to the limited number of participants, as this is a Master's project. However, I am optimistic that more students and staff members will be interested and sign up for the study, and hopefully, the project can be built upon and enlarged after the success of this one.

3.8 Ethical consideration

This research recognises the ethical considerations inherent in studies involving human participants and is committed to upholding principles of fairness, transparency, and respect throughout the research process. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), ethical considerations are fundamental when conducting research. In line with this, the study ensured that participants' rights, dignity, and well-being were fully protected. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Recruitment scripts were distributed through the UFS News platform, clearly indicating that participants could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or need for justification. Informed consent was obtained through a consent form linked to the online questionnaire, which included a consent button on the questionnaire's landing page. Participants could only proceed once consent was formally provided. All relevant information about the study was communicated to participants in advance through the recruitment materials.

Given that research involving human participants may pose potential risks—such as emotional, personal, or social discomfort—appropriate measures were taken to mitigate these. Participants were provided with information about available support services on campus and assured that their views would not be misrepresented or used in a manner that could cause harm. The study did not offer any incentives for participation, and participants were informed of this beforehand to avoid any false expectations. Anonymity was strictly maintained: participants' identities remained undisclosed, and pseudonyms such as “Staff Participant 1” and “Student Respondent 1” were used when presenting findings. Confidentiality was also rigorously upheld, with all data accessible only to the researcher and supervisors. No third parties had access to the participants' responses. The confidentiality of all data was treated with the utmost care. This study received formal ethical clearance from the University of the Free State's Research Ethics Committee (Reference: UFS-HSD2024/187)

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the methodology used to investigate participants' experience of language and its usage within lecture halls. It unpacked how language reflects social power struggles within teaching and learning spaces. A qualitative research design was employed, and the instrument used to gather participants' views was an online open-ended questionnaire, consisting of two questionnaires. One was created for academic staff members, and the other for students, which was administered online to fifty participants. Twenty-two

were academic staff members, and the other twenty-eight were undergraduate and postgraduate students of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. This method was appropriate for addressing the research questions and allowed for a deep exploration of language use in teaching and learning spaces, halls, and provided insight into how academic staff members and students experience language.

4 Introduction

This chapter discusses and presents the responses gathered from the open-ended online questionnaire distributed to students and academic staff members of the University of the Free State Qwaqwa campus. This study aimed to uncover participants' experiences of language within various teaching and learning spaces. This chapter presents the findings organised by research question and main themes that emerged from the data.

The study aimed to answer the following questions

- How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

Data analysis is vital and should be conducted with utmost care, as it forms the core evidence of the study and provides a response to the phenomenon the study aimed to resolve or provide more data on. Data analysis provides evidence to the research questions and advances knowledge through adding new data to the field of study. The presentation of findings is structured discourse analysis, focusing on Fairclough's three-dimensional model. Each stage of the model is presented and linked with the data received via questionnaires.

4.1 Description of sample

The sample included forty-eight participants in this study. Twenty-five were students of the UFS Qwaqwa campus; the sample mentioned above involved both postgraduate and undergraduate students. The sample was diverse in that it included students from the Education, Humanities, Economics and Management Sciences, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences faculties. This study involved students from the first-year level to PHD level. The sample of

the academic staff members was also diverse, including heads of departments, senior and junior lecturers. It also included Academic facilitators and facilitators. The sample provided valuable insights that moved the analysis beyond surface-level observations to reveal the underlying motivations and lived experiences of the participants.

4. 2 Results

The following sections present the feedback provided by participants through the online questionnaire. The responses offer valuable insights into participants' experiences, attitudes and perceptions regarding language use, inclusivity, and interaction within the UFS Qwaqwa Campus teaching and learning spaces. The feedback reflects diverse perspectives from both academic staff and students, highlighting how English serves as a medium of instruction that influences communication, participation, and access to learning. Through their responses, participants also reveal the linguistic dynamics that shape classroom engagement and broader campus interactions. This section serves as an illustration of how participants interpret and experience language practices in their academic environment.

The questionnaire included two icebreaker questions, designed to ease participants into the survey. One of the questions asked was "What does language mean to you?". This question is broad; it lacks any specific details. It was intended to understand the raw, unfiltered responses from participants on what language means to them, and the aim was to further participants' general view of language.

The themes that arise from the question are as follows. The main recurring theme or definition that participants gave is that language is a means of communication; most participants viewed language as a communication tool.

Staff members are regarded as SP (Staff participants), and students are regarded as SR (Student responses)

Staff responses: Language is a tool of communication

SP 1: A tool to communicate intent, meaning, and social standing.

SP 16: Language is the tool we use to communicate with each other.

SP 20: Language to me encompasses multiple meanings. It is a means of communication to convey meaning and a means to express thoughts.

SP 21: It means communication. A meaningful exchange of words between people who are in a conversation.

Student responses for language a tool for communication

SR 1: Means of communicating used by people, which consists of spoken and written words in a structured manner for conversational purposes.

SR10: It means communication.

SR 11: It means human communication and sharing of ideas using different meanings.

SR 16: It means certain words used to communicate.

SR 2: Mode of Communication

SR 20: Language is a way people communicate with each other using words to express what they feel.

The second theme that arises from the data is that language is a form of identity

Staff responses

SP 6: To me, language means part of one's identity.

SP 12: Means of identity.

SP 19: To me, language is more than just words and sentences, but it is a form of communication, a carrier of culture and identity that shows our uniqueness in the world.

Student responses

SR 15: Language to me means identity.

SR 12: It means my identity.

The third theme evident in the responses is that language is a form of culture.

Staff responses

SP 10: As much it is considered as means of communication to many. To me it refers to how one carries themselves with the words they articulate to derive meaning either to life, their surroundings and the people they engage with whom come from different cultural, traditional and national settings. Language to me also means how certain words are constructed together to make meaning of the academic world to which we are involved in, additionally, it is the medium of instruction.

SP 12: Carrier of culture.

Reflection

The findings of the above questions reveal that language functions as more than a mere medium of communication; it is deeply intertwined with identity and culture. Participants view language

as an indicator of who they are; it reflects their social, cultural and personal background. Furthermore, the findings reveal that language serves as a key tool for creating and maintaining interaction in academic spaces. From a Critical discourse perspective, the responses provided construct and position language as more than a neutral medium of instruction; instead, language emerges as a central social resource through which communication, identity, and culture are negotiated. The lexicon used by participants, such as “*means of identity*,” “*mode of communication*,” “*carrier of culture*,” and “*home language*,” does not merely describe language as a practical classroom tool. Rather, it positions language as a means of communication that enables or restricts meaningful interaction between students and lecturers in a multilingual academic environment. At the same time, participants’ references, such as SP 12 stating that language is a carrier of culture, reveal how language use shapes self-perception and social belonging. Furthermore, SR 15 states that language means identity, illustrating how language form’s identity within the university space. These expressions suggest that identity is continually negotiated through everyday linguistic practices, particularly in classrooms where certain languages are foregrounded over others. In addition, participants’ emphasis on their home languages as carriers of meaning, values, and familiarity highlights language as a form of culture, through which shared histories and ways of understanding the world are maintained. Together, these responses show that language in the academic context functions simultaneously as a communicative tool, a marker of identity, and a cultural resource, deeply embedded in students lived experiences of teaching and learning.

Research question 1

Student response

SR 25: Language is any form of communication that one uses to pass on a message or to be heard. This allows us to interact in different groups or spaces where diversity in terms of tribes as well as culture exists.

SR 18: Language is a combination of a lot of things, including history and our culture.

SR 14: It means diversity.

4.3.1 How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus

This research question aims to investigate the dual role of English as both an enabling and constraining factor in communication and interaction between students and academic staff across various teaching and learning environments. The above research question is the central focus of the study, examining how English both enhances and limits interaction within various teaching and learning environments. It examines how English, as the primary medium of instruction at the UFS Qwaqwa Campus, facilitates understanding, participation, and knowledge exchange among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The above research question was divided into three parts: the first one was, "How important is language and its usage in a classroom?" The second one was how English enhances interaction, and the final one was about how English limits interaction within different teaching and learning spaces. From the above question, various topics and subtopics emerged. Through these questions, we can investigate the ways in which the dominance of English may create barriers for those who are not fully proficient in the language, potentially limiting their engagement, confidence, and equal participation. The question, therefore, aims to investigate how language practices affect the quality, inclusivity, and effectiveness of academic interactions across various learning contexts.

Question: How important is language and its usage in a classroom?

From the above question, the following themes emerged.

Staff responses

Theme: Language as a gatekeeper to knowledge

SP 2: Language is important. I see students who struggle with English and therefore never really master important concepts. It is not that they do not have the aptitude to understand the concepts, it's just that they struggle with the terminology. That said, it is important that they can express themselves and their mastery of their subjects in English because they will need to do so in their careers. So, language has the potential to open opportunities, but also the potential to create barriers for our students.

SP 15: Without language proficiency a student would be seriously handicapped in social life and in the world of work. Along with numeracy and some form of moral education, it is crucial.

SP 19: It is very important because it makes or breaks a student. It is no doubt that most students believe that English is a measure of intelligence. Therefore, if English is the only language that is used in the classroom, some students tend to think they cannot have a successful academic journey.

Theme: English bridges barriers created by Multilingual setting

SR 16: Since English is a universal language and is the number one language used to communicate amongst different groups of languages. Its significance in a lecture class is to ensure that every student from a different language group understands the topic and lessons being taught.

SR 17: Since a lecture hall accommodates students from different backgrounds, with different home languages, English always comes into rescue when there is a language barrier in communications amongst students.

SR 18: The importance of using English is to ensure that everyone in a lecture room understands. In a lecture room we have different languages, and it becomes a barrier to communicate if others use their home language.

SR 20: In a classroom that has people who speak different languages, English can be used as a common language and will allow easy communication between students and lecturers.

Theme: Language creates mutual understanding

Staff responses

SP 20: Language plays a vital role in the learning process, mutual understanding between students and teachers is ensured by clear command/articulation from a teacher and clear understanding from the students. Good language use ensures progress.

SP 22: It is important because it can help students understand or not understand the subject at hand.

SP 23: Very important. Language drives engagement between instructors and students, engagement between students, and engagement with the content taught in class. Therefore, language influences understanding.

SP 9: Language plays a significant role in how well students understand content, as well as the extent to which they participate in class.

Theme: Language as a tool for assessment and academic success

SP 10: Language is important in the classroom as we use it to communicate or issue out assessments to students, through language students can derive meaning portrayed by the collection of words we refer to as language. The language used in class plays an integral part since students can ask questions in class to help them in completing their assessments.

Theme: Language, identity, and inclusion

Staff responses

SP 12: My understanding of the significance of language and its usage in the classroom is manifold. Language is central to classroom teaching and learning, serving as the primary tool for delivering content, fostering critical thinking, and building social relationships with my students. It shapes how students access knowledge, interact with peers (postgraduate students and other facilitators, junior lecturers, etc) and with lecturers, and develop cognitive and emotional skills. Effective, inclusive language use promotes equity, affirms learners' identities, and creates a supportive environment, while poor usage can lead to misunderstanding and exclusion. I also must point out that an international student who does not speak the local languages. Therefore, the use of English in the classroom setup has come in handy in achieving the above.

SP 14: It is very important considering that you cannot teach figures in class without communicating them or explaining them using a language that is understood by everyone.

Question: What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class?

From the above question, the following theme emerged. This question was meant for students.

The following themes that arose from students' responses

Theme: English links various cultures

Student responses

SR 6: As a global language, it bridges the gap between cultures, making it easier to engage with students from diverse backgrounds.

SR 2: Ensure that Communication is possible (sometimes effective communication) in situations where there are linguistically diverse interlocutors.

SR 14: English is a diverse language that accommodates everyone; it fosters communication amongst students and their educators, since we are from different cultures and speak different languages.

Theme: English creates a common understanding

SR 11: Makes it easy for everyone to understand because a lecture class has many people from different cultures and languages.

SR 12: We can understand what has been thought and it is the most used universal language.

SR 13: English is a language that everyone understands rather than everyone speaking their own.

SR 15: The significance of using English helps us to understand each other and have some form of understanding of the content presented even when we come from different cultures.

SR 22: The significance of using English in a learning environment is to cultivate a better conducive understanding and to accommodate and communicate well in class.

Theme: English as a Gateway to Academic and Global Opportunities

SR 21: We can understand this from several perspective because English is not the first language to most of the students, but we use it as a medium of instruction. And using English in our classes does not equip us as students only but it also prepares us for bigger opportunities and academic opportunities. it enhances our ability as students to engage internationally or collaborate.

SR 4: English is the global language we have as human, it is significant because it breaks barriers between cultures and native languages to foster a delicate and meaningful connection between people in their personal and professional lives.

Question: Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?

From the above question the following theme emerged

Theme: Language barriers and comprehension challenges

Staff responses

SP 4: In some cases, it does, especially when students are not fluent in English, it means that knowledge synthesis in a classroom environment is somehow limited.

SP 21: Every time. If I were to stick to English throughout my lesson, I doubt some of my students will understand the content.

SP 2: Oh yes. I have had many instances where students don't understand what I am saying because of language. I have had to learn to try to explain concepts in simple terms and in different ways to try to overcome this. I have also had students who bring their friends with them to my office to translate for them because their English proficiency is so poor.

SP 18: Many students struggle to engage with texts and learning materials that use academic English, which has an impact on classroom interaction. Sometimes it is difficult to clearly explain or discuss topics if students do not yet have the English academic vocabulary to do so. I think students may also be less likely to offer their opinions or discuss topics in depth, especially with the lecturer, if they are unsure of the language.

SP 11: Yes, the students' English leaves them struggling to articulate themselves on complex theoretical issues.

Theme: Reduced participation and confidence

Staff responses

SP 3: yes. some students are from rural areas and are less confident to express themselves in English.

SP 12: Yes — using English as the sole medium of instruction has, at times, created barriers for students who are more confident in their home languages, such as Isizulu, Sotho, Swati, IsiXhosa, Venda, Pedi, etc. Some learners struggle to express their ideas fully or ask questions, which limits meaningful classroom interaction. This can also affect their confidence and participation in class discussions. However, whenever I ask students to express themselves in local languages, more are willing to come out and share, even the shy-looking ones.

Question: Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom.

This question was answered by both students and staff members the question was the same for both participants.

Theme: Facilitating Cross-Cultural Communication

Staff responses

SP 14: Yes, it has. Out of all the 11 official languages, I know 3 so I cannot code-switch in class for emphasis in all these languages. However, English makes it easy because everyone understands the language, so it is better to communicate using it in class.

SP 16: Yes, it has. Since English is the lingua franca in South Africa, using English as the medium of instruction can allow students in a multilingual classroom to better understand each other and the lecturer. Using English as the primary language is simpler than everyone speaking all the languages that everyone else speaks and conversing in multiple languages at once. Still, even in classrooms where English is the main language, the use of other languages in the classroom should still be encouraged if students want to use them, especially in tutorial classes.

Theme: No language hasn't enhanced anything

Staff responses

SP 21: Lol! Enhanced? NO!

SP 2: It has created more barriers than it has opened opportunities.

SP 7: I believe that using English as a medium of instruction enables me to teach many students I would not have been able to if the medium of instruction were any other of, for example, South Africa's official languages. The universality of English enables one to teach across cultural and linguistic differences in a language that is mostly accessible to many students. Even students with a rudimentary grasp of English would be able to benefit from what I teach. Furthermore, English gives me an opportunity to interact with students outside of the classroom. I cannot communicate with each student in their home language, but communication via e-mail or discussions after lectures are easier when we share a common language. This also makes me more approachable, I believe.

