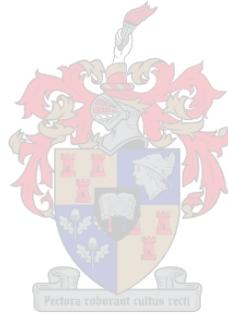


**Learners' attitudes to standard vs non-standard  
South African English accents of their teachers**

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**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy at Stellenbosch University**

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**March 2010**

## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 2 November 2009

## Abstract

This study is interested in the relationship between accent and hearers' perception of the speaker. It investigates the kinds of stereotypes related to phonological features of the speaker's language. Specifically this thesis focused on the perceptions that high school girls have of their Mathematics teachers who speak English with a non-standard accent. The general aims of the study were to establish whether high school girls perceived non-standard English speaking Mathematics teachers negatively and, if so, whether this perception changed as the girls mature.

Twenty-seven Grade 8 learners and 14 Grade 12 learners from a private English-medium school in the Gauteng Province of South Africa participated in this study. The school attracts learners from the affluent socio-economic group, and the majority of the learners are white (76.8%) and first language speakers of English (86%). These participants completed questionnaires using the matched-guise technique (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum 1960) to determine their perceptions of six accents. Five speakers were recorded reading the same Mathematics lesson in English. One reader read the same passage twice, using a so-called Standard South African English accent for one recording and a second language accent of an isiZulu mother tongue speaker for the second recording.

The results of this investigation indicate that high school girls are inclined to stereotype teachers according to the teachers' accents. Some of the characteristics attributed to the non-standard English speaking teachers were positive, but generally learners held a negative perception of such teachers. There was very little change in this perception from Grade 8 to Grade 12.

Of particular importance in the National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10 to 12 is that learners emerge from this phase of their schooling being "sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors" ([www.sabceducation.co.za/](http://www.sabceducation.co.za/)). The school where the research was conducted has addressed diversity in numerous ways in an attempt to prepare the learners for life in multilingual and multicultural South Africa. That the Grade 12 learners in this study, whether first language speakers of English or not, still display accent prejudice suggests that the life skills objectives are not adequately met and that this form of prejudice needs to be addressed in more creative ways.

## Opsomming

Hierdie studie stel belang in die verhouding tussen aksent en hoorders se waarneming van die spreker. Dit ondersoek die soort stereotipering wat saamhang met die fonologiese eienskappe van die spreker se taal. Hierdie tesis het spesifiek gefokus op die persepsies wat hoërskoolmeisies het van hul Wiskunde-opvoeders wat Engels met 'n nie-standaard aksent praat. Die algemene doelstellings van die studie was om vas te stel of hoërskoolmeisies hierdie opvoeders negatief beoordeel op grond van hul aksent en, indien wel, of hierdie oordeel minder fel raak met ouerdom.

Sewe-en-twintig Graad 8-leerders en 14 Graad 12-leerders aan 'n privaat- Engels-medium skool in die Gauteng Provinsie van Suid-Afrika het aan die studie deelgeneem. Die skool se leerders kom uit die hoë sosio-ekonomiese groep, en die meerderheid is Wit (76.8%) en eerstetaalsprekers van Engels (86%). Die deelnemers het vraelyste voltooi as deel van sogenaamde "matched guise"- (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner en Fillenbaum 1960) navorsing om hul persepsies van ses aksente te bepaal. Vyf sprekers is op band opgeneem terwyl hulle dieselfde Wiskunde-les in Engels lees. Een leser het die les twee maal geles, een maal met 'n sogenaamde Standaard Suid-Afrikaanse Engelse aksent en een maal met 'n tweedetaal aksent tipies van 'n isiZulu moedertaalspreker.

Die resultate van hierdie ondersoek dui daarop dat hoërskoolmeisies geneig is om opvoeders te stereotipeer op grond van die opvoeders se aksent. Party eienskappe wat aan die nie-standaard Engelssprekende opvoeders toegeskryf is, was positief, maar oor die algemeen het leerders 'n negatiewe persepsie van sulke opvoeders gehad. Baie min verandering in hierdie persepsies het van Graad 8 tot Graad 12 plaasgevind.

Van besondere belang in die Graad 10 tot 12 Nasionale Kurrikulum is dat leerders aan die einde van hierdie fase 'n sensitiwiteit sal hê vir kwessies aangaande "diversiteit, soos armoede, ongelykheid, ras, geslag, taal, ouerdom, gestremdheid en ander faktore" ([www.sabceducation.co.za/](http://www.sabceducation.co.za/)). Die skool waar hierdie navorsing gedoen is, spreek diversiteit op velerlei maniere aan in 'n poging om leerders voor te berei vir lewe in veeltalige en multikulturele Suid-Afrika. Die feit dat Graad 12-leerders in hierdie studie, of hulle eerstetaalsprekers van Engels is al dan nie, steeds aksentvooroordele toon, dui aan dat die doelstellings van lewensvaardigheid onderrig nie voldoende bereik word nie en dat hierdie vorm van vooroordeel op meer kreatiewe maniere aangespreek moet word.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am eternally grateful to Frenette Southwood for her guidance during the writing of this thesis.

There are so many people who have assisted me during the course of researching and writing:

- Hazel and Robin, thank you for giving me the reason to persevere;
- Elaine, thank you for editing and the sound advice;
- Diane – there are simply no words to express my thankfulness for all your help and love; and
- My dearest friends: thank you for not allowing me to give up.

But there are three exceptionally special people in my life:

- my girls, Emma and Faye, thank you for always being extraordinarily patient while Mommy read another page and another...; and
- Alec – my guide and my light – thank you for your wisdom and the constant faith you have shown in me.

# Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background to the study	1
1.2. Research questions	2
1.3. Outline of the thesis	2
1.4. Definition of core terms used in this thesis	3
<b>CHAPTER 2:</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Accent(s)</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. Introduction	5
2.2. Dialect	5
2.3. Accent	6
2.4. Non-standard first language accents	7
2.5. Second language accents	8
2.6. Accent reduction or accent modification	11
<b>CHAPTER 3:</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Adolescents, their teachers, and stereotyping</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. Introduction	14
3.2. Beginner teacher anxiety	14
3.3. Adolescence	16
3.4. Stereotyping and perception formation	20
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1. Introduction	22
4.2. General experimental protocol	22
4.3. Context of the study	24
4.4. The informants	28
4.5. The research technique	29
4.6. The readers	32
4.7. The passage read	34
4.8. Data analysis techniques	35
4.9. Ethical considerations	37
<b>CHAPTER 5:</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Results</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1. Introduction	39
5.2. Notes on reading the graphs in this chapter	39
5.3. Pilot study	39

5.4. Responses of the Grade 8 group	41
5.5. Responses of the Grade 12 group	44
<b>CHAPTER 6:</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>48</b>
6.1. Introduction	48
6.2. Hypothesis 1: High school girls view teachers with non-standard accents negatively	48
6.3. Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of accented speech become less negative with maturation	51
<b>CHAPTER 7:</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>54</b>
7.1. Summary of findings	54
7.2. Implications of the study for educational practice	55
7.3. Shortcomings of this study	56
7.4. Concluding remarks	57
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDIXES</b>	<b>63</b>
Appendix A: Questionnaire completed by informants	63
Appendix B: Example of answered questionnaire (Readers 1 – 3) - Grade 8	65
Appendix C: Example of answered questionnaire (Readers 4 – 6) – Grade 12	66
Appendix D: Letter of permission to complete research	67
Appendix E: Consent form sent to parents of Grade 8 informants	68
Appendix F: Statement of Transformation	69
Appendix G: Diversity Policy	71

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

*I have travelled more than anyone else, and I have noticed that even the angels speak English with an accent.*

– Mark Twain

### 1.1. Background to the study

My intention with this research is to establish whether accent stereotyping occurs in an environment that actively focuses on diversity and transformation, and if so, whether this stereotyping becomes less prevalent over time (i.e. as the learners mature).

I teach at a prestigious girls' school that draws most of its learners from a predominantly high socio-economic group and from various cultural backgrounds. The learners are particularly academically inclined and often receive pressure from home and school to achieve excellent marks. In this context, I have observed how learners make comments about their second language English speaking Mathematics teachers' ability to teach. These comments seem to be based solely on the teachers' accents. As learnership co-ordinator and teacher responsible for overseeing the activities of student teachers, I have also observed that such remarks result in many of these Mathematics teachers losing self-confidence. During class observations, I have noticed that if these teachers mispronounce key terms during the Mathematics lesson, the learners seem to lose focus on the content of the lesson, and it is at this stage that classroom discipline becomes an issue.

With an increasing teacher shortage in South Africa (see Peltzer, Shisana and Udjo 2005), particularly in Science and Mathematics, the government is expressing a need to retain quality teachers. With the business world offering more competitive salaries than the teaching sector, some Mathematics teachers may lose confidence in their ability to teach due to stereotyping by learners and leave the teaching profession. My informal observations of learner and teacher behaviour mentioned above, have led to two specific research questions. These are stated in the next section.

## **1.2. Research questions**

- (i) Does the non-standard English accent of high school Mathematics teachers influence the perception and respect high school girls have of these teachers?
- (ii) If so, does the perception and respect that high school girls have of their non-standard English accented Mathematics teachers improve by Grade 12?