SP 8: I would say yes and no. Because as much as the medium of instructions is English, some students in the first level of university cannot grasp the English language properly because they come from different backgrounds/ schooling system. So, in a way we

exclude them or rather they miss vital instructions in class thus impacting their academic journey negatively.

Theme: Access to Educational Resources and Knowledge

SP 1: Yes, for me, I would not have been able to teach them in Afrikaans (for example). And because I was trying to teach them academic literacy in English, it was important for them to hear the language and be forced to use the language, as it would in turn empower them when they had to write exams, essays, etc.

Students Responses

Theme: Facilitate cross cultural interaction

SR 1: Yes, when seeking assistance from fellow students who do not speak my home language, English always come in handy.

SR 19: Yes, it has improved my ability to talk with other students and lectures as it is a common language for communicating. It makes it easier to access study materials and understand them as they are written in English.

Theme: No English has not enhanced my ability interact within teaching and learning spaces

SR 9: No

SR16: No, it has never enhanced my ability because I'm scared to speak broken English in front of people.

SR 24: No, I sometimes do not see the necessity of speaking English, but I believe in expressing and interacting with people in my language.

Theme: English as a Tool for connection and mutual understanding in a diverse academic environment

SR 4: Yes, because most of the students use English to share ideas, and concepts to other people for understanding which makes everyone feel understood and comfortable.

SR 10: Yes, most definitely. English bridges language gaps that we have with different people so using it makes things much easier.

SR 18: Yes, it has enhanced my ability to interact with fellow students and the lecture. My communication skills using it has improved. I understand content better with it.

Theme: Help create fluency

SR 8: Yes, it has enhanced my ability as it helps me to speak English more fluently.

SR 5: As an international student, it enables one to access, engage and share information with diverse audiences.

SR 14: Yes, it has, it enhanced my linguistics skills, and I am now able to articulate myself well, especially in classroom debates.

SR 15: I believe it did, English makes it easy to interact with the content and helps us as students to be a unit and be in the same page unlike collaborating using our own home languages and never reaching common ground.

SR 20: Yes, using English as a medium of instruction has enhanced my ability to communicate with others because as much as the language is easily comprehended, there is still a lot that I am yet to learn about it, and using it while interacting with others is the best way to improve on it.

Reflection

The findings demonstrate that language plays a multifaceted and influential role within academic spaces. Firstly, language operates as a gatekeeper to knowledge, determining the extent to which students can access, interpret, and engage with academic content. At the same time, it serves as a medium for mutual understanding, fostering collaboration and shared meaning among diverse participants. Language also emerges as a tool for assessment and academic success, shaping how students demonstrate comprehension and competence in educational contexts. Beyond its functional role, language is closely tied to identity and inclusion, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and their position within academic communities. These findings highlight that language is not merely a communicative tool but a powerful determinant of access, achievement, and belonging within higher education. From a critical discourse perspective, these responses construct language—specifically English—as a gatekeeper that regulates students’ access to educational resources, cross-cultural communication, and opportunities for meaningful participation. The lexis used by participants, including expressions such as “*makes or breaks a student,*” “*handicapped,*” and “*measure of intelligence,*” is evaluative and high stakes, signalling that English proficiency is not merely helpful for communication but positions learners within a hierarchy of academic value. This language frames English competence as central to mutual understanding in multilingual classrooms, while simultaneously presenting limited proficiency as a language barrier that leads to comprehension problems and exclusion from classroom discourse. In SP19’s assertion that “English is a measure of intelligence,” the discourse reveals an underlying ideology in which linguistic ability is equated with intellectual capacity, thereby identifying English proficiency as a prerequisite for recognition as a legitimate knower. This positioning normalises English as the primary medium through which cross-cultural communication is

expected to occur, while obscuring structural constraints such as unequal prior schooling, mismatches between home and institutional languages, and entrenched linguistic prejudice. As a result, comprehension difficulties and communication breakdowns are attributed to individual deficiency rather than to systemic language arrangements, reinforcing unequal access to educational resources and limiting students' full participation in the academic environment.

4.4 Research question 2:

What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

This research question was divided into three subsections. The first subsection was created to understand the importance of language in interaction. This importance was gauged through the creation of a choice where participants get to state the language they would choose for learning and teaching. The question asked was.

If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to learn and engage in academic spaces using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

Table 1: The tables below reveal the languages students would like to use when learning and engaging in academic spaces, along with the reasons they chose those languages.

Table 2

Students' language choices	Reasoning for the choice
SR 1: English and my home language (Sesotho).	English to enhance my knowledge of the language and Sesotho to be able to easily understand what I am being thought.
SR 3: If I had to choose a language to learn and engage in academic spaces, I'd choose a language that facilitates global understanding and collaboration. Given the context, I'd choose a widely spoken language like: 1. English	The reasons for this choice would include: 1. Global connectivity: Facilitating communication and collaboration across cultures and borders. 2. Access to resources: Tapping into a vast pool of academic literature, research, and expertise. 3. Career opportunities: Enhancing opportunities for academic and professional growth globally.
SR 4: Russian	Because of how bold and commanding the language is, especially through Russian literature.
SR 5: English,	mainly because it is the language of commerce that allows one to access vast amounts of information and to collaborate on a global scale.
SR 6: I would always pick English,	it's easier to understand.
SR 7: Spanish.	I don't have a particular reason I just like it
SR 8: English,	I would choose English because it is the language that everyone can understand and interact with
SR 9: English	because most of the people speak and understand it
SR 10: Spanish	I find it interesting, the accent and its tone
SR 11: English	Most people can relate to the English language, and it is easy to learn
SR 12: French	because it's mostly spoken by the rich.
SR 13: IsiZulu	It is my mother tongue and It's easier to speak
SR 14: Spanish	because I like challenge and Spanish is not a simple language to learn, again I that one day it will come in handy, as I am interested in travelling.
SR 15: I would pick Afrikaans	because I simply love Afrikaans and back in high school, I never got to learn it.
SR 16: Tswana	because I'm Tswana and I speak Setswana fluently more than any other language

SR 17: I would choose either Sesotho or Zulu	because they are the most common and easier languages to learn to speak and understand.
SR 18: I could pick the language English	English because it is the only language that accommodates all of us as students who come from different backgrounds with different cultures and languages
SR 19: English	because it a language that people with different languages use to communicate and understand each other and it has a nice vocabulary of words. It is also easily understood by everyone around the world.
SR 20: English	Because it is widely spoken and understood, which makes it useful for communication.
SR 21: Sesotho	since this is my home language, I think it will better for everyone to learn everything in their own language to understand better and be able to answer questions because this will be their home language
SR 22: I would choose English	because it would be easy for all of us to communicate well verbally. Also, it would be making things easy for everyone to engage in academic spaces.
SR 23: I would pick sign language	because I haven't gotten the chance to do so and I have no experience in using it for communication. I love learning new things so I think that it would be cool to be in a world where people talk but not necessarily using their voices. As an introvert that would be ideal because it's less talking meaning less noise yet more communication, which is something I don't get to do currently.
SR 24: Tsotsi Taal	because I grew up in a township where we used different languages to form one language, and the Tsotsi taal (veal language or Gauteng) is gaslighted; however, during academics, it's hard for some students to understand something because they are used to communicating in that language. In lecture classes, it happens a student knows the answer but struggles to answer because they are not fluent in English or they are afraid of being judged for not speaking module C English. As a result, most students feel excluded and lastly.... having to come from a place where many languages are spoken and you arrive in Free State Qwaqwa, you are now questioned why you chose to do Sesotho because your ascent is different from theirs.
SR 25: I would pick Tswana or Sesotho	These are similar and interesting languages. I feel like they give you're the challenge of knowing as well as finding information on some things.

If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to teach using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why.

The table below reflects the language staff members would like to use when teaching and the reason why.

Staff responses

Table 2 reflects staff members' choice of language and the reasoning behind the choice.

Table 3

Staff Responses	Reasoning
SP 1: home language, Afrikaans, English	It depends on who I teach to I am most comfortable in my home language, Afrikaans, but due to its limitations in reaching more people, I would most probably choose English.
SP 2: I would be able to speak all the languages of my students	so that I can teach them in both English and their mother tongues. I would want to instruct them in English to prepare them for the globalised society but also be able to hear their thoughts and explain concepts to them in the language that resonates with their identities.
SP 3: Sesotho	it is my mother tongue. I can express myself to the fullest.
SP 4: IsiZulu	because it is my mother tongue. This will ensure accurate content delivery
SP 5: English	English because it is widely used
SP 6: I would pick a mix of Sesotho and English	mainly because SA is a diverse country using different languages for the purpose of learning and teaching, it also makes it easy for students to grasp certain content when spoken in their native languages
SP 7: English	Though not my mother tongue, it is a language I am passionate about. I love its inner workings, its linguistic and pragmatic oddities, its dialects and idiolects. I love its use in poetry, novels, drama, life writing; I love writing in it and using it to converse. And I love teaching others how to love it.
SP 8: I would pick Sepedi	which is my mother tongue. I think it does not limit how I can express myself and the extent to which I can do so.
SP 9: IsiXhosa	because it is my mother tongue and it is the language I understand the best and I can express myself properly.
SP 10: IsiZulu	the reason for this is because it is the language I was born into, it is the first language I knew, so everyone might say it is the language they inherit.
SP 11: English	because I teach English literature and I speak English
SP 12: I'd pick multiple languages	predominantly use my mother languages/vernacular
SP 13: English	it was the easiest for me to learn, and due to it being used globally I believe it was the easiest to

	learn among all the world's languages so people will be able to learn it a lot easier
SP 14: IsiZulu	Most people want to teach their kids English of which is okay, however they do not give Nguni languages the same respect as they give to English. So, I think continuing to teach a Nguni language will help the younger generation to see that our Nguni languages are also important
SP 15: English	
SP 16:	It's hard to imagine that, considering that most of the knowledge production is not in African languages. So, teaching in English is ideal considering the context provided
SP 17: I would teach in English and an African language, isiZulu or Sesotho	because those are widely spoken languages on the UFS campus where I teach
SP 18: isiZulu	It is my mother tongue, I feel comfortable in expressing myself in the language that I am familiar with.
SP 19: I would pick my own native language isiZulu	because I am best able to articulate my thoughts, my expertise and ideas in my language.
SP 20:	I just found this question funny because yet, language in a classroom can be a problem. Especially if the LOLT is different from the students' home language. In my ideal world, given the fact that I love to develop, deliver and share content, I would teach in a language that is the same as the students' home language. This would help clear any confusion that often arise because of language in a classroom.
SP 21: English	
SP 22	A mixture of languages to drive and promote understanding, because of the nature of our student population, which is diverse.

The second section of answering research question 2 focused on establishing how power is maintained and reinforced within interaction, so the approach to answering this was structured through two questions. It was found that power is embedded and enacted through the implementation and maintenance of policy. Furthermore, knowledge is power, so getting to know whether participants are familiar with the University's language policy or not.

What do you think about the University's language policy?

Staff responses

SP 1: I think it is a very good policy. It is flexible yet enables us to meet one another in the middle.

SP 2: I think it is important that the language of instruction is English because the

students need to leave university with proficiency in the language. I also think it is important so that students are treated unequally (for example in the case of modules being taught in Afrikaans). That said, I am very pleased that the university is beginning to embrace multilingualism in various contexts and particularly look forward to seeing it play out in tutorials.

SP 3: The university policy recognises four languages. The recognition of translanguaging will go a long way in enhancing teaching and learning.

SP 4: The university language policy is empowering teaching and learning by removing language barrier. Nevertheless, more still must be done in expanding the policy into assessments and other elements of teaching and learning.

SP 6: I have learnt that it allows the use of translanguaging which plays a huge role in students learning.

SP 7: I cannot say that I am familiar with it apart from the fact that I believe English is the general medium of instruction (apart from in other language subjects, like African languages, German, French, etc.).

SP 8: I like that it encourages multilingualism instead of only English, especially given the demographics of the QwaQwa campus.

SP 9: I think it is progressive now that the university is embracing a multilingual society and encouraging students, tutors, facilitators and lecturers to communicate in their native tongues in the classroom. It is a step towards the right direction and hopefully everyone will get to embrace it.

SP 10: The policy is well-structured, it enforces multilingualism in classrooms for most cases, however, it presents a challenge in modules that are English based (ENGL and GENL), so some elements of code-switching or Trans-lingual (Ing) can be practiced in this case.

SP 11: I am afraid I don't know anything about it.

SP 12: So far, they are trying. They should even incorporate more indigenous languages as well as Kiswahili.

SP 14: I think it is inclusive because it allows all modules to be taught in a language that is understood by every student, and it does not limit other languages in their respective modules.

SP 15: I have confidence in it.

SP 23: Great on paper, but there is a gap in implementation.

Student responses

Theme: I've never had of the policy

SR 1: I do not know anything about it.

SR 10: I don't know, I have never heard about it.

Theme: Language policy is inclusive

SR 2: It is still at a primitive state as far as multilingualism is concerned.

SR 11: I think it is good; however, some improvements must be done.

Theme: Diversity and fosters cultural inclusivity

SR 3: The university's language policy can have a significant impact on students, faculty, and staff. It fosters a diverse and inclusive environment.

SR 4: It is unique because it promotes multilingualism, and students get to learn other languages around campus.

SR 9: Honestly, I think it's okay. I really don't see the need to communicate in other languages. Knowing English and knowing how to articulate yourself in English puts you in a better position for job opportunities.

SR 13: I think it's good as it includes use of different language which creates communication in different languages and learning of other languages.

SR 16: It is good because it allows language inclusivity because everyone gets to embrace their own language there is no limitation to strictly use English when you are in school premises.

SR 6: I think the policy is great as it favours inclusivity and multiculturalism.

Theme: The UFS language policy is biased

SR 6: I think it's not fair because some of us are not majoring in Zulu only.

SR 20: I think it's fair because in our university we have multilingualism this means you can explain something that's written in English in your own language.

The exploration of the University's language policy, participants' ideal language preferences, and the relationship between language, power, and interaction reveals that language remains central to shaping teaching and learning experiences. The findings suggest that while the University's language policy aspires to promote multilingualism and inclusivity, its implementation remains limited, with English continuing to dominate academic communication. This dominance reinforces existing hierarchies of power, positioning those fluent in English as more authoritative and confident participants, while students who struggle with it often experience marginalisation or reduced engagement. When imagining an ideal

teaching context, participants expressed a strong desire to use indigenous languages such as Sesotho or isiZulu—languages that better reflect students’ cultural identities and enhance comprehension—while still acknowledging the practical and global significance of English. Overall, the study concludes that language, power, and interaction are deeply interconnected: language not only facilitates communication but also shapes access to knowledge, identity, and participation.

Reflection

From a critical discourse lens, these responses construct the language policy as an enactment of power, shaping who can participate fully in academic life and on what terms. Rather than functioning as a neutral administrative framework, the language policy operates as a regulatory mechanism that determines access to valued forms of knowledge, participation, and recognition within the university. The lexicon used by participants, such as “*diverse*,” “*fosters one community*,” and “*not fair*,” reveals competing interpretations of the policy and underlying power struggles over linguistic inclusion and exclusion. While SR5’s claim that “*it is diverse and fosters one community*”, the response reflects an institutional discourse of cohesion and unity. On the other hand, SR7’s response, “I think that is not fair because some of us are not majoring in Zulu only”, disrupts this narrative by foregrounding inequity and lack of choice. These contrasting evaluations reveal the underlying ideology that the policy does not simply describe language as helpful or useful; rather, it positions the five recognised languages as meaning-making languages in academic spaces. This positioning is reinforced by the assertion that “*English is inclusive*,” which reveals a powerful underlying ideology in which competence in English is conflated with intellectual worth. Such discourse normalises English as the standard against which students’ academic potential is judged, while obscuring structural factors such as unequal schooling, mismatches between home and institutional languages, and persistent linguistic prejudice. Crucially, the absence of genuine choice in selecting a preferred language of instruction further marginalises students whose linguistic repertoires fall outside dominant languages, limiting their agency and reinforcing asymmetrical power relations. In this way, university language policies both reflect and reproduce institutional power, presenting inclusion rhetorically while sustaining hierarchies that privilege certain languages and identities over others.

4.5 Research question 3:

What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

From the above research question, two questions were created to elicit and response.

Question 1: Discuss classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus.

Staff responses

Theme: Limitations embedded in the classroom dynamics

SP 10: The language dynamics reflect broader societal hierarchies. Students who are more proficient in English often dominate discussions, which is something we need to address.

SP 14: I think the classroom language dynamics are positive, but there is a need to be more mindful of students who struggle with English to ensure they are fully included in discussions.

SP 7: Overall, while English enables cross-cultural communication, attention must be paid to linguistic equity so that all students can participate fully and confidently.

Theme: Code switching and translanguaging

SP 4: I've observed that students often support each other by using their home languages in group work, which is helpful for understanding but can limit whole-class interactions in English.

SP 20: I encourage code-switching in small groups to enhance comprehension, but formal presentations and assessments still rely heavily on English.

SP 17: Overall, while English enables cross-cultural communication, attention must be paid to linguistic equity so that all students can participate fully and confidently.

Question 1: Discuss classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

From the above question these are the themes found

Student responses

Theme: Language Identity and Belonging

SR 20: Other lectures use their language when explain things in class which makes it hard for students with other languages to follow the lesson and understand. There

should be more usage of the inclusive language in teaching and learning so that everyone can understand and participate.

SR 17: I think as much as English is used as a medium of instruction, the Zulu language dominates in our campus and I have noticed that most of our lectures, the school staff included, tend to accommodate the Zulu language a lot more than the other languages.

SR 13: English helps as a common language that everyone can understand, even if it's not perfect for everyone. I think it's better to use English in class to avoid confusion, but staff should still be patient and supportive when students struggle and allow explanations in other languages when necessary.

SR 12: I think the way we communicate we could use more Of English than other languages because we come from different cultures and use different languages to communicate.

SR 7: I think Sesotho is the most prioritised language in a classroom environment, you will find a Sesotho student answering in Sesotho and no one will translate neither the lecture because it is believed that all students in that class understood what is said, but if other answers in their native someone must translate for others to understand.

Theme: Positive Perceptions of Classroom Interaction

SR 11: The interaction in classrooms is amazing; I personally wouldn't change anything.

SR 8: No, I don't have any thought because I think it is right the way it is.

SR 4: he language dynamic is perfectly suited for everyone and it promotes learning, growing and sharing knowledge within a classroom without creating a questionable experience.

Theme: The Need for Multilingual Flexibility in Classroom Interaction

SR 10: Yes, I think students shouldn't be forced to speak English, but they should interact with their languages since sometimes students fail to understand because of barrier.

Theme: Presence of Multiple Home Languages

Staff Responses

SP 5: By communicating in English, Sesotho and IsiZulu

SP 5: Yes, I usually use material or examples from different cultural contexts and allow students to share certain aspects of their language.

Student responses

SR 24 They should promote equality and multiculturalism because on the QwaQwa campus, they only focus on Sotho, English, and Zulu languages. What about others?

SR 23: Some lecturers do allow for other languages to be used in class while others do not. We are a very diverse campus which forces us to learn other languages to get a better understanding of what the other person is saying.

Question 2: How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?

From the above question these are the themes found

Theme: Encouraging Multilingual Expressions

Staff responses

SP 2: I allow students to discuss the content or certain difficult elements using any language of their choosing, but responses need to be provided in English, so that everyone understands.

SP 9: I like that it encourages multilingualism instead of only English, especially given the demographics of the QwaQwa campus.

SP 10: As a facilitator I have tried to speak my home language and other languages that I have known of in the classroom thus encouraging students to interact with me in their home languages as well given that we can all understand each other. So, it is a mixing of languages of some sort but, we rely on English to make most point across.

SP 11: Students can answer in Sotho verbally and a peer will translate.

Theme: Translanguaging and code-switching practices

SP 3: I am not proficient in any African language, so I see my own incompetence as a barrier to fully embracing language inclusivity in the classroom. What I can do is, if I see a student struggling to express themselves in English, I have them state what they are trying to say in their mother tongue and then ask other students to help them translate. This has benefited students in being able to express themselves in class.

SP 7: I have learnt that it allows the use of translanguaging, which plays a huge role in students' learning. I switch from one language to another to ensure everyone understands.

SP 12: I teach English. So, I foster language inclusivity in my classroom by creating a supportive environment where students, age, ethnicity, or colour, notwithstanding, feel free to express themselves in the languages they are most comfortable with when

necessary. I encourage code-switching (though not that much because I'm also limited in understanding the various languages) during discussions to help clarify ideas and ensure understanding, while gradually guiding students towards using academic English where appropriate. Additionally, I use visual aids and simplified explanations to bridge language gaps. I also acknowledge and celebrate the linguistic diversity in the classroom, integrating multilingual examples and encouraging students to share how concepts are expressed in their home languages. Sometimes, I ask different students from different ethnicities to make sense of each other's concepts in theirs and then do the same in mine as well.

SP 15: In my classes, I allow students to have group discussions using their home languages considering that everyone in the group understands the language, however, when presenting, they would use English to communicate with the whole class so that everyone may understand.

SP 19: I ask students to feel free in responding in their home language to peers who speak the similar language. Then we proceed to have discussions.

SP 22: When discussing in groups students are allowed to use their languages and report back in English.

SP 23: Using translanguaging strategies.

Theme: Developing academic language proficiency

SP 14: I strive to make everyone feel comfortable using the language they are most familiar with. I respect different languages and encourage learners to share their thoughts, even if their grammar isn't perfect. It's more important to be heard and understood than to speak perfectly.

Theme: I don't do anything to foster language inclusion

SP 6: I have not been doing any strategies for that.

SP 8: To be honest, I do not think that I do. It is challenging to teach academic writing and its conventions without using examples from academic writing which is in English. I try to use a variety of scholarship, primarily from African and South African authors, on African and South African issues in my instruction; many of these include colloquial terms. However, the decolonisation of academic writing has not yet come to the point where there are other academic writing conventions I could teach. I am, after all, beholden to the prescriptions of the UFS's style guides and writing norms.

Question 3: Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom?

Student response

Theme: No, language inclusivity is not fostered in classrooms

SR 2: No, because even though constitutionally all SA languages are official, English remains hegemonic in what defines a classroom experience at UFS and in many (if not all) SA universities.

SR 3: No, language inclusivity is not fostered:

SR 7: No because it is a fact that not everyone understands English and it is the only language used as a medium of instruction, learners are not given a chance to express themselves in their natives because if they do the next person will not understand, even if translated some information may be omitted or misunderstood.

SR 13: Only one language is used, strictly English, and students don't get to express themselves in their languages so No

SR 19: No, lectures sometimes use their own languages and allow learners who speak the same language as them to use their language in class this makes other learners to feel excluded as they happen not to understand what is being said and they don't even translate for them to understand.

SR 22: No because some lectures do not allow us to answer in our own language and this makes learning very difficult for us as students.

Theme: Developing academic language proficiency

Student responses

SR 5: Yes, it is, everyone in my classroom is in love with the English language, because of how it pushes us to learn and grow within our learning environment.

Theme: language inclusivity is only fostered in tutorials

SR 24: it is a 50/50 situation because other classes foster inclusivity (Tutorials) whereas in some lecture classes, inclusivity is not fostered.

Theme: Translanguaging and code switching as a form of language inclusivity

Student Response

SR 7: Yes, it is. Some Lectures now allow us to explain in our languages and if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English.

SR 17: Yes, it is, since the classroom accommodates students from different backgrounds speaking different languages, we are all allowed to express ourselves in our home languages, that way we somehow learn to speak or understand different languages.

SR 11: Yes, it is fostered because one can use their language to explain things they struggle to explain in English.

SR 23: It is because some lecturers allow students to ask questions in their languages then the lecturer will translate to the whole class what it means in English.

Reflection

The exploration of the above research question reveals that language inclusivity and classroom dynamics on the Qwaqwa Campus reflect the progress made in promoting inclusive learning spaces. Challenges remain, but English continues to dominate as the primary medium of instruction, often shaping participation patterns and access to knowledge. Although both students and staff recognise the importance of linguistic diversity, the degree to which inclusivity is fostered varies across classrooms. Some educators actively implement inclusive strategies such as allowing code-switching and creating supportive environments for multilingual expression, while others adhere strictly to English, unintentionally creating linguistic barriers. The classroom

Language dynamics thus reflect broader issues of power, identity, and access within the higher education sector.

From a critical discourse perspective, participants' responses reveal a tension between symbolic inclusion and structural dominance in the linguistic order of the classroom. While SR 7 frames multilingual practices as "*allowed*" by lecturers, the modal verb *allow* is ideologically loaded, positioning lecturers as authoritative gatekeepers who sanction when and how African languages may be used. The conditional nature of this inclusion, "*if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English*", constructs English as the ultimate language of validation and comprehension, relegating other languages to a transitional or auxiliary role. Multilingualism is therefore not normalised as an epistemic resource but tolerated only insofar as it culminates in English. In contrast, SR 2 explicitly names this imbalance by invoking the constitutional recognition of all South African languages while simultaneously highlighting English's hegemonic function in defining "*what counts*" as legitimate classroom discourse. The contrast between formal constitutional equality and lived linguistic practice exposes a discursive contradiction, where institutional language policy gestures toward inclusivity while

everyday pedagogic interactions reproduce linguistic hierarchies that privilege English. Collectively, these responses illustrate how language operates as a disseminator of power, shaping access to participation, knowledge production, and academic legitimacy within the university space.

4.6 Limitations based on the data

A key limitation of using an online questionnaire that I have found after analysing the data is that filling out the questionnaire was problematic for some participants; this was evident in the manner they answered some questions. Some participants provided vague answers that lacked depth. Some questions were not clear and left participants confused; instead of giving in-depth answers, since the questionnaire is open-ended, they provided closed-ended answers. Maybe having additional interviews would have provided more details in areas where participants provided vague answers that show a lack of understanding on what they needed to do.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, from the responses above, one can deduce that language functions as both a bridge and a barrier within higher education. English facilitates academic cohesion, access to global knowledge, and professional advancement, yet it simultaneously reproduces systemic inequalities. The multilingual realities present on campus present opportunities for transformation and learning through embracing linguistic diversity. The acknowledgement of diverse languages fosters inclusion, equity, and a sense of belonging. For language inclusivity to be realised, the institution must move beyond policy recognition to more intense practical, pedagogical, and policy-driven strategies that legitimise all languages as resources for learning and interaction.

The findings from the students and staff questionnaire revealed that the use of English as a medium of instruction both facilitates and constrains interaction between students and academic staff within various teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. English functions as a unifying communicative tool that enables students and lecturers from diverse linguistic backgrounds to engage in academic discourse within a shared space. This shared language promotes inclusion across ethnic and cultural lines, allowing for mutual understanding and access to global academic resour

5 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the data analysed in Chapter 4. It presents the discussion and interpretation of the main findings. It aims to discuss the themes, link them to existing literature and apply the theoretical framework to the data. Furthermore, the chapter maps out participants' experience of language within the UFS Qwaqwa campus teaching and learning spaces and provides insight into the language dynamics that exist on campus. Moreover, this chapter aims to narrate and map out participants' experiences of language through the analysis of the responses they provided on the questionnaire. The chapter discusses the dual position language holds as both an enabler and a restrictor of meaningful interactions within teaching and learning spaces. These interactions include engagement with the content, as well as interactions between academic staff members and students. The chapter is further divided into three subsections, each aimed at answering and reflecting on the study's research questions. Each subsection begins with a discussion of the dual position that participants assign to English. It further applies the theory to the responses participants provided in the questionnaires. Finally, this chapter is structured as follows: it begins by summarising the key findings based on each research question. It then applies the data to Fairclough's three-tiered model to explore broader meanings and significance of the results within the context of language use, power relations, and inclusivity in higher education. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting the main insights drawn from the study and provides recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

5.1 Reflecting on the dual role of language

Research question 1: How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

This research question focuses on uncovering how English enhances or limits students' and academic staff members' abilities to interact within teaching and learning spaces such as lecture halls, facilitation sessions and others. The chapter aims to narrate how participants have experienced either limited or enhanced interactions due to the use of English.

English can enhance interaction in multilingual classrooms in several ways, depending on the space, context, and proficiency level one possesses or finds oneself in. Existing literature on the use of English in multilingual classrooms and how language enhances interaction points to the fact that “the interaction in the multilingual EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom needs a lot of help from the teacher. The teacher must find appropriate methods to teach using English. The teacher needs to adapt their teaching to accommodate minority language students” (Idris, Adliah and Alfina 2020:382). These methods are discussed by Intarapanich (2013: 308-310), who conducted a study focusing on the EFL teaching methods and approaches used in English foreign language classes in the Lao PDR. The study reveals various methods teachers employ to foster learning in EFL classrooms. At the primary level, teachers provide learners with small amounts of English content, enabling learners and teachers to focus on correct pronunciation, grammar, and spelling-related activities. These teaching processes are done bilingually. The secondary-level findings reveal that teachers who use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Audio-lingual Method (ALM) focus their teaching on communication and discussion sessions, including dialogues. When EFL students have grasped the grammatical aspects of the language, the next phase is to develop language proficiency through discussions, role-playing, and other communicative methods. This suggests that the primary role of a lecturer or teacher in a multilingual classroom with ESL/EFL students is to ensure that effective teaching methods are developed, methods that meet the students' needs, and that these methods are used to facilitate learning. Furthermore, the role of a teacher is to ensure that students understand both the language used for teaching and learning and the content being delivered. So, in the context of the UFS Qwaqwa campus, where a classroom is a rainbow nation filled with a majority of African language speakers, lecturers can't employ bilingual approaches because the environment is multilingual, and the use of bilingualism will further perpetuate the subjugation of ESL students. This subjugation is maintained through making one's language seem inferior, as it is not represented in the teaching and learning space. In closing, the use of English in multilingual spaces should be viewed not only as a benefit but also as a challenge.

Based on research question 1, which focuses on participants' narratives about how language has both limited and enhanced their ability to interact in classrooms. Three questions were formulated to help answer the research question. These questions were used to generate responses. See below for questions asked to students and those posed to staff members.

Staff questionnaire questions

4. How important is language and its usage in a classroom? (Please provide a detailed response.)
5. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?
6. Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom.

Student questionnaire questions

4. What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class? (Provided detailed response)
5. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
6. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever enhanced your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.