The following two hypotheses were set:

Hypothesis 1: high school girls are intolerant of teachers with non-standard English accents. I based this hypothesis on my informal observations of these learners' behaviour and on the content of their casual conversations about their teachers.

Hypothesis 2: high school girls' become more tolerant of their teachers' non-standard English accents by Grade 12. I based this hypothesis on the assumption that the learners become more socially aware and tolerant with age.

## **1.3. Outline of the thesis**

Apart from the introduction given here, this thesis includes six more chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on accents and the modification of accents. Chapter 3 examines pertinent social and psychological aspects of adolescents and teachers as well as the phenomenon of stereotyping. After this theoretical background, I will embark on an explanation of the importance of understanding accent stereotyping and implications for intercultural communication in an educational environment.

In Chapter 4, I set out the research design and methodology that was utilised in the collection of data and in the analysis of this data. In Chapter 5, the results of data collection are presented and in Chapter 6 they are interpreted by utilising the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. It is in Chapter 6 that the relationships are drawn between the existing literature on stereotyping based on accent and the results of this investigation. A summary of the results and the answers to the two research questions appear in Chapter 7, where the merit

and shortcomings of the study are stated. Suggestions for further research in this area are also made in this last chapter.

#### **1.4. Definition of core terms used in this thesis**

**Accent:** Accent is defined by Crystal (1991:2) as “the cumulative auditory effect of those features of pronunciation which identify where a person is from, regionally or socially”. Ting-Toomey (1999:87) states that “linguistically speaking” everybody speaks with an accent because “accent means the inflection or tone of voice”.<sup>1</sup> However, a listener is often able to distinguish between accents, as the accented speech patterns are reflective of particular group membership.

**Non-standard accent:** A non-standard accent is defined, for the purposes of this study, as a non-South African English accent. This may include a first language isiZulu speaker who speaks South African English, a first language Afrikaans speaker who speaks South African English or a person of Indian origin speaking South African English.

**High school learner:** Within the South African context, high school learners are regarded as learners in Grades 8 to 12. The learners vary in age from 12 years old to 19 years old. (This study will examine Grade 8 and Grade 12 girls’ opinions only.)

**Perception:** The general label of “person perception” is used in social psychology when a person perceives and then judges another person. Whereas it is “human nature” to have certain perceptions of other people, when these perceptions begin stereotyping people, “it can harm individuals by denying them educational, work, and social opportunities” (Wright 2009:1).

**Stereotyping:** Ting-Toomey (1999:161) defines stereotyping as “an overgeneralisation about an identity group without any attempt to perceive individual variations within the identity category”. Stereotyping is often inaccurate, negative and could be damaging. Gudykunst

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I will use the phrase “speak with an accent” – even though not technically correct – in this thesis to refer to speaking with a non-standard or second language accent.

(2003:114) states that stereotyping is often used to control, criticise or make people from other groups seem less cultivated.

## Chapter 2: Accent(s)

*“The accent of our native country dwells in the heart and mind as well as on the tongue.”*

– François de la Rochefoucauld

### 2.1. Introduction

The focus of this research is on accent and not on dialect, and in this chapter a clear distinction is made between these two terms. In Section 2.2, a definition of “dialect” is given. There are a number of definitions of accent, and many explanations for the existence of different accents have been offered by a variety of researchers worldwide; some of these definitions are considered in Section 2.3. In Sections 2.4 and 2.5, a distinction is drawn between non-standard first language accents and second language accents, respectively, with English being the language in focus. Accent modification is suggested as an option to aid in an improved understanding of speakers with a foreign accent, as will be shown in Section 2.6.

### 2.2. Dialect

A dialect refers to a variety of language that has particular regional speech patterns. It is distinguished from other dialects by its vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. An accent refers to distinctive pronunciation only. A dialect is often associated with a particular social class or a particular geographical area. Collins and Mees (2003:2) make a similar distinction between accent and dialect by referring to dialect as a variation in grammar and vocabulary, whereas accent is a variation in pronunciation.

Adger, Wolfram and Christian (2007:26) make the statement that “members of the majority culture, the most powerful group, who would be quite willing to accept and champion equality in other social and educational domains” will resist accepting a dialect that is not their own. As such, Adger et al. (2007) concede that dialect prejudice is a difficult prejudice to overcome.

### 2.3. Accent

Mari Matsuda (in Wyld 1997:21) describes accent as follows:

“Your accent carries the story of who you are – who first held you and talked to you when you were a child, where you have lived, your age, the schools you attended, the languages you know, your ethnicity, whom you admire, your loyalties, your profession, your class position: traces your life and identity woven into your pronunciation, your phrasing, your choice of words.”

Much has been written about accent and there seem to be particular common characteristics regarding accent: the pace, cadence and tone; the expression and enunciation; the idiomatic expressions and the phonological processes all contribute to an accent.

Lippi-Green (1997:42) maintains that “accent” is a rather vague term. She continues by stating that, in a “technical way”, a listener is able to recognise a particular accent by the way the speaker stresses specific words or parts of sentences. As such, the manner in which someone speaks could generally be regarded as that person’s accent. Lippi-Green (1997:42) maintains that, in the minds of speakers, there are two essential aspects when differentiating between accents, namely prosodic and segmental features. Each of these will briefly be discussed below.

The first essential aspect, namely prosodic features, includes intonation. Intonation incorporates the stress patterns used when someone speaks as well as the tempo of the speech. Some accents may seem, for example, “singsong” as the intonation at the end of a sentence is raised. The rate at which someone speaks is included in this feature.

Regarding segmental features: as we learn to speak our first language, we learn the sounds (or segments) of the language which comprise vowels, consonants and glides. Lippi-Green (1997:42) states that “each of these sounds exists in relation to one another in a phonological structure.” An accent occurs when two varieties of a single language differ only in terms of phonology (segmental and/or suprasegmental).

As mentioned in Section 1.4, Ting-Toomey (1999:87) states that everyone speaks with an accent and, as such, accent is an identifiable speech sound characteristic of a particular person.

#### **2.4. Non-standard first language accents**

Cheshire (in Trudgill 1984:546) refers to non-standard English accents as the “regional pronunciation” of what she calls “General English”. Cheshire also states that many people in the United Kingdom speak with a non-standard English accent – and the same can be said for many speakers of American English(es). This non-standard English accent is particular to the region in which the person was raised, and can be influenced by age, gender and the person’s integration into “the social network” (Trudgill 1984:546). As such, many first language accents are not standard, and many non-standard accents, whether of first or second language speakers (and we return to the latter in Section 2.5) are stereotyped.

The standard variety of a language is that variety that is usually endorsed by schools and used in the media, particularly in the printed press. Because it is promoted in this way, it is often regarded by the speakers of the particular language as the ‘correct’ way of speaking. Any accented version of the language is then perceived as “incorrect”. Received Pronunciation (RP) is the way the English language is spoken by the English aristocracy and educated elite. RP is thought to be the standard and is used in dictionaries to assist with pronunciation in English. Cheshire (in Trudgill 1984:546) refers to Trudgill’s research in 1979 where he established that only “3% of the English-speaking population use RP.” If non-standard accents are viewed as deficient, the other 97% of English speakers speak “incorrectly”.

Although few people use RP, it is viewed as the revered English accent due to its association with the affluent and professional upper class. Thus, speakers of non-standard English appear to be at a disadvantage. Cheshire (in Trudgill 1984:548) discusses the flawed idea that children from working-class backgrounds, who speak non-standard English, do not achieve academically. She states that teachers need to ensure that they are not prejudiced by the accent of the child. Cheshire (in Trudgill 1984:457) states that the “use of non-standard phonological and grammatical features” is linked to socio-economic class and, as such, “it is working-class children who will suffer most severely from value judgments”.

Preston and Robinson (2005:133) mention how people's responses to non-standard language varieties expose their perceptions of the speakers of such varieties. They refer to the 1960 study by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner and Fillenbaum on these perceptions; their research will be discussed later in this thesis (see Section 4.5).

The website <http://www.putlearningfirst.com/language/12dial/tufnell.html> refers to an *Observer* newspaper article written by Peter Corrigan. In this article, Corrigan comments on the English spoken by an England cricketer, Phil Tufnell. Despite Tufnell being a first language speaker of English, Corrigan says that Tufnell's English accent "grates" and is "exaggerated Cockney". Such comments can be viewed as derogatory and could possibly reveal Corrigan's attitude towards speakers of Cockney. This leads the reader to ponder whether Corrigan's attitude is based on class prejudice or accent prejudice.

According to Lippi-Green (1997:42), it is imperative to understand the differences between a non-standard first language accent and a second language accent. She states that although "every native speaker of English has some regional variety" (Lippi-Green 1997:42), the speaker still speaks English as a first language. Lippi-Green (1997:42) views a second language accent as something "very different". In the next section, the discussion turns to second language accents.

## **2.5. Second language accents**

Second language accents are created when pronunciation rules from the speaker's first language are carried over into the second language. Thus, second language speakers tend to use the intonation and phonemic inventory from their first language and apply it to the second language.

Tahta, Wood and Loewenthal (1981:265) conducted a study to examine why only some second language speakers display a definite "transfer of accent and intonation from their first language" to their second language. A number of factors emerged, with the most important being the age at which the speaker acquired the second language. Tahta et al. (1981:269) observed that if the speaker started the acquisition of the second language by the age of 6 to 7 years, "then there will be no transfer of accent". Between the ages of 7 to 9, there is still an excellent possibility of very little transfer of the first language accent to the second language.

Older than this, the speaker's chance of being "accent-free" reduces significantly. A speaker's ability "to replicate intonation [in his/her second language – LG] drop[s] rapidly from 8 – 11" (Tahta et al. 1981:270).

Sebastián-Gallés (in Kroll 2005:74) supports Tahta et al.'s findings that the age at which a second language speaker is first exposed to the second language will impact on the speaker's accent. Sebastián-Gallés (in Kroll 2005:74) refers to the Perceptual Assimilation Model of Best and Strange (Best and Strange, 1992) and the Speech Learning Model of Flege (1992). Best and Strange's model includes three aspects of perceptual assimilation, namely that (i) the new second language "will be assimilated to an already existing [first language – LG] category"; (ii) the sound in the second language will be seen as something new; and (iii) the speech sound will be seen as "a non-linguistic sound" (Sebastián-Gallés in Kroll 2005:74). Sebastián-Gallés (in Kroll 2005:74) states that the "ease" with which two phonemes will be differentiated, depends on how similar the person's first and second languages are. Thus, the more similar the phonemes, the less observable the speaker's accent will be.

Keys (2002:78) agrees that the age of acquisition plays a fundamental part in the degree to which second language speech is accented. He mentions that although the learning of "syntax and semantics" may be excellent in second language learners, the learning of phonology may not be so. Keys states that transfer is a "major process in SLA [second language acquisition – LG] at the phonological level", where *transfer* is defined as "the use of L1 [first language – LG] knowledge in some way during the acquisition of L2 [the second language – LG]" (Keys 2002:82). He continues by stating that the transfer of "phonological elements" may become problematic when the second language speaker views the target phoneme (i.e., the one in the second language) as being similar to the more comfortable first language: instead of creating a "new phonemic category for that sound", the second language speaker will "settle for the L1-based version" (Keys 2002:79). Within the South African context, Keys (2002:80) uses the example of the clicks in the African languages. For a first language speaker of English, managing the clicks in isiXhosa is usually problematic; a click sound is usually replaced by that non-clicked consonant which shares the most distinctive features with the click sound.

Birdsong (2005:319), focusing on phonology, maintains that the older the speaker acquiring the second language is, the more likely it will be that the final "level of attainment" is limited. Birdsong continues by saying that this limitation could "lead to learner failure,

failure of being understood”. Munro, Derwing and Sato (2006:68) agree with Birdsong, stating that “a foreign accent is common” in a second language if the second language is attained after early childhood. They continue by saying that “even linguistically unsophisticated listeners are highly sensitive to accent differences and readily perceive the speech of L2 learners as accented.” This being the case, a second language accent is easily identifiable. It also implies that if it is perceived that someone speaks differently, there may well be a “negative social evaluation” of such a person (Munro et al. 2006:68).

Young’s research findings (reported in Sayahi 2003:110) also indicate that the attitude of listeners to second language speakers is influenced by the second language speaker’s accent. Her research was conducted in the United States of America, using three speakers with varying levels of a Spanish accented English. She continues to state that listeners are “ethnocentric in their judgments” (2003:111) and will equate themselves with like-sounding speakers. Munro et al. (2006:68) concurs with this statement when he says that “minority accents<sup>2</sup> are often disparaged or held to be signs of ignorance or lack of sophistication.”

Some South Africans have indicated, via blogs, their irritation of non-standard English accents on the national broadcaster. One such blog can be found on <http://www.mype.co.za/modules.php?name=Forums&file=viewtopic&t=4018>. In his doctoral thesis, Bheki Shongwe (2008:7) refers to complains received by the SABC about non-standard English accents on their radio channel, SAFM. Regarding non-standard accents being held to be signs of “ignorance or lack of sophistication”, many first language English-speaking South Africans are highly critical of second language English speakers, particularly of radio and television presenters. These critics are of the opinion that the media should always provide an example of Standard English, particularly regarding pronunciation.

This is certainly not an opinion held by South Africans only; there are reports of similar opinions in India and the United Kingdom, amongst others. Singh (2009), a former newspaper editor of *The Statesman*, is particularly critical of how English is used on the major Indian television channels. He states that to hear “some of the anchors and reporters on English-language channels is often a revelation”. He continues to complain about the

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<sup>2</sup> The term “minority accents” is used here to refer to non-standard first language accents and second language accents in general, even though for a language such as English the majority of its speakers would speak with such a “minority” accent.

mispronunciation and poor articulation of words. An article by Sarah Cassidy that appeared in the *Independent* newspaper in the United Kingdom indicates that complaints about television presenters occur in “the birth place of the English language” as well. She reports on a retired teacher’s complaint about the poor diction and pronunciation on the public broadcaster, the BBC.

There are many implications for someone who has so-called accented speech. A “negative social evaluation” (Munro et al. 2006:68) by people in the community may be detrimental for the speaker. Munro et al. state that such speakers may be viewed as ignorant and unsophisticated, becoming a target of prejudice and discrimination. It is for this reason, in South Africa in particular, that the “understanding of pronunciation issues [is becoming] becomes an indispensable part of training programs for English language teachers. Among the topics related to L2 speech that should be broached with prospective teachers is the nature of public attitudes towards those who speak with an accent” (Munro et al. 2006:68). I would argue that prospective teachers of school subjects other than languages should also be made aware of the general public’s opinion of people who speak their second language in an accented manner.

Prospective teachers should also be made aware of the possible communication difficulties which could be caused by second language accents. Non-standard pronunciation may lead to the listener hearing “the wrong word” (Munro et al. 2006:69), which could cause misunderstanding. Intonation patterns may also be incorrectly processed, which could “misinterpret the speaker’s intent”. It is important to note that although there are some “problematic aspects of accented speech” (Munro et al. 2006:69), the speaker may well be understood. Given that accented speech does not always lead to communication problems (and for other reasons), a teacher of a second language learner should not judge or stereotype the learner’s ability based on the accent of the learner. This being said, learners should also be encouraged to not stereotype a teacher’s ability based on the accent of the teacher.

## **2.6. Accent reduction or accent modification**

Singing sensation Shakira said, “I am trying to make my accent so it won't bother anyone, but I am not going to drive myself crazy trying to pretend I am an American girl when I am from Colombia.” (<http://www.shakiramedia.com/quotes>). In the music industry, accented speech

does not affect one's career prospects negatively, but there are professions in which it is more beneficial to sound like a first language speaker of one's second language or of the standard variety of one's language. This section discusses accent reduction (or "accent modification", the more recent term), which is a specific methodical approach used to adopt a new accent. An attempt is made to change the accented speech by learning the phonology of the new language or of a different, socially more acceptable variety of the speaker's first language.

Accent modification programmes have become popular worldwide, with one professional organisation (The American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association) stating: "With lots of hard work, practice, and the help of a qualified speech-language pathologist (SLP), you can learn how to change your speech pronunciation" ([http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/accent\\_mod.htm](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/accent_mod.htm)). An organisation, such as this one, offering accent modification needs to be aware that eliminating accent is difficult and they should not give their students false hope.

The popularity of accent reduction seems to be due to the need for effective communication particularly in the workplace. Effective communication may be hampered by a person's accent when others do not always understand the speaker, avoid social interaction with the speaker and/or focus on the speaker's accent rather than on the content of what is said. Barb (2005:2) states that "accented speech" could possibly "have high levels of intelligibility and comprehensibility" but that the listener may still view the accent to be a distraction and lose interest. Barb continues by saying that the focus of the usual methods of accent modification is "on the production of speech". The pronunciation of the vowels and consonants tend to be core of the accent modification.

According to Wilner in the *Academic Internal Medicine Insight* (2007:14), 20.9% of the physicians in the United States are international medical graduates. Accent modification has thus become "a major focus of communication training programs in the medical setting" (2007:14). According to those in the medical fraternity, any misinterpretation of vital information could have life-threatening consequences. Wilner (2007:14) suggests that medical graduates who are second language speakers of English should be selected for an accent modification programme if the speaker's accent "interferes with optimal patient care."

Monger (2009:3) found that foreign accented telesales agents calling American customers were rated as providing “a lower level of service”. She also found that agents with non-American accents were often “subjected to abuse by customers” (Monger 2009:4). This discriminatory environment could have a negative effect on the agents’ self-esteem and work performance, so accent modification may assist these agents as well as the telesales company.

Moving into the realm of education, Boyd (2003:132) states that in her studies of “both adults and students and young people”, language was blamed for “virtually all problems of communication or pedagogy” where a foreign teacher was concerned. This being the case, accent modification of the foreign teacher may assist in changing these responses from participants.

Barb (2005:8) reminds the reader that the objective of accent modification is not to eliminate the speaker’s accent. The purpose of accent modification is rather “communicative effectiveness”. She states that many people seeking accent modification are professionals who may choose accent modification because they feel vulnerable to stereotyping by listeners (Barb 2005:9). In the next chapter, I will discuss such stereotyping.