From the above questions, nine themes emerged in the responses given by both staff and student participants. The themes are as follows:

10. Language as a gatekeeper to knowledge
11. Language creates mutual understanding.
- 12.** Language foster's identity creation and inclusion
13. English links various cultures
14. No language hasn't enhanced anything.
15. English creates a common understanding,
16. English bridges barriers created by a Multilingual setting,
17. English as a gateway to academic and global opportunities
18. Facilitate cross-cultural interaction, access to educational resources and knowledge,

The above themes were combined under a single umbrella theme titled "The Role of English in Creating, Challenging, and Maintaining Knowledge, Culture, Identity, and Global Connectivity."

The theme focuses on how English is a powerful tool that shapes the cultural, social, and academic realities of non-native speakers. The theme examines the ways in which English contributes to the circulation and production of knowledge in teaching and learning environments. Furthermore, the themes look at how English can challenge existing cultural and linguistic identities by privileging certain languages over others. Finally, the theme recognises

English as a tool that connects people from diverse global environments. Staff participants (SP) 13 best reflect the theme when stating that.

SP 13 “Yes — using English as a medium of instruction has enabled me to communicate with a diverse group of students in a common, widely understood language. Consider that I don't speak any South African languages. It allows access to a broader range of educational resources and materials, enriching classroom learning. Additionally, it prepares students for further studies and global opportunities where English is often the dominant medium”.

This response highlights the transformative power of English, not only as a medium for communication between diverse people but also as an enabler for gaining access to the global work, research, and learning environment. The theme suggests that language simultaneously enables global participation and knowledge exchange. Rao (2019:72-73) notes that the transformative power of English lies in its ability to be used in various societies and sectors, including education, business, and media. So, having proficiency is a benefit because it ensures access to a wider and more globalised environment.

In addition, the theme also examines how language challenges and reshapes cultural and linguistic identities in both empowering and restrictive ways. Xulu-Gama and Hadebe (2022: 293) questions whether there can be genuine democracy in South Africa when prevailing post-apartheid institutions continue to foster forms of knowledge that produce inequalities, which underprivilege the African majority. The authors suggest that language continues to be used to perpetuate inequality in South Africa, as it determines who can access information and education. As a result, using English in teaching and learning spaces creates in-groups and out-groups, which further perpetuates a sense of alienation. The in-group consists of those who understand the language, are confident in using it, and whose knowledge acquisition journey is not hindered by the language. On the other hand, the out-group refers to people who do not understand the language used in teaching and learning spaces, or those who are disadvantaged by the language, as it hinders their knowledge acquisition journey. In the case of the study, in-groups can be both academic staff members who are proficient in English and are comfortable teaching and learning using the language, and the out-groups are students and staff members who feel that English is a hindrance to their teaching and learning encounters. These ideas are evident in the study and are articulated by SP 2,15, and 19, who discuss how language can be exclusionary to those who lack proficiency in it and how the lack of proficiency poses challenges for ESL students.

SP 2: Language is important. I see students who struggle with English and therefore

never really master important concepts. It isn't that they don't have the aptitude to understand the concepts; it's just that they struggle with the terminology. That said, it is essential that they can express stuff and demonstrate their mastery of English subjects, as they will need to do so in their careers. So, language has the potential to open opportunities, but also the potential to create barriers for our students.

SP 15: Without language proficiency, a student would be seriously handicapped in social life and in the world of work. Along with numeracy and some form of moral education, it's crucial.

SP 19: Language is very important because it makes or breaks a student. It is no doubt that most students believe that English is a measure of intelligence. Therefore, if English is the only language that is used in the classroom, some students tend to think they cannot have a successful academic journey.

It is evident from the responses above that English fulfils a gatekeeping role when one lacks proficiency in it, because it limits their ability to interact with the content. Additionally, a lack of proficiency may impact how one socially engages with others within teaching spaces and the future work environment. Therefore, the use of English as the sole language of instruction and assessment further perpetuates inequality, as those who lack proficiency are perceived and might perceive themselves as lacking the competency to fully participate in the teaching and learning environments. Wijayanti (2024: 35) states that language proficiency becomes a prerequisite for epistemological access — the ability to acquire, produce, and share knowledge. Therefore, English is seen as an enabler to academic success and access to global markets and workspaces. It also a challenge for an ESL student who lacks the prerequisite language proficiency. Giang (2025:136) also states that “English proficiency has become an essential skill in both academic and professional environments, serving as a gateway to better career opportunities and global interactions. In the era of globalisation, proficiency in English is no longer a luxury but a necessity for individuals seeking to excel in international markets and academia”. Therefore, the lack of proficiency in English poses challenges; ESL students may feel excluded from global work and academic spaces, because these spaces are often positioned to require proficiency in English. In the context of this study, the above assertions reflect the challenges faced by some ESL students. Where proficiency in English means access, this implies that ESL students must work twice as hard to gain access to the globalised work environment, and they are doubly marginalised. Firstly, by the language, and secondly, by the requirement to have proficiency in English. This view reflects one side of the dual role English plays. It showcases how exclusionary markers of the language are not only evident in the

classroom through interactions, content and assessments, but the exclusion continues even outside teaching and learning spaces. These exclusionary factors are also evident in the labour market. Therefore, I argue that this reflects how globalisation reinforces English dominance and shapes who gets access to opportunities.

The role of English in fostering interaction is not always negative; at times, the use of English is positive and reaffirming. This is evident in Student Respondent (SR) 16,17,18,11 and 2 who speak about the positive side of using English in a multilingual space.

SR 16: Since English is a universal language and is the number one language used to communicate amongst different groups of languages. It's significance in a lecture class is to ensure that every student from a different language group understands the topic and lessons being taught.

SR 17: Since a lecture hall accommodates students from different backgrounds, with different home languages, English always comes into rescue when there is language barrier in communications amongst students.

SR 18: The importance of using English is to ensure that everyone in a lecture room understands. In a lecture room, we have different languages, and it becomes a barrier to communication with others.

The above three responses position English as a unifying language, a glue that connects people of diverse linguistic dynamics. SR16 response places emphasis on the idea that English is a “universal language”. It is a language used by people from diverse groups to ensure mutual understanding, as evidenced by the fact that “every student from a different language group understands,” indicating that English is perceived as a practical solution for enabling comprehension and facilitating equitable access to lecture content. In addition, SR17 reinforces this idea by highlighting English as the language that “comes to the rescue” when communication barriers arise. The use of rescue implies that multilingualism is a problem in a Multicultural setting, and thus English becomes the solution. This student's response reflects how students, at times, internalise the institutional language ideology that constructs English as the primary medium for academic success. The responses further reflect how students and staff members sometimes view linguistic diversity as something that complicates teaching and learning, suggesting that multilingual realities are not fully embraced but rather managed using English. Furthermore, SR18 further reveals how students see English as a mechanism to “ensure that everyone...understands.” The repeated emphasis on understanding, communication, and overcoming barriers demonstrates that students recognise the limitations created by language diversity in lecture halls. As a result, English is perceived as the common

ground that enables participation and knowledge exchange.

5.1.1 Application of Fairclough's 3D/ tiered model

This section provides a deconstruction of the text. The text in this regard refers to the responses students and academic staff members provided when completing the online questionnaire used to gather data. The text is analysed using Fairclough's 3D model, which is broken down into three dimensions: the textual dimension, the discursive dimension, and the social practice dimension. This was done to reveal and explore the hidden meanings contained in the transcript/ response.

5.1.1.2 Text dimension

The text dimension is the first level of Fairclough's model, which focuses on the text as both written and spoken languages. The text level aims to understand how language is used to convey meaning and how language reflects or reinforces certain ideologies. The key feature of text analysis includes lexical choices, which refer to words used in the text to reveal underlying ideologies and power struggles. The second feature is grammar and syntax, which focuses on sentence structure, including the passive and active voice, among others. There is also intertextuality, which reflects how the text references or incorporates other texts (Alassiri 2024:04).

When applying the text dimension to the responses participants provided on the questionnaire, the analysis focused on indicating the language of the discourse. This involves uncovering word forms, phrases, sentence structures, and grammar, revealing the ideologies and power relations that are evident in the language. However, for the purpose of this research, I focused only on lexical items. Dewangga, Budianto and Wijaya (2025:73), in a study titled "Fairclough's Three Dimension Critical Analysis of Malcolm X's speech at the Oxford Union debate", apply the text practice dimension using positive and negative lexical items. They state that there are certain words or phrases in Malcom X's speech transcript that can be classified as positive and negative lexical items. Positive lexical items refer to words or phrases that have positive connotations or give a good image to the subject, as evidenced in the use of phrases such as "freedom fighters", "brotherhood", and "better world." Meanwhile, negative lexical items are forms of words or phrases that carry negative connotations or convey a bad image of the subject in the form of a certain group or class, such as "oppressor", "cold-blooded murder", "deceitful methods", and "unwillingness." This study employs the use of positive and negative lexical items because this approach reflects the recurring theme evident in the chapter, namely, the dual role language plays in interaction. So, using positive and negative lexical items clearly

outlines this duality by examining the words used by participants, which reinforce inclusion and exclusion criteria.

5.1.1.3 Positive and negative lexical choices

When analysing data using words/phrases that are repeated by multiple participants, these can be positive or negative phrases. Positive words or phrases are reaffirming and show mutual understanding. Examples of these words, as extracted from the questionnaire, are represented in the table below:

Table 3 presents the participants frequently used positive phrases and discusses the broader context that the phrases reflect. The table provides a glimpse in how some participants positively view the use of English in their teaching and learning spaces.

Table 4

Positive words or phrases	Type of words	Application
Language inclusivity	Abstract noun	Reflects how English promotes equality and acknowledges linguistic diversity. The phrase reflects inclusion and fairness
Means of communication	Descriptive noun	English is positioned as a tool that enables interaction, showing its instrumental role in social and academic exchange.
Mutual understanding	Relational/ emotional phrase	Highlights reciprocity and shared meaning, signalling collaboration and empathy among speakers.
Easily Understood	Evaluative adjective phrase	Suggests clarity and accessibility in communication, showing that English simplifies interaction.
English Bridges	Metaphorical phrase	A strong metaphor representing unity and connection — portrays English as a linking force across linguistic and cultural boundaries.
Better understanding	Comparative phrase	Conveys improvement and intellectual progress; implies that English enhances comprehension and learning

The table above clearly shows that words and phrases reflect how meaning is embedded in language. The words that speakers use reflect their own views and experiences of language

within interactions and the world around them. Altun (2023:362) posits that language can be used to dominate narratives, sway public opinion, and manage large populations. This suggests that language plays a profoundly influential role in people's lives, defining and shaping how they react to and perceive the world around them. Furthermore, the language one uses reflects their experiences, which is evident when they use positive phrases to describe and recollect their experiences within teaching and learning spaces. Both academic staff members and students frequently used the phrases 'language inclusivity,' 'mutual understanding,' and 'English bridges' to reflect how language can be used to foster inclusivity and how it is already utilised across multiple linguistic platforms as a tool that promotes inclusion. These ideas are evident in SP 8 response stating that.

“I believe that using English as a medium of instruction enables me to teach many students I would not have been able to if the medium of instruction were any other of, for example, South Africa's official languages. The universality of English enables one to teach across cultural and linguistic differences in a language that is mostly accessible to many students. Even students with a rudimentary grasp of English can benefit from what I teach. Furthermore, English provides me with an opportunity to interact with students outside the classroom. I cannot communicate with each student in their home language, but communication via e-mail or discussions after lectures is easier when we share a common language. This also makes me more approachable, I believe.”

This response reflects how participants view the use of English as a lingua franca, but also as a tool that enables cross-cultural interaction, facilitating meaningful interaction both within and outside the classroom. Therefore, I argue that the experience of ESL or EFL students is not always shaped by negative, marginalising experiences; at times, the use of English in any multilingual classroom encounters provides space for meaningful, inclusive encounters and interactions that require and foster cultural sensitivity. Therefore, is evident that the use of positive words such as English bridges reflects the enhancing side of English, where it acts as a support system that connects students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Negative lexical choices

Refers to words and expressions that reflect resistance, struggle, and power imbalance. These words reveal discrimination, unfair preferences, hidden struggles, or inequalities that are embedded in the discourse

Table 3.1 presents the participants frequently used negative phrases and discusses the broader context that the phrases reflect. The table provides a glimpse in how some participants negatively view the use of English in their teaching and learning spaces.

Table 3.1

Negative Words/phrases	Type of words	Text Dimension
Language barrier	Metaphorical phrase	A powerful metaphor indicating obstruction and separation. It constructs English (or lack of proficiency) as a physical wall that prevents communication, participation, and inclusion. Reflects exclusionary discourse
Limited Access	Noun + modifier	It reflects a lack of access, which in turn reflects inequality and restrictions in accessing educational resources or opportunities. The adjective limited emphasises constraint, pointing to unequal linguistic power dynamics in academia.
Language bias	Abstract phrase	Reveal how one language (often English) is privileged over other languages. It signals social power imbalance and ideological dominance.

The analysis of the text dimension further utilises negative phrases to reflect on the position that some participants assign to their experience of using English in various teaching and learning contexts. The negative words found within participants' responses reveal how language reinforces social exclusion and marginalisation. This marginalisation and social exclusion are evident in the use of phrases such as *limited access* and *language bias*, which reveal that not all students have the proficiency to engage or learn in English, and the lack of proficiency limits their access to interactions within classrooms and engage with the content. Therefore, language restricts and hinders participants. Student respondent (SR) 10 state that

“Yes, sometimes I lack words to explain words or what I mean”. So, this reflects and laments how language, at times, hinders students. The response further reveals how language affect students' ability to respond to and successfully engage with the content just because they lack the skills to adequately express their thoughts in English. Therefore, negative words affirm the restrictive part of language.

5.1.2 Discourse Practice

This level of Fairclough’s model is the discursive and processing analysis level. This level focuses on how discourse originated, circulated, and was used within a social context. This level involves three functions of text: the construction of the text, its distribution, and its usage. The text highlights the relationship between participants. This level connects the text to its reception and production. It involves interpreting the process of how the text was created and understood by the audience. For example, this includes considering the author's intentions, the intended audience, and how the text is distributed and consumed, including any intertextuality (references to other texts).

The responses in this section were produced using four sections: 1. Examining how the text was produced. 2. Analysing how the text is interpreted and understood. 3. Examining how the text is distributed and reproduced. 4. Interpreting what these reveal about discourse.

- Examine how the text was produced.

The text was created by students and academic staff members, and it was created through the answering of online questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of language among students and academic staff members in various teaching and learning environments. Through the questionnaires, various themes were identified that reflected participants' experience of language within different teaching and learning spaces.

- Analyse how the text is interpreted or understood.

The interpretation section looks at how data is analysed and interpreted. I interpreted the data by drawing parallels between the data and the recurring themes that are evident in the response. The themes I mentioned are only two.

5.1.2.1 Theme 1: English reduces participation and confidence.

This theme focuses on how the use of English in teaching and learning spaces can sometimes be a stumbling block that affects the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of participants.

Staff responses

SP 3: Some students are from rural areas and are less confident in expressing themselves

in English.

SP 12: Using English as the sole medium of instruction has, at times, created barriers for students who are more confident in their home languages, such as isiZulu, Sepedi, siSwati, isiXhosa, Venda, and others. Some learners struggle to express their ideas fully or ask questions, which limits meaningful classroom interaction. This can also affect their confidence and participation in class discussions. However, whenever I ask students to express themselves in local languages, more are willing to come out and share, even the shy-looking ones.