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Adolescents, their teachers, and stereotyping**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This research focuses on female learners and the perceptions they have of their high school teachers. As such, this chapter commences with a discussion of high school teachers, and particularly the anxiety experienced by beginner teachers of adolescents (Section 3.2). Hereafter, the focus shifts from the teachers to their learners: Section 3.3 contains a discussion on the period of adolescence, with particular emphasis on girls and the peer pressure these adolescent girls experience. Not only the psychological but also the physical development that takes place in this period will be discussed, as the latter to a certain extent influences the former and plays a role in identity formation. Stereotyping and perception formation are often influenced by peer pressure; the former two will be reviewed in Section 3.4, as stereotyping of teachers and inaccurate perceptions of them are important factors in the creation of anxiety in beginner teachers of adolescents.

#### **3.2. Beginner teacher anxiety**

Lambert and McCarthy (2006:105) state that teaching “has been recognised as an emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating occupation.” It is said that in the 1940s, learners who were chewing gum during a lesson were a major stressor for teachers. The twenty first century, however, has seen the causes of teacher anxiety change radically.

Currently, there are a number of causes of teacher anxiety; Humphreys (1996:6) focuses on two, namely demands and control. When the demands on the teacher are high and the classroom control is low, the level of teacher anxiety is extreme. Over the last three decades, the demands on teachers “have increased enormously and control issues have become a major problem” (Humphreys 1996:6). According to Lambert and McCarthy (2006:106), there has been a general increase in occupational demands in the educational sector recently, and this has caused a further rise in teacher anxiety. Lambert and McCarthy (2006:116) indicate four classroom demands that create teacher anxiety, namely (i) children with behavioural

problems, (ii) “administrative demands”, (iii) children with special educational needs and (iv) “classroom environmental demands.”

Handling children with behavioural problems and special educational needs creates the potential for a lack of classroom control. Joseph (2000:28) elaborates on the types of disruptive behaviour experienced by teachers in two London schools, namely “rowdiness, abuse, bad language, talking, and refusing to accept the teacher’s authority”. Anecdotal evidence points to these types of behaviour being present in South African schools and could thus be potential stressors for beginner teachers in South Africa.

In a study conducted by Coates (1974:5), learner control and discipline were again identified as the dominant sources of anxiety for beginner teachers. Further anxieties centred on demands, namely on knowledge of the subject matter, and the relationships with learners, parents and other teachers. A further demand is teaching in an environment where there is a lack of resources. This is a particular concern in South Africa and many other developing countries. With more children having the opportunity of an education, there is a greater need for teachers and teaching facilities.

The beginner teachers in the school in which the present study was conducted are in an educational environment that is particularly well resourced compared to the environment of the large majority of other South African schools. These beginner teachers have furthermore obtained excellent qualifications from well-respected South African universities, implying that they do not lack subject knowledge. That said, an initial lack of socialisation into the teaching profession is a further source of anxiety for beginner teachers. To move from a tertiary theoretical environment into a secondary educational environment that includes practical aspects of the subject, may be challenging for the beginner teacher. Learners may perceive any anxiety displayed by the beginner teacher as a weakness and behavioural issues may arise.

An academic qualification may provide the necessary curriculum content, but the beginner teacher is surrounded by experienced teachers whom the beginner teacher may perceive as being more competent. Often a beginner teacher has little or no mentoring by a senior teacher (which is not the case in the school in question in this study), and Tisher and Wideen (1990:75) believe that this contributes to further anxiety. They state that most teacher trainers

believe that the supervision of beginner teachers is the most important facet of teacher training, yet this facet is the “least adequately resourced and developed”.

The learners in the school under investigation in this study are predominantly hard working and from affluent backgrounds. The learners and parents at this school could be said to be demanding of the teachers. Thus, it seems unavoidable that beginner teachers would experience stress. Added to this is the possibility of the beginner teacher being a second language speaker of English, the latter being the medium of instruction at the school in question. Having an accent which is unfamiliar and which possibly renders some words unintelligible to the learners could cause the learners to become distracted during the lesson. This distraction could lead to misbehaviour by the learners, creating a lack of control in the classroom and hence a further stressor for the beginner teacher. Demirezen (2007:2) states that “the sense of ethnic identity is intrinsically connected with the use of a dialect of a language.” If this is so, then the beginner teachers with accents, in an attempt to “lose the accent” and gain control of the classroom, may find themselves facing certain identity issues.

### **3.3. Adolescence**

The participants in this study are all adolescent girls at a South African school and as such, it is vital that a clear, yet brief, understanding of adolescent development is discussed. Newman and Newman (2005) offer a comprehensive explanation of adolescent development and this is outlined below.

The period of human development known as “adolescence” is a time of great “social, physical, emotional, physiological and psychological change” (Mwamwenda 1995:63). As South Africa is the context of this study, Mwamwenda’s text (1995) has been selected as he focuses on the South African and African child particularly. Newman and Newman (2005:318) concur when they state that adolescence is “characterised by rapid physical change, significant cognitive and emotional maturation, newly energised sexual interests and a heightened sensitivity to peer relations”. It is during this stage of being neither a child nor an adult that the search for identity begins and is established. Mwamwenda (1995:73) states that adolescents will “spend considerable time examining themselves physically and psychologically”; this is done in search of their identity – indeed, during adolescence, searching for one’s identity becomes a preoccupation.

For the purposes of this study, the physical development of an adolescent will be brief surface to say that physical development might vary significantly from one individual to the next. A group of Grade 8s is likely to be physically diverse, with a variety of heights, weights and body shapes. (Newman and Newman 2005:319).

There seems to be general consensus among researchers that, as stated by Newman and Newman (2005:322), girls seem more discontent with “their physical appearance and overall body image” than do boys. They continue that this discontent and self-consciousness peaks between 13 and 15 years of age. Studies indicate that when self-esteem is low, there is an “increased likelihood of depression among early adolescent girls”, more so than among boys. We return to this later in this section.

Pipher (1996:55) states that girls are under immense pressure to be beautiful and are aware of others’ regular “evaluations of their appearance”. Pipher continues by emphasising that for adolescent girls “their appearance over-determines their identity” (1996:55). Due to this preoccupation with body appearance and also the internalising of problems, the Department of Mental Health in South Carolina (<http://www.state.sc.us/dmh>) has indicated that eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia are prevalent during adolescence.

During early adolescence, emotions are intense and variable. This instability of emotions frequently leads to erratic behaviour, and adults often find this a trying period. Mwamwenda (1995:75) agrees that there is instability of emotions in early adolescence, but he states that “as they grow older, adolescents do their best to control such aggressive behaviour.” It is during this stage that as girls become aware of the new variety of emotions, they “are likely to turn inward, experiencing feelings of self-doubt, guilt, or depression” Pipher (1996:58). Pipher (1996:58) states that if adolescent girls remain “connected to their emotions” and work through the difficult times steadily, they can “emerge from adolescence strong and whole”.

Young adolescent girls tend to see the world in terms of black and white, with few grey areas. They are still thinking and analysing on a concrete level; very few young adolescent girls are able to think abstractly. Because adolescent girls often over-generalise, it is challenging for an adult to reason with them. Pipher (1996:60) believes that teenage girls are

often viewed as being “egocentric in their thinking”, as they can frequently only focus on their own experience and not that of anyone else. Elkind (in Newman and Newman 2005:329) refers to the concept of a ‘personal fable’, which he says is the “intense investment in one’s own thoughts and feelings” and the belief that these “thoughts are unique”. He refers to the imaginary audience adolescents think they have; young adolescents believe that they are the focus of everyone’s “thoughts and attention” (Elkind cited in Newman and Newman 2005:329). From a psychological perspective, young adolescents slowly begin to decentralise, realising that their ideals are shared by everyone. They “gradually discover that their neat, logical life plans must be constantly adapted to the expectations and needs of others” (Newman and Newman 2005:329). Once they start decentralising, the adolescents’ egocentrism normally wanes.

Academically, adolescents experience major development in conscious thought, reasoning and problem solving. The adolescent is able to formulate a hypothesis “to explain an event, and then to follow the logic that a particular hypothesis implies” (Newman and Newman 2005:327). This is particularly important for this thesis, as it is at this stage of development that the adolescent is able to make a conscious decision to “behave in a culturally accepted manner” (Newman and Newman 2005:329).

Social development during adolescence is reflected in the adolescent’s need for conformity. This conformity, which gives the adolescent a sense of belonging, can be seen in clothing, hairstyles, tastes, language and accessories. Mwamwenda (1995:70) states that “there is room for innovation, but this must be in conformity with the basic structure and meet with the approval of peers.” For the purposes of this study, it is essential to be aware of the need for approval of peers as the responses to the questionnaire in this study may be influenced.

While on the one hand seeking to belong to a group, the adolescent on the other hand longs for independence. The latter could create conflict between adolescents and their parents. Parents frequently try to maintain the same control over the adolescent that was felt necessary when the adolescent was younger. Mwamwenda (1995:72) says that it is during this time that “the adolescent is inclined to establish stronger friendship links with ... peers” than with core family members. Newman and Newman (2005:355) concur with Mwamwenda’s opinion of peer pressure by stating that adolescents feel the need to demonstrate commitment and

loyalty to the group. Brown (in Newman and Newman 2005:355) proposes “four modes of peer influence”, namely:

- (i) a direct suggestion that the adolescent should “perform a particular behaviour”; if they decline, they risk being rejected by the group;
- (ii) modelling of other group members’ behaviour and even fashion sense;
- (iii) “normative regulation”, which entails mocking or gossiping – this manipulates other group members’ attitudes and behaviour; and
- (iv) the opportunity for adolescents to participate in “unsupervised activities”, i.e. activities from which adults are absent.

Although peer pressure is often viewed negatively, this is not always the case. Being part of a group could have a “positive effect on an adolescent’s self-image and self-esteem” (Newman and Newman 2005:355). A peer group can offer an adolescent protection from loneliness and provide a place to express frustration about family situations.

Peers will have a significant influence over the adolescent. The need to feel part of a group is paramount. Newman and Newman (2005:352) suggest four dimensions to group identity. These dimensions are:

- (i) “a capacity to categorize people into groups and to recognise distinguishing features that define members”,
- (ii) “experiencing a sense of history as a member of the group”,
- (iii) “an emotional investment in the group”, and
- (iv) “a social evaluation of one’s group and its relation to others.”

Bearing these dimensions in mind, groups have certain “boundaries that limit membership” (Newman and Newman 2005:351). There are also particular shared markers that identify the members of the group. These shared markers enable the adolescent to match the rest of the group and to be identified as a member. For the purposes of this study, one should note that these markers also allow the adolescent to identify teachers who do not belong to their group.

While attempting to fit into the group, Newman and Newman (2005:351) states, the adolescent may be “confronted by the fit – or lack of fit – between [their] personal needs and the norms and values” of the group. These personal needs include “social approval, affiliation, leadership, power and status” and will determine the type of group the adolescent

joins. Alienation occurs when the adolescent feels socially rejected. The adolescent may be at odds with the group if the group subscribes to certain behaviour or values that are in conflict with the adolescent's views. Newman and Newman (2005:354) allude to the idea that racism, stereotyping and elitism could contribute to this alienation. For the purposes of this study, these three issues become central. Adolescents, by their nature, are more likely to stereotype their peers and others as a result of peer pressure than people in other developmental phases.

### **3.4. Stereotyping and perception formation**

Ting-Toomey (1999:161) defines stereotyping as “an exaggerated set of expectations and beliefs about the attributes of a group membership category”. Thus, a stereotype is a generally held public belief about specific social groups or types of individuals. Ting-Toomey (1999:161) continues to explain that a “stereotype is an overgeneralization” about a particular group without considering that there may be “individual variations” within this group. Gudykunst (2003:114) concurs with Ting-Toomey's definition when he states that “stereotypes are all too often overgeneralised, inaccurate and negative”.

Although a stereotype can be either positive or negative, the connotation of the word “stereotype” tends to be pejorative. Lippi-Green (1997:101) states that “even when stereotyping is not overly negative, it is confining and misleading.” Sociologists often refer to mental categorising, and people make use of such categorising when stereotyping. By this is meant that people perceive others as part of either the “ingroup” or the “outgroup”. The “ingroup” refers to the group with which a person associates; this group is perceived as being normal and superior to other groups. An “outgroup” refers to all the other groups; they are perceived as being inferior. Ting-Toomey (1999:161) states that stereotyping is often done subconsciously and is an efficient way to categorise people. As stated above, it is, however, frequently inaccurate. People categorise in order to make sense of their world as it simplifies, predicts and organises the world around them. Categorising saves people time and allows people to predict the social world.

Some of the most complex and influential factors in developing stereotypes are encountered and assimilated during childhood. Children are under the influence of their parents, teachers, peers and the media. Lippi-Green (1997:101) mentions that “stereotyping is prevalent in television programming and movies”, with situation comedies offering many examples.

Cultural stereotypes, according to Gudykunst (2003:114), are formed as a result of “socialisation, media portrayals, norms and laws.” Once these cultural stereotypes are entrenched, the perceiver will find it difficult to change. Gudykunst (2003:115) believes that the victim of negative stereotyping “may respond to being treated in this manner by acting in ways that confirm the initial expectations.”

Perception formation of a person who speaks “accented” English has been well documented. Butler (2007:734) verifies this when by stating that studies have indicated “that accents and dialects do indeed influence listeners’ perceptions of speakers”. Hamers and Blanc (2000:222) contend that there is nothing specific that makes a language superior or inferior, rather it is “merely a matter of social evaluation conferred upon language or variety by social groups”. Gill (1991:1) found that the way a person sounded influenced how that person was perceived, and that language was one of the major factors used to categorise people. She reiterates the importance of “how speakers sound” and how this affects perception formation (Gill 1991:2). Furthermore, Gill states that “judgments about speakers based on language characteristics are an integral part of social stereotyping.”

In the next chapter, I will give an exposition of the methodology employed to ascertain whether the way speakers sound influences the perceptions which high school learners form of such speakers.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Methodology**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter will give an account of the methods employed to answer the research questions, namely (i) whether the non-standard accent of high school Mathematics teachers can negatively influence the perception high school girls have of these teachers, and if so (ii) whether these perceptions that high school girls have of their Mathematics teachers become less or more negative as they grow older. This would relate not to their natural maturation, but rather to more mature responses to their learning environment. Mathematics was selected as the focus subject as there is a dire need for quality Mathematics teachers in South Africa. As a result, there are many talented second language English Mathematics teachers who find their ability to teach is judged on their accent as opposed to their capability.

The data were gathered at an independent Methodist school in Johannesburg. Although the school has 2551 learners from Grade 0 to Grade 12 (see Section 4.3), this study focused on the girls' high school only. Specifically, the research was conducted with girls in Grade 8 (ages 13 – 14) and Grade 12 (age 18) (see Section 4.4). The general procedure followed to collect data is set out in Section 4.2. As stated in this section below, the matched-guise technique was selected as data collection instrument. This technique and the ways in which it was modified for use in this study are discussed in Section 4.5. Basically, the matched-guise technique entails that listeners (in this case, high school girls) rate persons in terms of certain criteria based on an audio-recording of such persons. In this case, the persons rated were teachers at the above-mentioned school. The characteristics of the teachers are given in Section 4.6 and the passage that they read during the recording is given in Section 4.7. The manner in which the collected data were analysed is set out in Section 4.8. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the ethical considerations relevant to this study (see Section 4.9).

#### **4.2. General experimental protocol**

As stated above, a modified version of the original matched-guise technique of Lambert et al. (1960) was used to collect the data necessary to answer the research questions. Based on the

work of Lambert et al. and others, a questionnaire was devised. Before using this questionnaire to collect data from the informants, it was trialled with four Grade 8 girls to determine (i) how long to give the informants to complete the task and (ii) whether any aspect of the questionnaire was unclear. It was established that the girls in the pilot study needed an average of one minute to complete a questionnaire and that they did not fully understand the word “assertive”. Grade 8 girls were selected for participation in the pilot study instead of Grade 12 girls, as it was assumed that Grade 8s may have more questions or concerns about the questionnaire. The Grade 8 girls would also have been able to tell me which words in the questionnaire needed explaining (Grade 12 girls might have acquired words that Grade 8 girls still find difficult).

There were two data collection sessions. Data were collected from all Grade 8 informants simultaneously during the course of a lesson and from all Grade 12s later on the same day (also as a group). Each session started with the following instructions:

*Good morning, ladies. Thank you for participating in this study. Everything you write down today will remain confidential. Using a pencil or a pen, please complete the front sheet of the pack on your desk but don't page over just yet.*

The girls then filled in the front page of the questionnaire (see Appendix A), which asked them for the following information: their age, home language, other languages spoken, length of stay at this school, and primary school attended. I then continued:

*Now that you have completed the form, please listen carefully to the instructions. You will be listening to six recordings today. Each recording is about 55 seconds in length. After each recording, you will have a few moments to answer the questionnaire. Now page over to the first questionnaire. All you need to do is decide where you would position the reader on the table. Have a look at the example. Is the person closer to the left or the right? Once you have decided, place a cross in the block. Does everyone understand what to do? Please don't discuss the voices or the questionnaires with anyone during this data collection period. Once we have completed all the recordings and questionnaires, you are free to discuss anything you like.*

The first recording was then played and the informants were given one minute to complete the rating. They had to wait until the first reading was completed before they could start with the rating, so that they could hear the entire extract without any distraction. After one minute, the informants were requested to turn to the next questionnaire and the next recording was played. This was repeated until all six recordings were heard and all the questionnaires were completed. (See Appendices B and C for example of completed questionnaires.)

### **4.3. Context of the study**

The school where the research was conducted is in Johannesburg, South Africa. The school borders both an affluent suburb and a middle-class suburb, and is accessible by public and private transport. The school is located on 105 hectares of land.

Both boys and girls attend the school but are only together from Grades R to 2. From Grades 3 to 12, the boys and girls are educated in separate schools. The school was established in 1953 and has developed into one of the most prestigious schools in the country, voted as the top school in Johannesburg for 2009 by *Caxton* newspaper readers.<sup>3</sup>

Founded on a liberal, Christian foundation, the school has combined “academic excellence and individual expectations based on international standards to produce an education that is not only richly entrenched in its South African roots, but also sets global standards”.<sup>4</sup> Although the school has a Methodist ethos, it accepts learners from all religious backgrounds (refer to Table 1 below).