SP 4: In some cases, it does, especially when students are not fluent in English, it means that knowledge synthesis in a classroom environment is somehow limited.

SP 21: Every time. If I were to stick to English throughout my lesson, I doubt some of my students will understand the content.

SP 2: Oh yes. I have had many instances where students don't understand what I am saying because of language. I have had to learn to explain concepts in simple terms and in different ways to overcome this challenge. I have also had students who bring their friends with them to my office to translate for them because their English proficiency is so poor.

Xuan Mai, Ngoc, and Thao (2024: 03) state that there are fundamental reasons for students' low participation in speaking activities in EFL classrooms, including their language proficiency, a lack of confidence, nervousness and shyness, a lack of motivation, cultural acceptance, hostile classmates' traits, and teachers' performance. Although English is often celebrated as a unifying language in multilingual lecture halls, it at times reduces students' participation and affects their confidence. For many students, English is an additional or second language, and limited proficiency can create anxiety about speaking, asking questions, or contributing to discussions. SP 12 validates these ideas and alludes to the psychological barrier that the use of English creates, making an uncomfortable situation that, in turn, results in a willingness to engage and participate actively in academic interactions.

According to Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital, the language of power gives social advantage to those who command it. In lecture halls, students who struggle with English may feel inferior or academically inadequate, even when their intellectual abilities match or exceed those of their peers. This creates unequal learning conditions, where some students dominate discussions while others remain on the margins. Over time, these dynamics contribute to lowered self-esteem, reduced motivation, and withdrawal from collaborative learning activities.

The above quote, Xaun Mao, is supported by SP 3, who states that some students are from rural areas and lack confidence in expressing themselves in English, which reflects that language use is deeply tied to issues of identity and access. Language is used to create social inequality, where rural students who are often educated in African languages that are not English are positioned at a disadvantage within an English-dominant academic culture. Their lack of confidence is not merely a linguistic limitation but a manifestation of the unequal distribution of linguistic capital within the education system. From a critical discourse perspective, this reflects how institutional practices privilege English as the legitimate medium of academic expression, reinforcing power hierarchies between urban and rural students. Such discourses contribute to the reproduction of linguistic inequality, where students from marginalised backgrounds internalise feelings of inferiority and silence, thereby limiting their participation in classroom discussions and academic discourse. Furthermore, Tosky King and Scott (2014:72) state that “There are fundamental reasons for students’ low participation in speaking activities in EFL classrooms, including their language proficiency, shortage of confidence, nervousness and shyness, lack of motivation, cultural acceptance, hostile classmates’ traits, and teachers’ performance. The above idea is clearly articulated through the student and staff responses, where participants discuss how English becomes a hindrance to interaction within classrooms, words such as less confident, create barriers, struggle and limit are used to describe and give context to the effects of monolingualism, these words signify the personal struggles students experience, and these struggles are not unique to students, staff members also use them to describe students encounters within teaching and learning spaces

5.1.2.1 Theme 2: English as a tool that fosters mutual understanding

When discussing English as a tool that fosters mutual understanding, we examine how it serves as a means of connecting people in a diverse academic environment and how it is utilised to create a shared understanding.

Student responses

SR 4: Yes, because most of the students use English to share ideas and concepts with other people for understanding, which makes everyone feel understood and comfortable.

SR 10: Yes, most definitely. English bridges the language gaps that we have with different people, so using it makes things much easier.

SR 18: Yes, it has enhanced my ability to interact with fellow students and the lecturer. My communication skills have improved. I understand content better with it.

The above responses suggest that students and academic staff members perceive English as a valuable asset for facilitating interaction in multilingual settings. This idea is supported by the responses gathered, where multiple students pointed out that the classroom is a place where language, in this instance English, is used to generate joint meaning and promote inclusivity within a multilingual environment. English serves as a means of fostering interaction between people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, meaning is generated by looking at how participants value the use of English within a multilingual setting.

The production of this discourse reflects the experiences of lecturers and students within the UFS Qwaqwa campus and learning spaces, where English serves as the primary medium of instruction. Participants view and construct English as a neutral tool that facilitates communication and fosters mutual understanding among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This perception is produced within institutional and social contexts. The institutional context refers to the University and its policy that promotes English as the LOLT. The social context refers to various teaching and learning spaces where students engage with English, whether formally or informally. These contexts legitimise English as the only standardised language of academia and intercultural exchange.

The distribution of this discourse occurs through university policies, pedagogical practices, and everyday classroom interactions, which collectively reinforce English as the language of connection. However, from a critical discourse perspective, the interpretation of this discourse reveals both inclusionary and exclusionary dimensions. While participants view English as a unifying force, the discourse simultaneously normalises English linguistic dominance and marginalises local languages. This interpretation, therefore, highlights the inconsistency embedded in the idea that English unifies people from different linguistic backgrounds. One can conclude that English operates as both a bridge that connects and a gatekeeper that determines who can participate fully in academic communication, interaction, and learning.

5.1.3 Social Practice

This level of the theory focuses on how the text and discourse level relate to larger social structures, revealing underlying ideologies and power struggles. From the responses provided previously in the questionnaire, we can see that language has a dual effect on interactions and learning, promoting, and hindering at the same time. It promotes inclusivity and common understanding by offering people from diverse linguistic groups a shared language to use while learning and interacting. It also hinders when the very same people are excluded due to a lack of fluency in the language, which affects their learning and comprehension of the subject

matter. These ideas reveal broader limitations in social practice.

At the level of social practice, the text constructs English as a tool for connection and mutual understanding. Within this level, we reflect on the broader ideological and institutional structures within South African higher education. While participants view English positively as a language that promotes inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding, and negatively as a hindrance to the promotion of marginalised indigenous languages when applying these views to the broader social context, we see that participants' interactions operate within a context shaped by colonial legacies and global linguistic hierarchies. Colonial legacies that viewed English as a dominant language and imposed it forcefully. The dominance of English as the official medium of instruction perpetuates the ideology that English is the primary language used for knowledge creation and dissemination. This equates English proficiency with academic capability and intellectual legitimacy. Therefore, dualism in the academic environment is exercised both openly and subtly through language use, particularly English, which privileges lecturers and fluent English speakers while marginalising ESL students who are not fluent in the language.

5.1.4 Linking the Model

In the text level, participants' use of terms such as "*bridge*," "*necessary*," and "*accommodates*" portrays English as an enabling resource that facilitates understanding in a multilingual classroom. These specific word choices construct English as both a solution to communication challenges and an authoritative linguistic tool. At the discursive practice level, these meanings draw on and reproduce dominant academic discourses that institutionalise English as the primary medium through which teaching, learning, and assessment occur. By repeatedly circulating these ideas in classroom interactions, participants reinforce a discourse that frames English as the norm and other languages as supplementary. At the social practice level, this discourse contributes to broader ideological patterns within South African higher education, where English continues to function as a gatekeeping mechanism that privileges its speakers while marginalising indigenous language users. Through this movement from text to discourse to social practice, it becomes clear that individual word choices reflect and sustain institutional power relations, demonstrating how linguistic practices maintain existing hierarchies within the academic environment.

Furthermore, participants' use of negative lexical choices, such as "difficult," "confusing," "excluded," and "limited," signals their experiences of linguistic struggle within multilingual classrooms. These words emphasise constraint and loss, linguistically positioning students as

disadvantaged when unable to fully engage in English-dominated interactions. In addition, the discursive practice, such as lexical choices, draws on deficit-oriented academic discourses that normalise English proficiency as a prerequisite for meaningful participation, while framing multilingualism as a problem rather than a resource. Through repeated circulation in classroom talk and institutional narratives, these discourses become taken for granted and reproduced by both students and lecturers. At the level of social practice, this framing reflects and sustains broader power relations within higher education, where English operates as a gatekeeping mechanism that systematically marginalises speakers of indigenous languages. Consequently, individual expressions of difficulty are not merely personal challenges, but rather discursive manifestations of structural inequality, revealing how language practices perpetuate exclusionary norms within the academic environment.

In the text dimension, participants' use of positive and negative lexical choices reflects underlying attitudes toward English in the classroom. Words and phrases such as "*fosters interaction*" and "*enhances participation*" carry positive evaluative connotations, framing English as a facilitator of communication and engagement. Conversely, lexical items like "*reduces participation*" and "*hegemonic*" signal criticism and exclusion, constructing English as a barrier that limits students' full involvement. These evaluative lexis choices do not merely describe experiences; they encode judgments about the value and consequences of English, signalling the dangers involved in linguistic access. At the discourse dimension, these lexical choices shape how classroom interactions are enacted and interpreted. When English is positioned positively as a tool that "*fosters interaction,*" it legitimises certain communicative practices, encouraging students to engage in knowledge exchange. In contrast, when English is framed as *reducing participation*, it exposes the power asymmetries in interaction: students who lack proficiency are marginalised, silenced, or forced to rely on translation. The discourse surrounding English thus functions as a mechanism for negotiating inclusion or exclusion, structuring who can participate and who is positioned as a legitimate knower within academic spaces.

At the social practice dimension, these texts and discourse patterns reflect and reproduce broader societal structures. The hegemonic position of English in higher education reflects colonial legacies, in which English continues to dominate as the language of authority, knowledge, and academic legitimacy. Calls for the decolonisation of language highlight the tension between these entrenched hierarchies and the normative ideal of multilingual inclusion. The interplay of positive and negative lexical framing at the text level, and the resulting discourse patterns, thus both mediate and are mediated by historical and social forces, showing

how micro-level classroom experiences are connected to macro-level struggles over power, identity, and access to knowledge in postcolonial South Africa. Linking the three dimensions: The textual choices (positive/negative lexicon) encode evaluative stances that shape discursive practices (who participates, how interaction is structured). These practices, in turn, are situated within social practices that reflect larger power relations (colonial legacy, English hegemony, calls for decolonisation). Thus, the micro-level language use in classrooms is inseparable from the macro-level social and political forces, demonstrating how English functions simultaneously as a tool for inclusion and a mechanism of exclusion.

5.2 Research question 2

- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?

According to social theorist Michel Foucault (1989:09), “power is not only about CEOs or politicians making rules for their subordinates. Instead, there are different forms and nuances of power that are exerted by all people in everyday situations, such as conversations with friends, lessons at school, and reading the newspaper or engaging in social media. Importantly, power in language is omnipresent and sometimes hardly perceptible.” This means that language carries power, but it is often subtle and normalised; we don’t always recognise it. Therefore, power is embedded throughout language. Power is not just about hierarchies; it shapes how people think, act, and interact with one another.

Norman Fairclough (1995:98) also discusses power, conceptualising it as asymmetric between participants in a discursive event. Like Foucault's ideas of power and interaction, Fairclough states that power is everywhere; it is not an institution, structure, or force that people possess. According to him, power is not possessed but practised through discursive events. For example, a lecturer does not possess power as an object, but power is embedded within their role as a knowledge barrier; their authority is maintained through discursive practices. This refers to how they speak, the academic language they use, and how they control who gets to speak and when. He identifies two major aspects of power in relation to language. He identifies power in discourse and power behind discourse. Power in discourse encompasses the exercise and enactment of power, where powerful participants control and constrain the contributions of those who lack power. Power behind discourse refers to the power to shape and constitute the order of discourse dimensions of social orders, social institutions, or societies; as well as which

discourses and genres are available and who has access to what. Fairclough further speaks of “Hidden power, which, implies the power relations that are enacted in unclear ways. The case of “hidden power” in discourse is when people who are unequal in power are not co-present in certain social interaction, so the effects of power are less obvious (e.g. power in mass media); power behind discourse is hidden power by its very nature: “the whole social order of discourse is put together as a hidden effect of power” (Fairclough 2015: 73). In addition, Yuan, and Bentler (2008:142) write about manifest and latent power relations. Manifest power is the clear, intended, and obvious, while latent power is the unintended, often unrecognised. The Manifest power refers to the authority academic staff members possess as fluent users of English, which enables them to wield discursive power. They are regarded as having access to knowledge due to their position and academic accolades. They get to decide what can be regarded as clear or correct communication. The latent power is exercised through the enforcing of monolingualism and the upholding of the idea that all teaching and learning should happen in English, which reinforces marginalisation and exclusion of indigenous languages and students who are ESL speakers who lack fluency and confidence in using English.

5.2.1 Application of Fairclough’s 3D/ tiered model

5.2.1.1 Text dimension

Power within a discursive event is embedded in the role and position that different participants assume. The institution's language policy also ensures that the inclusion and exclusion criteria are adhered to. This section uses participants' responses to questions regarding the language policy and its implementation. It looks at how the policy is used to reflect relevant power struggles and how power is revealed.

These are the questions used to elicit responses; the same question was asked for both students and staff members.

3. What do you think about the University’s language policy?
4. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces

5.2.1.2 Positive/negative lexical choices

Table 4 This table presents positive words used by students and academic staff to describe and speak about the UFS Language policy.

Table 5

Positive word/phrases	Type of word	Text dimension (Power)
Encourages	Verb	Reflects a discourse of inclusion and motivation, where power is used positively to promote participation or engagement.
Embraces	Verb	Indicates acceptance and inclusivity
Promotes	Verb	Shows active support or advocacy
Addresses	Verb	Implies responsiveness, the speaker acknowledges and attends to others' needs or issues, signalling power used for dialogue and problem-solving

The responses above reflect how participants view the UFS language policy as a tool that promotes linguistic diversity within the institution. In addition, the use of words such as “addresses” and “Promotes” reflects how the policy embraces and acknowledges diverse linguistic identities, recognising that language is central to how individuals learn, participate, and interact in academic spaces. Furthermore, when narrating their experiences and views on the language policy, participants noted that the policy promotes inclusivity by creating a space for different languages to coexist, thereby reducing feelings of exclusion among those who are not fully proficient in English. At the same time, participants use words such as *addresses* to reflect the responsive nature of the policy in resolving and acknowledging the long-standing language inequalities by attempting to provide equitable access to academic content and opportunities for meaningful engagement through the creation of a policy that fosters and promotes multilingualism within the university.

Table 4.1 Reflects the negative perceptions

Table 4.1

Negative words		Type word	Text dimension
Biased		Adjective	Indicates unequal power distribution, it reveals institutional or linguistic dominance, such as privileging English over indigenous languages. It exposes how discourse normalises one viewpoint as “neutral” or “standard,” marginalising alternative voices
Unfair		Adjective	Highlights perceived injustice in language policy or academic practices.

In contrast to the more positive interpretations, some participants view the UFS language policy as biased because it only acknowledges the use of five languages: Sesotho, isiZulu, Afrikaans, English, and South African Sign Language. This approach is biased because South Africa has 12 official languages; acknowledging only 5 languages means excluding those who are not part of the in-group, which perpetuates bias. Therefore, from their perspective, this bias reinforces linguistic hierarchies in which English is privileged as the language of learning, participation, and academic success. As a result, participants feel that the policy creates an unfair learning environment for students who are less proficient in English, as they must work harder to access content, participate confidently, and express complex ideas. These students experience the policy as unequal in practice, despite its intentions to promote inclusivity. Thus, while the policy may appear progressive on paper, participants’ experiences reveal that its implementation continues to disadvantage those who rely on indigenous languages for meaningful learning.

5.2.1.2 Discourse practice

The responses in this section were produced using three sections: 1. Examining how the text was produced. 2. Analysing how the text is interpreted and understood. 3. Examining how the text is distributed and reproduced. 4. Interpret what these reveal about discourse.

How was the text produced?