The school fees for 2009 range between R35 611 per year for Grade R to R65 127 for Grade 12, thus catering for a very specific socio-economic group. There is a scholarship programme in place that assists sporting, academic and culturally gifted children from disadvantaged

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<sup>3</sup> Caxton Community Newspapers, a division of Caxton and CTP Printers and Publishers Ltd, print and publish free and sold newspapers throughout South Africa but has its head quarters in Johannesburg. According to <http://www.linkedin.com/companies/caxton-community-newspapers>, the median age of the newspaper readership is 25 years.

<sup>4</sup> This statement appears on the school’s web page; in an attempt to protect the identity of the school, the address of this web page is not provided here.

backgrounds, but only approximately 100 learners in total are awarded this scholarship at any particular time.

Historically, the school was a boys' only school. A girls' school was opened on the campus in 1995 due to an enormous demand. Although there is a boarding facility on the campus, this facility is for boys only. A need has arisen for a boarding facility for girls and this is being addressed at present. A temporary arrangement is in place for some girls from disadvantaged backgrounds on scholarship at the school: ten girls are currently housed in staff accommodation on the campus.

The school runs a teacher learnership programme which currently accommodates 23 candidates (referred to as interns). There are five interns in the junior prep section of the school, four interns in the prep schools and 14 interns in the high schools. Although the focus of the programme is to develop student teachers from historically disadvantaged sectors, Mathematics, Science and English remain the core subjects needed, with Early Childhood Development being a further area of need. These candidates vary in age, qualification and ethnicity. Most of the interns are second language speakers of English, which places extra demands on them when attempting to teach well in this already demanding environment.

Each intern on the programme has a mentor who supports that intern throughout his/her internship at the school. The mentor's role includes guiding the intern in terms of appropriate behaviour; the workings and politics of the school; developing an open, flexible attitude; developing appreciation for different and conflicting ideas; overcoming obstacles; acquiring skills; gaining knowledge; developing and adjusting. The mentors receive regular training and have the opportunity to complete a mentoring certificate course offered by UNISA.

The girls' school where the research was conducted has 59 teachers, which include a full-time educational psychologist, two academic support staff to assist learners with difficulties and a full-time chaplain. In terms of languages as subjects, the school offers both English and Afrikaans at first language level; Afrikaans, isiZulu and Sesotho at second language level; and French, IsiZulu and Sesotho at third language level. The medium of instruction is however English only.

Below are two tables indicating ethnicity, home language and religion of the learners in attendance at the school. Table 1 illustrates the entire school, which includes the girls' and boys' high schools, girls' and boys' preparatory schools and the junior preparatory school. As stated above, there are 2551 learners in the school as a whole. Table 2 focuses on the specific section of the school, namely the girls' high school (henceforth School A), where the study was conducted. It is essential to understand that many parents indicate on their application forms that they speak English as a home language. For example, an African learner may adhere to the Xhosa cultural traditions, view herself as Xhosa but speak English instead of Xhosa.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of learners - entire school (2551 learners): Breakdown by ethnicity, home language and religion

**ETHNICITY**

<b>African</b>		
426	English	211
	Zulu	59
	Xhosa	45
	Sesotho	41
	Setswana	21
	Tsonga	11
	Sepedi	10
	French	9
	Other	9
	Venda	3
	Ndebele	2
	Portuguese	1
	Seswati	2
	Swazi	1

<b>Coloured</b>		
30	English	29
	Afrikaans	1

<b>White</b>		
1962	English	1854
	Afrikaans	76
	Other	11
	German	6
	Czech	3
	Flemish	3
	Polish	2
	French	2
	Greek	2
	Dutch	1
	Italian	1

<b>Indian</b>		
87	English	84
	Indian	1
	other	1
	Afrikaans	1

<b>Asian</b>		
45	Chinese	21
	English	17
	Japanese	3
	Korean	3

<b>Summary</b>	
White	76.80%
African	16.70%
Indian	3.40%
Asian	1.76%
Coloured	1.17%

**HOME LANGUAGE**

English	2196
Afrikaans	77
Zulu	60
Xhosa	45
Sesotho	41
Setswana	21
Chinese	21

**RELIGION**

Christian	1975
Hindu	48
Islam	12
Jewish	12
Did not state	500

**Table 2:** Characteristics of learners - School A (504 learners).  
Breakdown by ethnicity, home language and religion

**ETHNICITY**

<b>African</b>		
82	English	40
	Zulu	12
	Xhosa	6
	Sesotho	8
	Setswana	6
	Tsonga	2
	Sepedi	3
	French	1
	other	2
	Venda	1
	Swazi	1

<b>Coloured</b>		
11	English	11

<b>Indian</b>		
19	English	19

<b>White</b>		
380	English	353
	Afrikaans	23
	Other	2
	French	1
	Greek	1

<b>Asian</b>		
12	Chinese	6
	English	5
	Japanese	1

<b>Summary</b>	
White	75.40%
African	16.20%
Indian	3.76%
Asian	2.38%
Coloured	2.18%

**HOME LANGUAGE**

English speakers	429
Afrikaans speakers	23
Zulu speakers	12
Xhosa speakers	6
Sesotho speakers	8
Setswana speakers	6
Chinese speakers	6

**RELIGION**

Christian	368
Hindu	13
Islam	1
Jewish	6
Did not state	114

These tables indicate the dominance of English at the school although a number of other languages are spoken by some of the learners at home. In this school, English is the language of the classroom, playground, sports field and hostel.

#### 4.4. The informants

Twenty-eight Grade 8s and 14 Grade 12s acted as informants, totalling 42. These girls were selected as they all do Mathematics as a school subject. Tables 3 and 4 below indicate the details of the respondents, per grade level.

**Table 3:** Characteristics of informants - Grade 8s

Code name	Age	Home language	Other languages	Years at school	Previous school
A1	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A2	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A3	14	English	isiZulu	1 year	Private
A4	13	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A5	14	English	German, Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A6	13	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A7	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A8	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A9	13	Mandarin	English	1 year	Private
A10	14	isiXhosa	English, isiZulu	1 year	Private
A11	13	Sesotho	English	1 year	Government
A12	14	English	Afrikaans, isiXhosa	1 year	Government
A13	13	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A14	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Government
A15	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Government
A16	14	English	-	1 year	Private
A17	13	English	isiZulu	1 year	Private
A18	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A19	14	English	isiZulu	1 year	Private
A20	14	English	French, Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A21	Did not provide information				
A22	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Government
A23	13	isiXhosa	English, isiZulu	1 year	Government
A24	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A25	14	English	isiZulu	1 year	Private
A26	14	English	Afrikaans	1 year	Private
A27	14	English	-	1 year	Private
A28	14	English	isiZulu	1 year	Private

**Table 4:** Characteristics of informants - Grade 12s

Code name	Age	Home language	Other languages	Years at school	Previous school
B1	18	English	isiZulu, isiXhosa	3 years	Government
B2	18	English	isiZulu	5 years	Private
B3	18	Shona	English	5 years	Government
B4	18	English	-	5 years	Government
B5	18	English	Shona	5 years	Private
B6	18	English	Afrikaans	5 years	Private
B7	18	English	Afrikaans	5 years	Private
B8	18	English	Portuguese	5 years	Private
B9	18	English	Afrikaans, isiZulu, French	5 years	Government
B10	18	English	isiZulu, French, Chine	5 years	Government
B11	18	English	Afrikaans	5 years	Private
B12	18	English	Afrikaans	5 years	Government
B13	18	English	Afrikaans, French	5 years	Private
B14	18	English	Afrikaans	5 years	Private

#### 4.5. The research technique

The matched-guise technique was selected as the research technique in this study. This technique is used to examine people's attitudes toward social, geographical or ethnic language varieties as well as the attitude towards different languages spoken in bilingual communities. This technique allows researchers to remove "individual speech characteristics" (Gass and Mackey 2007:145). Individual speech characteristics include the speaker's speech flow, loudness, intonation and strength of overtones. Thus, when all speakers are reading the same script and at the same volume, there is very little opportunity for variance except in pronunciation. The learners cannot see the speaker so they are also not making judgments based on ethnicity or appearance.

Obiols (2002:3) refers to the matched-guise technique as "asking the interviewees to evaluate the personal qualities of the speakers." Stefanowitsch (2005:1) believes that if a researcher merely asked people about their attitudes to people who use a particular language variety, they would have a chance to "reflect conscious stereotypes prevalent in their community rather than their actual attitudes."

Gaies and Beebe (1991) indicate that the matched-guise technique has two basic principles, namely (i) to extract responses to particular codes and, (ii) “to control all [the] variables”. They state that the wish of the researcher is that the listeners will presume that all the speakers are different. Thus, if the listeners hear six extracts, they will assume that each extract is of a different speaker when, as is the case for two of the six extracts in this thesis, one speaker speaks twice, once using a guised accent.

Lambert et al. (1960) developed this technique when they were evaluating the responses of people living in Montreal, Canada, to both French speakers and English speakers. The procedure Lambert et al. followed was to record “French/English bilinguals read[ing] a spoken text in French and English” (Romaine 1995:289). Lambert et al. then played the recordings to English-speaking and French-speaking monolinguals and asked them to evaluate each speaker’s personality. What the listeners did not know was “that they were evaluating the same speaker twice in ‘matched guises’” (Romaine 1995:289). Lambert et al. found that the responses to the same speaker changed depending on which language the speaker was using, and the “linguistic affiliation of the person making the judgment” (Romaine 1995:289).