The text was produced through the creation and answering of online questionnaires by students

and academic staff members at the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The responses provided are regarded as text because they detail participants' experience of language. To answer the second research question, two questions were posed and answered. Question 1: If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to learn and engage in academic spaces using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why? Question 2: What do you think about the University's language policy? The responses received from these questions are applied.

Analyse how the text is interpreted and understood.

The text was interpreted and understood through the analysis of the responses and the identification of themes evident in them. One of the themes found was.

5.2.1.3 Theme 1: The UFS Language policy is biased

SR 6: I think it's not fair because some of us are not majoring in Zulu only.

The text, which is the above response from a student, is understood and interpreted through the analysis of the words used by the participants and how they reflect existing social structures. Using words such as “not fair” reflects an existing marginalisation and the lack of inclusion that people experience. Where they feel one language is privileged more than the other. The theme language policy is biased, which exposes how official policies often privilege the language, typically English, thereby reinforcing structural inequalities and silencing other linguistic identities. A biased policy represents an exercise of institutional power through language, where control over acceptable forms of communication determines who is heard and who remains invisible.

5.2.1.4 Theme 2: The language policy fosters diversity and cultural inclusivity; most student and academic staff members' responses reflect this theme.

SR 3: The university's language policy can have a significant impact on students, faculty, and staff. It fosters a diverse and inclusive environment.

SR 4: It is unique because it promotes multilingualism, and students get to learn other languages around campus.

SR 5: It is diverse, and it fosters one community.

SR 7: I think it addresses some cultural biases related to language and learning.

These responses are understood and interpreted by looking at the words used to generate meaning and create a shared understanding. Through the responses, students also see the benefit of the language policy, and they use words such as “it promotes” It is unique and diverse”, “it addresses” to show how the policy also acts to bridge any form of inequality by creating learning spaces that are unique and address diverse linguistic needs of students. Smith

(2024: 01) states that

“Language diversity fosters inclusive learning environments. When educators value and incorporate diverse languages into curriculum and classroom activities, all students feel valued and represented. This inclusivity promotes a sense of belonging and encourages active participation in learning.”

The quote above relates to the responses students provided, which reveal how language usage is tied to power, ideology, and access within the educational space. Participants' use of language reflects inclusion and exclusion. The discourse of inclusivity positions language diversity within a classroom as a transformative tool that breaks and challenges the monopolisation of the language of instruction. It promotes the use of various languages within teaching and learning spaces. For example, when academic staff members value language diversity, they redistribute discursive power by allowing previously marginalised languages to participate in academic interactions. The recognition of five official languages, as stated in the UFS Language Policy (2022), reveals how language inclusivity embodies and promotes empowerment by acknowledging multilingual expression within different spaces. Language inclusivity challenges the dominance of a single language and creates opportunities for shared understanding.

3. Examining how the text is distributed and reproduced

The distribution and reproduction of a text refer to how the text, in this case, the responses received from the questionnaire, is shared and how the meaning is reshaped. The distribution of the text refers to who has access to it. Access to the questionnaire was limited to students and academic staff members of the UFS Qwaqwa campus. The text also refers to the responses participants provide, which narrate their experience, so those experiences are regarded as a written text. Thus, the distribution of the questionnaire becomes a reflection of inequality, as it reveals the disparities in access to the questionnaire and the conditions under which it is available, thereby highlighting existing power relations. For instance, the questionnaire is distributed through formal university digital platforms, which privilege participants who possess linguistic competence, digital literacy, and institutional access. This selective circulation reinforces the dominance of certain groups while excluding others, often along linguistic or socio-economic lines, as the text was only written in English, a limitation I acknowledge as a researcher.

4. Interpretation (what theme reveals about discourse)

Two major themes were identified: The UFS language policy is biased, and the language policy fosters diversity and cultural inclusivity. These themes reveal how the policy and language

shape power structures and ideologies. Power structures are reflected through who creates and distributes the policy versus those who access and use the policy. The response reflects how the policy is not neutral; it promotes different spectrums based on the space one finds themselves. The policy reflects teaching and learning spaces as spaces that promote equality and multiculturalism. The feedback participants provide indicates that most agree the policy is inclusive and fosters multicultural interactions. The themes further position language policy as a tool for unity, transformation, and social cohesion.

Additionally, the responses demonstrate how discourse and language can be employed to create both exclusionary and inclusive spaces. By stipulating the five official languages, the UFS language policy unintentionally excludes those who do not affiliate with the languages, as they feel unrepresented. Participants feel that the policy favours some languages over others. The theme highlights how English often remains the preferred or privileged language; however, the policy now acknowledges the use of IsiZulu, Sesotho, and South African Sign language, thereby marginalising speakers of African languages that are not recognised, which reproduces historical power imbalances.

Overall, these themes reveal that discourse, language, and the language policy are sites of ideological struggles, one where inclusivity and equity are promoted in principle but often contested in practice. It shows how language functions as both a symbol of transformation and a mechanism of control, shaping who has access to knowledge, voice, and participation within the university space.

5.2.1.3 Social Practice

This level of the model focuses on how discourse is connected to broader social structures and how it reflects cultural practices and power relations. This stage moves beyond the texts, which are the responses received from the questionnaire, to what the text reflects in the broader social scheme. This level examines how language reflects, reinforces, and challenges social realities. In this dimension, Fairclough (1996: 38) argues that discourse both shapes and is shaped by society. That is, language practices contribute to maintaining or transforming existing social structures such as class, gender, race, and institutional power, while also being influenced by them. Analysts using this dimension examine how a particular discourse (for example, a university's language policy or classroom interactions) is connected to broader social issues, ideologies, and historical contexts. The aim is to reveal how power and dominance are sustained through language and how certain groups' voices are privileged while others are marginalised.

These themes reflect the ideological positions within broader social and institutional power structures. They are not just statements about language policy, but participants struggle over whose languages are valued in higher education.

The language policy fosters diversity and cultural inclusivity

This theme aligns with the notion of the need for transformation and inclusivity in post-apartheid South Africa. It speaks to the broader social call for decolonisation of language, where universities' monolingual approaches are challenged. The feedback promotes an image of equality, suggesting that not all languages and cultures can be recognised within the institution, but the higher education sphere has space for inclusivity, as some previously marginalised languages form part of the university's official languages. Furthermore, the text reflects that the institution is working toward decolonisation and social justice. In addition, discourse and language are reflected upon and seen as performative, meaning that discourse and language are used to maintain the university's legitimacy and alignment with national policies, such as the Language Policy for Higher Education (2002), which served as the basis for pushing all universities to work towards language inclusivity.

The social practice dimension exposes how language inclusivity reflects the silencing of languages not included as the official languages within the institution. Thus, the idea of language inclusion can sometimes mask social inequalities if English continues to be regarded as the sole language for teaching and learning, and previously marginalised indigenous languages are only used as remedial languages in tutorials and translanguaging efforts.

The UFS language policy is biased.

This theme is a challenge to the dominant institutional narrative that emerges from the lived experiences of students and staff who perceive the policy as privileging English while marginalising African languages which don't form part of the institutions official languages.

Through Fairclough's social practice lens, this theme reveals resistance to dominant power relations and exposes how institutional policies may perpetuate linguistic inequality and cultural exclusion despite claims of inclusivity. This theme is situated through a broader social context of postcolonial inequality, where English remains the language of academic and economic mobility, and indigenous languages are still devalued. This discourse, therefore, reflects a struggle for linguistic justice and epistemic inclusion, challenging the university to move beyond symbolic inclusivity toward genuine multilingual transformation.

5.2.1. 4 Linking the model

In the text dimension, participants' use of positive lexical choices such as "*encourage*," "*embraces*," "*promotes*," and "*addresses*" constructs the language policy as supportive, inclusive, and proactive, signalling an evaluative stance that frames the policy as a tool for fostering linguistic diversity. In contrast, negative lexical choices like "*biased*" and "*unfair*" encode critique and disapproval, presenting the same policy as exclusionary and inequitable. These evaluative lexis choices do not merely describe the policy; they reveal how language is positioned as a resource that can either legitimise or marginalise participants within the academic space.

At the discourse dimension, these lexical choices shape the ways participants interpret and discuss the policy. Positive framing ("*fosters diversity*") constructs classroom and institutional interactions as collaborative and empowering, implying that students from various linguistic backgrounds are recognised and supported. Negative framing ("*policy is biased*") highlights discursive tension, exposing how the policy can restrict participation, privilege certain languages, and marginalise non-dominant speakers. In this way, discourse reveals the power relations embedded in policy implementation, showing how linguistic practices are negotiated, resisted, or normalised in everyday academic interactions. At the social practice dimension, these texts and discourse patterns reflect and reproduce broader societal structures and historical legacies. Positive representations of the policy resonate with aspirations for inclusive and decolonised education, while negative representations point to ongoing language hierarchies and systemic inequities, rooted in English hegemony and the colonial privileging of certain languages over others. Together, these dimensions illustrate how micro-level evaluations of policy (text), their enactment in interaction (discourse), and their connection to societal power structures (social practice) are deeply intertwined. The interplay between positive and negative lexical choices thus mediates the tension between the ideals of linguistic inclusivity and the realities of exclusionary institutional practices, reflecting the broader struggle over language, power, and access in higher education.

5.3 Research question 3

- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

This research question seeks to identify and explore the linguistic dynamics present in various

teaching and learning at the UFS Qwaqwa campus. It explores how language functions as a social, academic, and communicative resource within a multilingual higher education environment. The UFS Qwaqwa campus is situated in a linguistically diverse region, where languages such as Sesotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa and many more intersects in everyday interactions. This form of multilingual interactions produces complex linguistic dynamics, so this research question aims to uncover and narrate those dynamics.

From the above research question, three questions were created to elicit a response.

Question 1: Discuss classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus.

Question 2: How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?

Question 3: Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom.

From the above question, four themes were identified, namely,

- Language identity and belonging.
- Positive perception of classroom interactions,
- The need for multilingual flexibility in classroom interaction,
- Developing academic language proficiency.

5.3.1 Application of the theory

Text dimension focuses on the language aspects of the responses, examining the structure, word form, and meaning. The focus is on positive and negative words.

5.3.1.1 Text dimension

Positive/negative lexical choices

Table 5 discusses how positive lexical choices enable and highlight multilingual discussions.

Table 6

Positive word	Type of word	Text Dimension
Allowed	verb	Reflects permission and freedom to speak and engage using any language of choice
Accommodates	verb	Suggests flexibility and openness in communication practices.
Express ourselves	verb	Highlights empowerment and agency in classroom interactions.

Translate	verb	Demonstrates cooperation and bridging of linguistic gaps.
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The use of words such as “*accommodates*,” “*express us*,” and “*translate*” reflects a discourse of inclusion and linguistic empowerment. Within Fairclough’s text dimension, these lexical choices reveal a shift toward more democratic and participatory classroom practices. The language used portrays the lecturer not as an enforcer of English, but as a facilitator who enables mutual understanding across linguistic boundaries. This repositions multilingualism as a resource rather than a barrier, signalling a redistribution of communicative power and promoting equality in meaning-making within academic spaces.

Table 5.1 This table present negative words they are used by participants to narrate their experience of language.

Table 5.1

Negative Words	Type words	Text Dimension
5. Feeling excluded Not allowed Not everyone understands English	Negative expressions	reveals a discourse of exclusion and disempowerment
6. Misunderstood	Verb/ Adjective	Highlights communication breakdown and lack of mutual comprehension.
7. Difficult	Adjective	Emphasises the emotional and cognitive strain caused by monolingual instruction
8. Omitted	Verb	Demonstrates loss of meaning and exclusion from full participation in discourse.

The choice of words such as “*misunderstood*,” “*difficult*,” and “*omitted*” in the participants’ responses reflects a discourse of exclusion and linguistic struggle. These lexical items signal the challenges students face in expressing themselves when English is the sole language of instruction. Within Fairclough’s text dimension, such word choices highlight how communication barriers and meaning loss stem from language policy and classroom practice. The use of these negative term’s constructs English not as a neutral medium but as a gatekeeper

to knowledge, reinforcing existing power imbalances between fluent and non-fluent speaker.

5.3.2 Discourse practice

This level of the model focuses on the process of communication, examining how a text, in this case, participants' responses to the questionnaire, is created, shared, and understood. Furthermore, the dimension helps reveal the power relations, institutional influences, and interpretive practices that shape what people say and how they say it.

The responses in this section were analysed using three sections: 1. Examining how the text was produced. 2. Analyse how the text is interpreted and understood.

The text was compiled from the responses collected in the questionnaire. The responses were produced by student and staff members who reflected on their experiences of language within the classroom.

2. Analyse how the text is interpreted and understood.

Meaning can be interpreted and understood by examining students' responses and how they reveal themes and underlying meanings. The themes are evident in the responses, and meaning is derived from the words used. Words carry meaning, and people assign different meanings to them.

When analysing the responses, we see how institutional practices influence the engagement of academic staff members and students within the classroom. English is the primary medium of instruction, making it a vital source of knowledge. Some students operate within an environment where English is normalised as the language of learning, and those who struggle with the language are seldom assisted or attended to. Students use words like these to share their experiences with language in the classroom: “not everyone understands English,” “we are not allowed.” This reveals how students interpret and reproduce the institutional power of English; they acknowledge it as a rule, even if they disagree with it.

From these themes, two major themes emerged.

5.3.2.1 Theme two: Lack of language Inclusivity

The data provides a different perspective on understanding classroom encounters and interactions. The data provides a different view that paints the classroom as a monolingual space that does not allow any multicultural interaction, hence the respondents below that the multilingual approaches and language inclusive strategies are not used within their teaching and learning spaces.

Student Respondent (SR) 7, 13, 19, 22 states that language inclusivity is not fostered within their

teaching spaces.

SR 7: No because it is a fact that not everyone understands English and it is the only language used as a medium of instruction, learners are not given a chance to express themselves in their natives because if they do the next person will not understand, even if translated some information may be omitted or misunderstood.

SR 13: Only one language is used, strictly English, and students don't get to express themselves in their languages so No

SR 19: No, lectures sometimes use their own languages and allow learners who speak the same language as them to use their language in class this makes other learners to feel excluded as they happen not to understand what is being said and they don't even translate for them to understand.

SR 22: No because some lectures do not allow us to answer in our own language and this makes learning very difficult for us as students.

The findings reveal a strong perception and understanding among students, highlighting that language inclusivity is not effectively fostered within the various teaching and learning environments in which students find themselves. The participants express that English remains the sole medium of instruction, which is a disadvantage for ESL students who lack proficiency in the language. This is supported by SR7, who states that not everyone understands English, and the constant use of it as the LOLT restricts students' ability to express themselves freely. Furthermore, it is evident that even when translation is attempted, participants observe that meaning is often lost or distorted, leading to miscommunication and reduced understanding. native languages, which contribute to learning difficulties and feelings of alienation. Furthermore, SR19 identifies a form of intra-linguistic exclusion, where lecturers occasionally use their own local languages with certain students, thereby excluding others from discussions. Collectively, these responses suggest that monolingual practices and unequal language policies in classrooms perpetuate linguistic hierarchies and hinder the goal of inclusivity in higher education.

5.3.3 Social Practice Dimension

At the level of social practice, the responses point to broader ideological structures that sustain English hegemony in academia. The dominance of English maintains colonial legacies, where indigenous languages are devalued and positioned as inferior or irrelevant in formal education. This situation reflects a systemic form of latent power, where institutional policies indirectly

marginalise non-English speakers and restrict their epistemic participation. Consequently, language becomes both a symbol and an instrument of power, shaping who has access to knowledge and whose ways of knowing are legitimised within the academic space.

At the broader social level, the responses also challenge the ideological dominance of English in higher education. By integrating indigenous languages into teaching and learning, lecturers and students resist linguistic marginalisation and promote epistemic justice, valuing diverse “ways of knowing” and recognising multilingualism as a resource rather than a deficiency. This reflects a growing awareness of transformative language policy in post-apartheid South Africa, aligning with efforts to decolonise education and foster genuine inclusivity.

The findings reveal that language plays a vital role in shaping classroom interactions, facilitating access to knowledge and promoting inclusion at the University of the Free State Qwaqwa campus. English, as the dominant language of instruction, functions both as a bridge and a barrier to equitable participation and communication. While it enables cross-cultural understanding and provides access to academic and global opportunities, it also marginalises students who are not fluent in it, particularly those from rural areas and non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Many participants indicated that language inclusivity is unevenly practised. Some lecturers encourage students to use their home languages or explain concepts through translation, fostering inclusivity and mutual understanding. These practices help bridge linguistic gaps and promote collaborative learning. Conversely, other lecturers strictly enforce English-only communication, which limits student expression, reduces participation, and creates anxiety among English Second Language (ESL) speakers. This inconsistency highlights a tension between institutional language policy and actual classroom practice.

Using Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, the study uncovered both manifest and latent power relations within language practices. Manifest power is visible in the authority lecturers hold as fluent users of English, while latent power operates through the implicit enforcement of monolingualism, which privileges English and excludes indigenous languages. This dynamic reinforces historical and social hierarchies, sustaining the marginalisation of non-English speakers.

The study further found that participants view multilingualism as a potential tool for inclusion and transformation. Acts of translation, code-switching, and linguistic accommodation serve as small but powerful resistances against the dominance of English. These practices not only enhance understanding but also affirm students' linguistic and cultural identities.

5.3.3.1 Theme 1: Fostering positive classroom interactions by using translanguaging and code-switching techniques

Translanguaging refers to the use of two languages and the use of more than two languages in teaching and learning (Childs 2016:24). It involves students mixing languages when responding to specific questions by drawing on the knowledge and vocabulary they possess. In other words, translanguaging refers to the seamless coexistence of different languages, where students choose which language to use based on the cultural and social contexts. Therefore, the use of translanguaging is a solution to challenges faced in multilingual classrooms. Salazar (2013:121) states that the lack of acceptance of learners' languages and “ways of knowing” can result in dehumanising experiences in classrooms. Furthermore, he states that the lack of acknowledgement of students from different linguistic backgrounds and those who differ from the dominant norms may lead to shame, alienation, or exclusion in the classroom, which is dehumanising because it denies them the opportunity to explore their full identity and lived experience within a classroom. Therefore, translanguaging can be used to foster positive classroom interactions. Similarly, Mazzaferro (2018:71) indicates that translanguaging motivates learners in the classroom in various ways. Such as creating a context for discourse, relating cultural and social backgrounds, and negotiating and constructing meaningful interactions. Therefore, the use of translanguaging is meaningful in the classroom, as it identifies the linguistic background of students and provides them with an opportunity to develop metalinguistic abilities.

Translanguaging can foster positive classroom interactions within teaching and learning spaces. These positive encounters are facilitated by both teachers and students through their use of student language repertoires to engage in meaningful intercultural conversations. For example, a lecturer or facilitator can present a lesson in English and may ask students to discuss the topic or answer questions using their own languages, which motivates learners to focus on meaning. Translingual practices have led to a paradigm shift in classroom discourse, rejecting monolingual theoretical orientations (Canagarajah 2012: 51) and shifting toward more inclusive strategies that foster inclusion and encourage participation with fellow students and the content. In addition, Translanguaging enables a teacher to reduce language monotony in the classroom, as it allows them to use more than one language. The language will be used to exchange connotations regarding the content taught in a language classroom. These views are

supported by students and staff members who acknowledge and seek more usage of translanguaging approaches as solutions towards the creation of positive learning environments.

Student Respondents (SRs) 7, 17, 11, and 23 affirm the use of translanguaging techniques in their teaching and learning spaces. When responding to whether language inclusivity is fostered in their classrooms, they responded and said yes.

SR 7: Yes, it is. Some Lectures now allow us to explain in our languages and if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English.

SR 17: Yes, it is, since the classroom accommodates students from different backgrounds speaking different languages, we are all allowed to express ourselves in our home languages, that way we somehow learn to speak or understand different languages.

SR 11: Yes, it is fostered because one can use their language to explain things they struggle to explain in English.

SR 23: It is because some lecturers allow students to ask questions in their native languages, and then the lecturer will translate what it means in English to the whole class.

The above responses reflect how academic staff members work to ensure that students' voices are included within the classroom using their preferred language.

Staff Participants allow the use of translanguaging and code-switching techniques, fostering peer discussion to create a language-rich environment. Staff participant (SP) 4, 20, 3, 7 and 15 states that

SP 4: I've observed that students often support each other by using their home languages in group work, which is helpful for understanding but can limit whole-class interactions in English.

SP 20: I encourage code-switching in small groups to enhance comprehension, but formal presentations and assessments still rely heavily on English.

SP 3: I am not proficient in any African language, so I see my own incompetence as a barrier to fully embracing language inclusivity in the classroom. What I can do is, if I see a student struggling to express themselves in English, I have them state what they are trying to say in their mother tongue and then ask other students to help them translate. This has benefited students in being able to express themselves in class.

The findings of both students and staff members reveal that language inclusivity is increasingly being fostered within the classroom, as both lecturers and students demonstrate openness to

multilingual interaction. Students report that lecturers allow them to express themselves in their native languages when they struggle to articulate themselves in English. This approach promotes positive interactions by reducing the shame associated with interacting within a classroom when one lacks proficiency in English, as well as the shame associated with interacting in one's mother tongue. Furthermore, the use of home languages is also accompanied by providing translations to ensure collective understanding. This approach enables students to utilise their linguistic resources to clarify complex ideas, thereby bridging issues surrounding comprehension. All in all, students and staff members, through their responses, highlight how translanguaging accommodates students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, encouraging interaction across languages and cultures, which fosters both understanding and respect for linguistic diversity. Such discourse signals a shift from rigid monolingual instruction to more inclusive pedagogical approaches, where multiple languages coexist as tools of learning rather than as barriers.

5.3.1 Linking the model

In the text dimension, participants' use of positive lexical choices such as "*encourage*," "*allowed*," and "*accommodates*" constructs the classroom environment as inclusive and supportive, suggesting that multilingual practices are sanctioned and valued. Conversely, negative lexical choices such as "*feeling excluded*," "*not allowed*," and "*misunderstood*" encode experiences of marginalisation and disempowerment. These lexical selections are not neutral; they possess evaluative positions that frame English as enabling or restricting access to knowledge and interaction. At the discourse dimension, these lexical choices reveal how classroom interactions are structured and mediated. Positive framing aligns with practices such as code-switching and translanguaging, which allow students to participate fully, collaborate, and co-construct knowledge, reflecting an inclusive pedagogical ethos. Negative framing highlights tensions in the enactment of language policy, exposing how restrictive or biased policies can silence students and limit engagement, thereby reproducing hierarchical language practices. Here, discourse mediates the relationship between policy and practice, showing how language choice shapes who can participate, how, and to what extent.

At the social practice dimension, these text and discourse patterns reflect broader societal and historical power structures, including the hegemonic status of English, the lingering effects of colonial language hierarchies, and ongoing debates about the decolonisation of higher education. Positive lexical and discursive practices illustrate attempts to counteract exclusionary legacies through pedagogical flexibility, while negative evaluations expose

persistent inequalities and institutionalised bias. Together, these dimensions show how micro-level language experiences (lexical choices), their enactment in classroom interaction (discourse), and macro-level societal structures (social practice) are interconnected. The interplay between inclusionary and exclusionary language practices demonstrates how language both reflects and reproduces power, shaping students' access to participation, recognition, and knowledge within higher education.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that language use in the academic environment functions simultaneously as a bridge and a barrier to participation, knowledge access, and identity formation. Drawing on Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model, the findings reveal that English holds a dominant position, shaping classroom interactions and perpetuating tensions between inclusion and exclusion. While some lecturers and students adopt multilingual practices such as translanguaging and code-switching to negotiate meaning, English remains the default language of academic legitimacy. Consequently, monolingual norms are sustained, marginalising speakers of indigenous languages. Overall, the findings suggest that meaningful language inclusivity requires more than policy commitments; it demands the active validation of all languages as legitimate resources for learning, participation, and knowledge construction.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the overall conclusions drawn from the study. It outlines the study's significance and discusses the examination of the relationship between language, power, and inclusivity in the university's teaching and learning spaces. Furthermore, it links the previous chapters and provides a summary of the main findings in relation to each research question. In addition, the chapter discusses the study's implications and outlines its limitations. Finally, it offers recommendations for future research.

6.1 Aim

This study aimed to explore and track the use of language by students and academic staff members in teaching and learning spaces. It examined how language, in this instance English, limited or enhanced interactions within the teaching and learning environments. Furthermore, it explored how power is embedded and enacted through discursive language practices. Finally, the study outlined and mapped participants' experiences of language using Fairclough's 3D model.

6.2 The study is founded on the following research questions.

- How does the use of English enhance or limit interactions between students and academic staff within lecture halls, facilitation sessions, and other teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What is the relationship between language use and power in interactions between students and academic staff across different teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus?
- What linguistic dynamics characterise classroom interactions at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, particularly in relation to English and multilingual practices?

6.2.1 Conclusion

This study has examined the role of language in shaping interactions between students and academic staff across teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus, with a particular focus on the use of English, power relations, and prevailing linguistic dynamics. In reflecting on the research questions, the findings suggest that English functions ambivalently: while it can enhance communication by providing a shared academic medium, it can also limit participation and meaningful engagement for students whose linguistic repertoires are not fully aligned with dominant institutional norms. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that language

is deeply implicated in power relations within educational spaces, influencing whose voices are heard, whose knowledge is legitimised, and how authority is negotiated in classroom interactions. The identified linguistic dynamics reveal ongoing tensions between monolingual practices and the multilingual realities of the campus, highlighting how institutional language choices may perpetuate exclusion despite commitments to inclusivity. Collectively, these reflections underscore the need for more responsive and inclusive language practices that recognise multilingualism as a resource rather than a barrier, thereby promoting equitable interaction, participation, and knowledge construction within higher education.

6.3 Summary of Research Findings

The study uncovered the duality embedded in language, which refers to how language and its use produce feelings of exclusion and inclusion in teaching and learning spaces. This duality reflects how participants perceive language as both a positive and negative indicator of their experience. Language and language use are portrayed as positive experiences and encounters that enable mutually inclusive encounters. Participants 23 and 9 said, “SP 23: Very important. Language drives engagement between instructors and students, engagement between students, and engagement with the content taught in class. Therefore, language influences understanding”.

“SP 9: Language plays a significant role in how well students understand content, as well as the extent to which they participate in class” “SR 25: Provided that this is a diverse institution. The English language accommodates every one of the students as it is most widely known. And English has become the most prominent language in the country as well as the world most interviews or jobs require English as a basic language”. These responses demonstrate how language facilitates students and staff members in creating meaningful interactions that are mutually beneficial and inclusive. These engagements are mutually beneficial because they bridge potential linguistic barriers and misunderstandings by facilitating and enabling interactions between diverse individuals using a common language, namely English. Therefore, English becomes a glue that links and joins people; it creates mutually beneficial encounters. On the other hand, the duality lies in the negative role effect of using English in multilingual spaces; the study uncovered how exclusionary and marginalising it is. Both students and staff members describe this negative duality, highlighting how language acts as a gatekeeper to knowledge acquisition and self-development. These ideas are evident in this response “SP 15: Without language proficiency, a student would be seriously handicapped in social life and in the world of work. Along with numeracy and some form of moral education, it's crucial”. “SP

19: It is very important because it makes or breaks a student. It is no doubt that most students believe that English is a measure of intelligence. Therefore, if English is the only language that is used in the classroom, some students tend to think they cannot have a successful academic journey”. The responses participants provided show how using English only can create barriers in the classroom for those who with limited proficiency in the language. In addition, the negative duality highlights how language can have a detrimental influence on participation, which in turn can affect students' confidence and willingness to engage with the content and the people around them. Thus, language use embodies a tension between empowerment and limitation, revealing how a single linguistic medium can both expand and restrict students' access to knowledge, identity expression, and meaningful academic engagement.

6.3.1 Fostering positive classroom interactions using translanguaging and code-switching techniques.

The study revealed that classrooms at the UFS Qwaqwa campus are diverse spaces that encompass people from different language communities, cultures, social classes, and religions, so there is a need for the creation of positive classroom interactions, which refer to interactions that are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and accommodating. With these in mind, the data revealed that teaching and learning spaces at Qwaqwa are sometimes a reflection of a positive classroom because both academic staff members and students utilise techniques that promote inclusive interactions and recognise the limitations that exist due to language barriers. These inclusive strategies include the use of translanguaging and code-switching techniques to ensure seamless knowledge creation and acquisition. Furthermore, these techniques encourage students to utilise their existing language repertoires to create meaning and understanding. SR 7 and 17 state that “ Some Lectures now allow us to explain in our languages and if they don't understand, at least someone can translate in English” SR 17 “since the classroom accommodates students from different backgrounds speaking different languages, we are all allowed to express ourselves in our home languages, that way we somehow learn to speak or understand different languages”. The responses students provided reveal how translanguaging and code switching are used as transformative tools aimed at creating positive and inclusive learning environments. These spaces are inclusive because they allow students to draw on or use their linguistic repertoires to create meaning and confidently engage in lecture halls. In addition, translanguaging creates positive learning experiences because it allows students to shift fluidly between multiple languages, enabling them to unpack complex ideas, negotiate meaning, and engage consciously in the learning process. This makes them feel confident because the knowledge is accessible to them in a way they best understand. Furthermore, the

use of translanguaging fosters a sense of belonging, as students can utilise their own languages to create meaning, which validates the significance of home languages or indigenous African languages as tools that can create and promote academic discourse. Similarly, codeswitching has been used for decades as a strategic tool that fuses LOLT with home languages to make knowledge more accessible. SP 20 and 15 state that SP 20 “I encourage code-switching in small groups to enhance comprehension, but formal presentations and assessments still rely heavily on English”. SP 15 “In my classes, I allow students to have group discussions using their home languages, considering that everyone in the group understands the language; however, when presenting, they would use English to communicate with the whole class so that everyone may understand”. These responses demonstrate that some academic staff actively work towards fostering multilingualism using translanguaging techniques to create positive and reaffirming learning spaces that encourage and strengthen collaborative learning, tapping into students' existing knowledge to create a more enhanced understanding of the content. Therefore, this finding reveals that creating positive learning spaces requires acknowledging one's culture and language and using them to generate more intense engagement and participation in knowledge creation. On the other hand, students feel that the language policy is biased SR 6 states “I think it's not fair because some of us are not majoring in isiZulu” this reflect the biasedness student feel or experience when one language is privileged over the others. It is evident that the language policy acknowledging five languages created an exclusionary space for those who languages are not include.