De Klerk and Bosch (1994:51) used the matched-guise technique as the primary instrument in their research. They do mention that it was used in full awareness of the criticism that this instrument tends to be artificial as the listeners are expected to make “evaluative decisions”. A fair criticism of this approach is that the listeners may judge the speakers on their “performance as readers” as opposed to the accent they are utilising.

The issue of reader performance was of particular concern to me, as a number of the listeners were excellent learners and actors, who might have been irritated by “stilted” readings. It was for this reason that each of the readers received the extract a week in advance of the recording. This would provide the readers with sufficient time to practise the extract and present it fluidly.

A second concern was that the listeners would become bored after hearing the same short Mathematics lesson repeated six times. I was particularly concerned that the Grade 8s may become distracted and then distract fellow listeners. Fortunately, this did not occur; the informants seemed genuinely interested in assessing the readers accurately. The informants

seemed to regard the exercise as a game. This game-like quality concurs with Lambert's opinion (in Obiols 2002:4) that "interviewees usually enjoy taking part in this test because they regard it as a game."

Obiols (2002:4) indicates four issues relating to the matched-guise technique, namely (i) whether it is a direct or indirect methodology, (ii) whether the research possibly forces stereotyping where none may have been before, (iii) "the experimental nature of the technique", that it is conducted in an artificial environment, and (iv) that the matched-guise technique assumes that there is only one functional style of the linguistic varieties evaluated. The first three concerns could not be addressed in this study. Regarding (iv), in this study, various varieties of one and the same language (English) were evaluated, so the concern is not as relevant to the current study as it is to studies comparing two separate languages (such as English and French).

Gaies and Beebe (1991) indicate that the matched-guise technique has been used widely, amongst others in the fields of sociolinguistics, social psychology and education. The technique has been used to ascertain (i) what the attitude of foreign-language learners are towards target-language speakers (i.e., towards the first language speakers of the language which the learners are acquiring) (ii) "the linguistic bases of teacher prejudice", (iii) the attitudes of listeners towards different varieties and codes – as used in this thesis, (iv) the attitudes "toward the speech of language learners or nonnatives" – again, as used in this thesis, (v) "convergence and divergence" and (vi) how the variables of a speaker and hearer affect comprehension, recall and evaluation.

Gaies and Beebe (1991:160) refer to two applications of the matched-guise technique in Japan. The first application, by Beebe, Harmon and Kushibuchi in 1990, was to assess the attitudes of female learners at high schools in Japan "toward speakers of either English or Japanese" who had lived in the USA. The results indicated little variance in attitudes towards those returning from the USA and those who had stayed in Japan. The only significant variant was that many listeners wanted to be friends with returning Japanese people.

The second application referred to by Gaies and Beebe (1991:161) is a study to "explore language attitudes and their educational implications in Japan" of code switching and the response to code switchers. The results indicated that the responses by the Japanese listeners

were the same as “monolinguals elsewhere” (1991:163) in that there are negative attitudes towards both code switching and the code switchers.

In the present study, the original technique had to be modified somewhat, as it was not possible to find enough teachers who could convincingly use more than one accent when speaking English. In fact, only one such reader could be found. The six recordings were thus made by a total of five readers, as explained in the next section. This is a limitation of the study, as it is not clear whether differences in rating for the readers is based on language variety only or also on aspects such as voice quality or voice intensity. As indicated in Section 4.2, the questionnaire used in this study is found in Appendix A.

#### 4.6. The readers

The readers were selected to represent the variety of accents the girls might encounter during their high school education at School A. The readers are all female, to control for the possible effect of gender on informant ratings. The readers were specifically selected so that the girls did not recognise their voices. This was done to avoid that previous encounters with the readers taint the girls’ responses in the questionnaire. Table 5 below indicates each reader’s characteristics:

**Table 5:** Reader characteristics

Reader <sup>5</sup>	Ethnicity	Accent	Age	Tertiary training/qualification	Teaching experience in years
Raheem	Indian	Indian	47	BA HDE	26
Sarah	White	SA English	36	MBCChB and MA	10
Helen	White	SA English	49	BSc HDE	26
Runzi	Black	SA English	17	0	0
Runzi	Black	Zulu	17	0	0
Julienne	‘Coloured’	Afrikaans	38	BA Ed	19

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<sup>5</sup> In order to protect the readers’ identities, I make use of pseudonyms throughout.

Raheem is an English teacher at School A. At school, she speaks with what would be considered a so-called Standard South African English accent. However, she has the ability to speak with a very strong Indian accent. Although the informants know Raheem (she teaches at their school and would have been the English teacher of at least some of the girls), they would not recognise her voice when using this accent, as they would not have heard her use such an accent before. Sarah is a high school Mathematics and Science teacher at another school (in other words, she does not work on the same campus as that of School A). Helen is a full-time Mathematics teacher at the school in question but teaches at the boys' high school only. At the time of data collection, Julienne was a new teacher at School A, teaching Afrikaans. She has previously taught Mathematics, at a different school. At the time, the girls do not know Julienne well and so would probably not have recognised her voice.

It was particularly difficult to find a teacher who could meet the accent requirements I needed for the matched-guise technique. I could not identify any Mathematics teachers that the girls would not recognise, who could speak both English and isiZulu like native speakers or speak accented English. During a discussion with the drama teacher at School A, she identified an exceptionally talented Grade 11 actress who could speak both English and isiZulu fluently. The learner, Runzi, speaks with a Standard South African English accent but when visiting family in her ancestral area, she reverts to speaking English in a heavily accented manner. She does this accent change as, in the past, her family in the ancestral area have been heavily critical of what they view as her urbanised accent.

I invited the isiZulu teacher into the meeting I had with Runzi regarding her participation as reader. The isiZulu teacher was of the opinion that Runzi's accented English was authentic. I decided to use Runzi speaking both South African English and accented English (i.e., English with an isiZulu accent) as Guise 1 and Guise 2. I am confident that the learners did not recognise Runzi's voice in either of the recordings (and she was asked not to make her participation known to her fellow learners), as Runzi is in a different grade than the informants and the informants were under the impression that all the voices belonged to Mathematics teachers.

As stated above, I chose to use the classic matched-guise technique with a slight variation, in the sense that only two of the readings were done by the same person. I had two groups of listeners, Grade 8 and Grade 12 girls, who all listened to the readers in the following order:

Filler → Guise 1 → Filler → Filler → Guise 2 → Filler  
 (Helen) → (Runzi) → (Julienne) → (Raheem) → (Runzi) → (Sarah)

As my focus was to discover if accent prejudice is present, I used Helen, Julienne, Raheem and Sarah as *fillers*. A filler is used in the matched-guise technique to fill the spaces between each recording so that the learners are not aware that only particular voices are the focus.

#### 4.7. The passage read

Below is the extract that was read by the readers. I wrote it using a particular mathematical theme that is evident at Grade 10 level. This is the start of a lesson where the teacher revisits the areas discussed in the previous lesson. A mathematics lesson would normally follow this format, and I have tried to keep the reading passage as authentic as possible. Many of the words like *trigonometric*, *comments*, *homework*, *remember*, *six* and *angle* were deliberately selected as they are frequently mispronounced by non-mother-tongue speakers of English. Possible pronunciations that I have heard from second language English-speaking teachers include the following:

*Trigonometric*: [tri:kəʊnəʊmetri] with the primary stress on the first syllable, and the final consonant deleted, instead of [tɹɪgənəʊmətɹɪk]

*Comments*: [kɔmənts] with the stress on the second syllable, instead of [kɔmənts]

*Homework*: [hɔmwɛk] with two short vowels, instead of [həʊmwɛ:k]

*Remember*: [ri:mɛmbə] with the primary stress on the first syllable, instead of [rɛmɛmbə]

*Six*: [si:ks] with a long vowel, instead of [sɪks]

*Angle*: [ɛ:ŋgəl] with a long vowel instead of [æŋgl]

The passage was as follows:

*Remember yesterday's lesson on trigonometric functions? I hope you all worked hard on your homework and got the right answers.*

*Any questions or comments on the homework? Not even question six?!*

*Okay, let's continue, girls. Remember, we can measure angles clockwise or anti-clockwise from the positive x-axis. Angles that are measured in an anti-clockwise direction, like those in the exercise you did for homework, are positive and angles measured in a clockwise direction are negative. This is valid only on a Cartesian plane, as we cannot get negative angles in a triangle. You will have noticed from your homework exercise that  $\sin \hat{a}$  always has the same value as long as the angle remains fixed, no matter what the x, y and r values are. This also applies to  $\cos \hat{a}$  and  $\tan \hat{a}$ . This means that, for example,  $\sin 30^\circ$  always has the same value no matter what the length of the radius on a Cartesian plane is.*

The recordings were made directly onto a laptop computer using Microsoft Windows Media player in the reader's classroom or home. The first two recordings were of Runzi using her two accents. These recordings proceeded successfully. The third recording was also successful, but the remainder all had to be restarted: recording number three because it was interrupted by a lawnmower starting up outside the classroom; recording number four because the reader was not speaking loudly enough; and number six was interrupted by a learner knocking on the classroom door. The six final recordings can be heard on the CD enclosed.