6.3.2 The language policy fosters diversity and bias.

This finding illustrates the dual effect of having a language policy that is perceived as both inclusive and biased by different participants simultaneously. The UFS language policy of 2023 is perceived as inclusive, with participants noting that it promotes multilingualism. However, others view it as biased because it only recognises five languages as official languages of the institution. Participants feel excluded, while others acknowledge the recognition of the 5 languages as a huge milestone or achievement. Those who say the language policy foster diversity based their response on SR 4 stating “It is unique because it promotes multilingualism, and students get to learn other languages around campus” and SR 5 stating “It is diverse, and it fosters one community” and SR 7 also stating that “ I think it addresses some cultural biases related to language and learning”. The participants' responses demonstrate how the language policy promotes diversity by creating spaces or learning environments that acknowledge and respect linguistic and cultural differences. These differences are used as vital resources that promote inclusive learning. In addition, the policy

promotes multilingualism by allowing students to learn from a range of languages used or spoken. The findings also reveal how the policy plays a crucial role in dismantling cultural biases that are often evident in the learning process. Thus, the policy acknowledges the multilingual realities of students by using various methods to aid and promote multilingualism in both practice and effect.

6.3.1 Justification for the study

The relevance of the study lies in the need to understand how language shapes interactions within multilingual teaching and learning spaces at the UFS Qwaqwa campus. Furthermore, it explored how English is used as the primary language of instruction, despite the student and staff population being linguistically diverse and speakers of indigenous African languages. This linguistic imbalance has created tensions around inclusivity, participation, and access to knowledge. Therefore, it became necessary to explore how language use in classrooms enables or limits interaction, understanding, and academic performance. The study is further justified by its focus on the power relations embedded in language practices. By applying Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, the research offers insight into how institutional language policies and classroom discourse either reinforce or challenge social hierarchies. So, understanding these dynamics is vital in transforming higher education spaces to be more inclusive and equitable. Additionally, this study contributes to existing scholarship on language and education in post-apartheid South Africa by highlighting the lived experiences of both academic staff members and students. It extends current debates about multilingualism and the dominance of English in academia, offering evidence-based recommendations for developing language policies that reflect linguistic diversity, promote mutual understanding, and empower all students to participate fully in academic discourse.

6.4 Summary of the chapters

Chapter one focused on providing an overview or brief insight into the study. It provides a summary of language and language usage in a higher learning environment, and it provides a map that helps navigate the thesis. Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review that encompasses a range of topics, including language, discourse, language in education, multilingualism, and other relevant areas. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the literature surrounding language, interaction, and language inclusivity, and it further explores how multilingualism and various policies promote the adoption of multilingual approaches in diverse learning environments. Chapter three outlined the approaches and

methods used to gather data, reflecting how this study employs a pluralistic approach to integrate a critical discourse perspective with a phenomenological paradigm. The study employed online open-ended questions to gather data, utilising two sampling methods. Initially, purposive sampling was used; however, it did not yield enough participants. Consequently, convenience sampling was also employed to complement the purposive sampling approach. Chapter four focused on presenting the raw data and creating various themes from it. NVivo was used as a tool to analyse the data and draw parallels that help create themes and sub-themes. Chapter five mapped participants' experiences of language using a thematic approach, which aligns with phenomenology and Fairclough's 3D model, as well as Critical Discourse Analysis. These approaches uncovered the duality embedded in language and language use. Chapter 6 concluded the study and highlighted the importance of language inclusivity in teaching and learning spaces and made recommendations on how researchers can build on this existing research.

6.5 Recommendations

This study provides four recommendations for enhancing language inclusivity in various teaching and learning environments. The recommendations are as follows: 1. Promoting Multilingual teaching practices, 2. The creation of questionnaires in different languages, 3. Further Research on Language and Power 4. Strengthening the implementation of the language policy. The recommendations call for a shift from a monolingual to a multilingual paradigm, where linguistic diversity is viewed as an asset rather than a limitation. Implementing these suggestions will not only improve teaching and learning outcomes but also contribute to the university's broader goal of creating an inclusive, equitable, and socially just academic environment.

5. Promoting Multilingual Teaching Practice

The study recommends that academic staff members should support and encourage the use and integration of multilingual teaching strategies. These strategies should include the use of translanguaging and code-switching to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences. The use of English as the sole medium of instruction was found to create challenges for students whose first language is not English, particularly those from rural backgrounds. Many participants reported that they frequently struggle to articulate complex academic ideas or engage confidently in discussions, which impacts their learning experiences and performance. Consequently, there is a pressing need to promote teaching approaches that

acknowledge and utilise the rich linguistic diversity present within the classroom.

6. The creation of the questionnaire in multiple languages

The study recognised the limitations of using English, as the findings reveal that language plays a critical role in shaping how participants understand, interpret, and respond to research instruments. Therefore, the study recommends the creation of questionnaires in the four official languages of the UFS, as recognised in the language policy, so that participants can respond to the questionnaire in the language with which they are most comfortable. This highlights the need for future research instruments, particularly questionnaires, to be developed and administered in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity, clarity, and authenticity of responses. Creating questionnaires in multiple languages serves several key purposes. Firstly, it allows participants to engage with research questions in the language they are most comfortable with, which enhances the accuracy and richness of the data collected.

7. Further Research on Language and Power

This study also recommends that future studies investigate how language policies and practices perpetuate or challenge power dynamics in higher education institutions, particularly on rural-based campuses. Furthermore, the investigation can include studies that focus on comparative studies across campuses or other universities to provide insights into how linguistic inclusivity contributes to transformation and decolonisation and how these link with power and access.

8. Strengthening the implementation of the language policy

Finally, the study acknowledges that the UFS language policy promotes multilingualism and inclusivity; however, its implementation remains inconsistent. Although the University has a language policy aimed at promoting multilingualism and inclusivity, the findings of this study reveal a gap between policy formulation and actual implementation in classroom settings. Therefore, it is recommended that the institution strengthen the practical enforcement of its language policy to ensure that its objectives are reflected in teaching, learning, and administrative practices. To achieve this, the University should develop clear guidelines and monitoring mechanisms that ensure lecturers and departments adhere to the principles of linguistic diversity outlined in the policy. Regular audits and evaluations should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the policy's implementation and to identify areas where additional support or training is needed. Moreover, capacity-building initiatives should be introduced for academic staff to help them integrate multilingual approaches in their pedagogy. Workshops, seminars, and professional development programmes can equip lecturers with the necessary skills to manage multilingual classrooms effectively and to employ strategies such as translanguaging, code-switching, and the inclusion of indigenous languages in instruction.

6.6 Recommendation for future research

This study recommends that future studies focus on exploring broader linguistic dynamics by examining multilingual practices beyond formal classroom settings. These studies should examine how language influences interactions in less formal settings, such as tutorials, computer labs, and other spaces that promote teaching and learning. Furthermore, future research should also explore the relationship between language, power, and interaction, with a particular focus on how linguistic hierarchies shape academic identities and participation, and the studies should use classroom observations and in-depth interviews to gather data that reflect deeper insight on how power is enacted through language use during lectures, consultations, and assessments.

6.7 Closing remarks

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge surrounding Critical Discourse Analysis, multilingualism, and language in education. It interrogated the role of language in shaping teaching and learning experiences within the context of higher education. Furthermore, the study examined how English both enhances and limits interactions, and how language and power intersect in academic settings. Therefore, the study's findings affirm that language is not merely a medium of communication but a powerful social and academic tool that influences access to knowledge, confidence, belonging, and the overall quality of teaching and learning interactions. Finally, the study demonstrated that meaningful learning occurs when students can draw on their full linguistic repertoires, provided that academic staff members adopt inclusive practices that acknowledge multiple languages and learning styles. Initial in students' teaching and learning processes. It affects how they engage with one another and their ability to participate in learning-oriented activities and engagements effectively. Language, be it spoken or written, has its own rules that govern how the speaker and receiver understand and make meaning of the given stimuli. These rules can sometimes pose challenges for non-native speakers. Choosing an inclusive language for learning and teaching plays a vital role in aiding engagement between staff and students. Throughout the discussion, the importance of language inclusivity was highlighted not only for engagement purposes but also for better learning experiences and encounters. Students should be given lingual options so that they can participate from a point of understanding and access, rather than marginalisation and exclusion. Using English in multicultural and multilingual classrooms might be seen as a solution for bridging the challenges that arise from multicultural classroom interactions.

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Appendix A: Open-ended questionnaires for staff members

Staff questionnaire

Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: “A Reflection of the Participant's Experience of Language”

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information that will help unpack the importance of language in classroom interaction. The study aims to understand how language affects interactions in lecture halls among students, staff, and among students. The study further seeks to get a clearer understanding of participants experience on how language has limited or enhanced their interactions with students within a lecture hall.

If you experience any emotional distress due to the nature of the study, please contact the student counselling and development office for assistance; they have pledged to assist and ensure the emotional well-being of participants, should the need arise. Please email them below for assistance
SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Biographical Information of Participant

Level of study you teach	
Current position i.e are you a lecturer, facilitator etc	

Ice breaker Question

13. Define the word language.
14. If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to teach using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

Research-related questions

15. How important is language and its usage in a classroom? (Please provide a detailed response.)
16. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with students within a classroom?
17. Has using English as a medium of instruction enhanced your ability to interact with students in a classroom?
18. Has the language you use to teach limited students' ability to interact with you or the content?
19. Narrate how the language you use to teach enhances/limits students' ability to interact with you or the content. (Please answer by supply details as to how the language used enhances or limits students' interactions with you and their understanding of the content.)
20. What do you think about the University's language policy?

21. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
22. How do you foster language inclusivity in your classroom?
23. Is the decolonisation of language in higher learning institutions desirable and feasible?
(Please elaborate.)

Closure

24. Do you have any other final thoughts on the classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

Appendix B Open-ended Questionnaire for students

Title: Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: “A Reflection of the Participants’ Experience of Language”

This questionnaire aims to gather information that will help unpack the importance of language in classroom interaction. The study aims to understand how language affects interaction within lecture halls between students and staff members and among students. The study further seeks to get a clearer understanding of participant's experience on how language has limited or enhanced their interactions with lecturers, content and fellow students within a lecture hall.

If you experience any emotional distress due to the nature of the study, please contact the student counselling and development office for assistance. They have pledged to assist and ensure the emotional well-being of participants, should the need arise. Please email them below for assistance
SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Biographical Information of Participant

Level of study	
The degree you are studying towards	

Ice breaker

11. What does the word “language” mean to you?
12. If we were living in your ideal world and you were given a choice to learn and engage in academic spaces using any language of your choice, which language would you pick and why?

Research related questions

13. What is the significance of using English in a learning environment such as a lecture class? (Provided detailed response)
14. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever limited your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
15. Has using English as a medium of instruction ever enhanced your ability to interact with fellow students, the content, or the lecturer within a classroom? Please elaborate.
16. Do you think language inclusivity is fostered in your classroom? (If yes, please explain how inclusivity is fostered. If no, please explain why you think inclusivity is not fostered.)

17. What do you think about the University's language policy?
18. Do you think the policy encourages/ promotes multiculturalism within teaching and learning spaces?
19. What does decolonization of language in higher learning institutions mean to you?
Do you think it is desirable and/or possible?

Closure

20. Do you have any other final thoughts on the classroom language dynamics between students and staff on the Qwaqwa Campus?

Appendix C: Participant recruitment script for staff members

Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"

Dear Participant,

I hope this e-mail finds you in good spirits. My name is Mpho Tsiloane. I am a Masters student at the University of the Free State studying in the English Department. I am contacting you with an invitation to participate in a research study titled **Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"**. This research satisfies the requirements of the Master of Arts (with specialization in English) degree. The purpose of the research is to understand the role of language (particularly English) in enhancing or limiting interaction between academic staff members and students within lecture halls.

Due to your important role in the academic setting, I would like to invite you to participate in this study, as your insights are invaluable to the research. Your participation in this study will involve completing an online questionnaire using a link that will be provided. When starting the questionnaire, you must first complete the informed consent form. The questionnaire consists of three sections. Section 1 focuses on biographical questions relevant to the study and an icebreaker. The questions include for example your job title and the level of study you teach. Section 2 focuses on the impact language has within lecture halls. Section 3 is the closure, where you provide your final remarks, recommendations and thoughts on ways in which multiple language-use can improve the lecture-hall experience for both academic staff and students alike. After reading each question in each section, please provide as detailed responses as possible that will accurately represent your opinion. Note that each question is meant to express your opinion; there are no correct or incorrect answers. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 or less minutes to complete.

The study has no risks, and your participation is entirely voluntary. There is no harm involved in the research, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you wish to. You do not need to disclose any identifying information, and information will be kept confidential, and the responses will only be used for academic purposes. If you are willing to participate, please click on the link provided, which will take you to the questionnaire. The study has received an ethical clearance (Ethical clearance Number: **UFS-HSD2024/1877**

If you have any questions you can contact me, Ms Mpho Tsiloane, via email at 2011084486@ufs4life.ac.za or my supervisor, Dr KM Ngara, at ngarak@ufs.ac.za.

In case you experience emotional distress, please email

Please contact SCD, they have all the necessary resources to assist and have pledged to help all participants of this study should they encounter emotional distress. For assistance, please email

SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

Link to participate:

[UFS Qwaqwa Campus Staff Questionnaire – Fill out form](#)

Appendix D: Student participation recruitment script

Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"

Dear Participant,

I hope this e-mail finds you in good spirits. My name is Mpho Tsiloane. I am a Masters student at the University of the Free State studying in the English Department. I am contacting you with an invitation to participate in a research study titled **Linguistic Dynamics in Staff and Student Classroom Interactions on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus: "A Reflection on the Participants' Experience of Language"**. This research satisfies the requirements of the Master of Arts (with specialization in English) degree. The purpose of the research is to understand the role of language (particularly English) in enhancing or limiting interaction between academic staff members and students within lecture halls.

Due to your important role in the academic setting, I would like to invite you to participate in this study, as your insights are invaluable to the research. Your participation in this study will involve completing an online questionnaire using a link provided at the end. When starting the questionnaire, you must first complete the informed consent, by reading through the document, then provide consent through the checkbox.

The questionnaire consists of three sections. Section 1 focuses on biographical questions relevant to the study and an icebreaker. This includes the year of study the participant is in and the degree they are studying towards. Section 2 focuses on the impact language has within lecture halls. Section 3 is the closure, where you provide your final remarks, recommendations and thoughts on ways in which multiple language use can improve the lecture-hall experience for both academic staff and students alike. After reading each question in each section, please provide as detailed responses as possible that will accurately represent your opinion. Note that each question is meant to express your opinion; there are no correct or incorrect answers. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes or less to complete.

There is no harm involved in the research and your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time if you wish to. You do not need to disclose any identifying information, and information will be kept confidential, and the responses will only be used for academic purposes. If you are willing to participate, please click on the link provided, which will take you to the questionnaire. The study has received an Ethical Clearance Number:

Ethical Clearance number:
UFS-HSD2024/1877

Participation link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/fxSsSy7fgT>

If you have any questions, you can contact me, Ms Mpho Tsiloane, via email at 2011084486@ufs4life.ac.za or my supervisor, Dr KM Ngara, at ngarak@ufs.ac.za.

In case you experience emotional distress, please note that the student counselling and development department is ready to assist to ensure your well-being. They pledged to help participants who face emotional distress due to the nature of the study. If you experience emotional distress at any point please use the email below for assistance

SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated.

Appendix E: Ethical approval

Appendix F: Title approval

Appendix G: Turnitin Report