#### **4.8. Data analysis techniques**

The questionnaire required the learners to place a cross over a particular number (see Appendices B and C for extracts from questionnaires of a Grade 8 and a Grade 12 informant, respectively). The scoring ranged from 2 to -2. The results were calculated for each speaker and each personality trait. To be more specific, the data were collated using a blank questionnaire per speaker onto which all the raw scores were transferred. For instance, Figure 1 below is an extract of Helen's Grade 8 collated data form:

1	Tall	1 2	1111111111 11	1111111	1111111 -7	1 2	Short
2	Good looking	0	111111111 8	1111111111111	111111111 -8	0	Unattractive
3	A great leader	11 4	11111111 7	1111111111111	111111 -5	11 -4	A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour	0	11 2	1111111	111111111111 -10	1111111111 -18	Has <b>no</b> sense of humour
5	Intelligent	1111111111111111 28	1111111111 9	1	11 -2	1 -2	Unintelligent
6	Honest	111111111111111111 30	1111111111 8	1111	0	0	Dishonest

**Figure 1:** Extract of Helen's Grade 8 data

These results were added for each characteristic. For example, Helen's height would be  $2 + 11 - 7 - 2 = 4$ . The score of 4 was then transcribed onto a word document using the graph function. This function enables the user to enter the data on an excel spreadsheet and the programme converts this information into a graphic representation, as shown in Figure 2. This raw data is converted and displayed on graphs in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The details of Runzi's Guise 1 and Guise 2 were extrapolated and compared to ascertain whether there is accent discrimination. The results are also detailed in Chapter 5.

**Figure 2:** Helen's collated data

<b>Helen</b>	
Tall	4
Good looking	1
Leadership	2
Humour	-26
Intelligence	33
Honest	38

#### **4.9. Ethical considerations**

The school where the research was conducted is an independent school, so no permission from the Department of Education was required. A written request for permission to conduct the research was submitted to the school rector, as per the school's policy on surveys and research (see Appendix D). This permission was granted on the proviso that any information gleaned from the research would be confidential. Any correspondence to parents needed to be approved by the head of the relevant school. The school would also require a copy of the completed thesis.

Two classes were approached. I asked the classes if they would be prepared to assist me in gathering data for my thesis. As this research deals with adolescent perceptions and stereotyping, I did not want to elaborate on the precise reasons why the research was being conducted, as I did not want to jeopardise the authenticity of the obtained data. I explained that the purpose of this research was to ascertain how successfully intercultural communication occurred in the Mathematics classroom. Both classes were eager to participate. Letters requesting parents' consent to their daughters' participation were then sent home with the Grade 8s (see Appendix E), but not to the parents of the Grade 12s, as the Grade 12 girls were all 18 years old and so no longer required parental permission; they signed their own consent forms. All girls were informed that participation would be completely voluntary and that they may choose to terminate their participation at any time without providing reasons for such decision.

The data were gathered during school time with the permission of the relevant teacher. To protect the girls' identities, each girl was given a questionnaire with a code indicated on it. The Grade 8s were the first group to complete the questionnaires and their codes ranged from A1 to A28. The Grade 12 questionnaire codes ranged from B1 to B14. The pilot (or sample) group had questionnaires marked from S1 to S4.

In an attempt to maintain the girls' objectivity when they heard the recordings, I did not make use of any Mathematics teachers who taught the girls. This was done to ensure that no teacher would be rated by her own learners. This was an attempt to protect the beginner teachers from possibly receiving harsh ratings from their learners. If the learners heard a familiar voice, their preconceived ideas might taint their responses. Instead I selected people who had similar characteristics (in terms of ethnicity and linguistic background) and accents to the beginner teachers who taught the participating girls.

## Chapter 5:

### Results

#### 5.1. Introduction

Wood (2007:73), a teacher of many years in the southern states of America, states “I can’t understand the teacher’s accent” is a complaint frequently made by learners about international teachers. In my experience, this is a particularly common complaint from learners in some South African schools too. It is with this common complaint in mind that my research was undertaken. I needed to establish whether intern teachers speaking English as a second language were not understood or whether the learners were merely stereotyping the interns based on their accents. No comprehension test was done in this study (which is a limitation of the study); I focused on the second possibility, namely on whether high school learners stereotype their teachers based on accent.

#### 5.2. Notes on reading the graphs in this chapter

There are some fundamental details required when reviewing the graphical data presented here. The five readers are indicated by their first names only. Each reader is represented by a specific colour throughout, as indicated by the legends of the graphs. Runzi speaks twice: *RunziE* indicates that Runzi is speaking with a South African English accent, and *RunziZ* indicates that she is speaking English with a strong isiZulu accent.<sup>6</sup>

In each graph, the X axis indicates the possible characteristics assigned to each reader. The Y axis indicates the number of points allocated by learners to each characteristic.

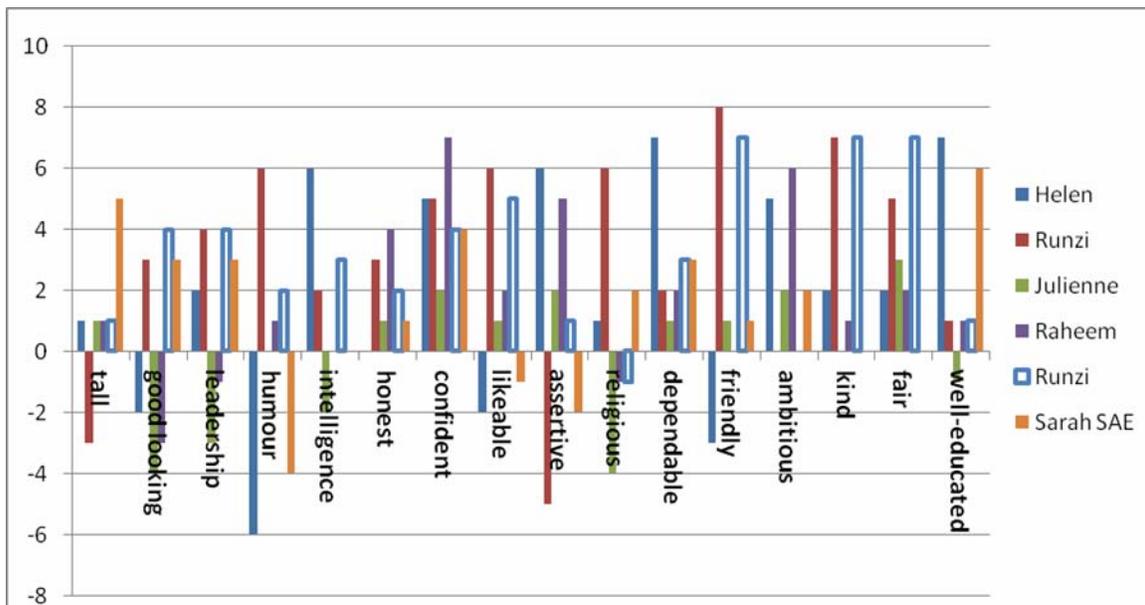
#### 5.3. Pilot study

The first group of informants comprised four Grade 8 girls. This was a sample group to ascertain whether the methodology of the study was in order and would work effectively in a

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<sup>6</sup> In the text, though, I will for ease of reading use the labels “English Runzi” and “Zulu Runzi”, respectively – *Zulu* instead of *isiZulu* because I refer to the supposed ethnicity of the reader and not to the language which she was using during the reading (both readings were in English only).

larger group. In this pilot study, the time taken to complete each questionnaire was noted and the learners were asked whether they understood all the words on the questionnaire. One learner indicated that she was not sure what *assertive* or *reserved* meant. These words were then explained before the questionnaires were completed by these four informants. The results of the pilot group for all the readers are indicated in Graph 1 below:

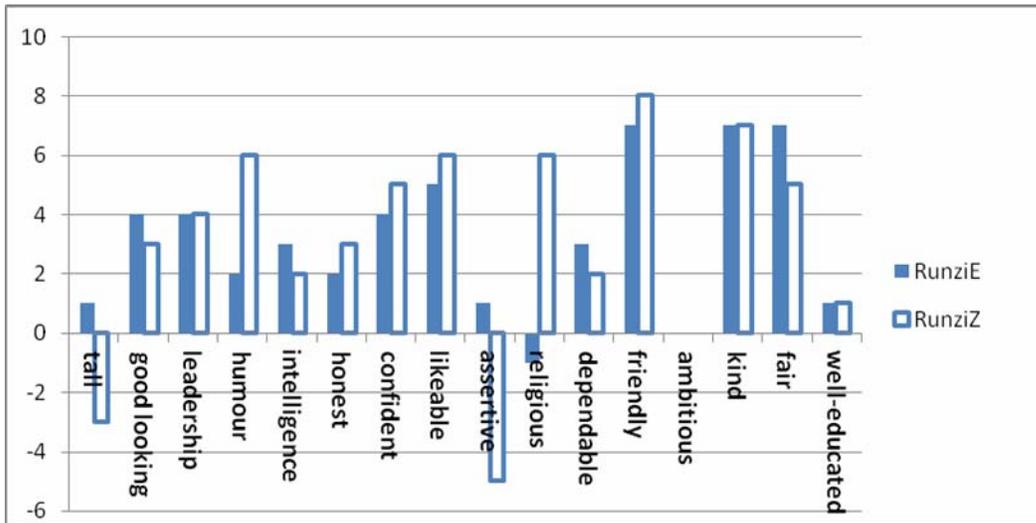


**Graph 1:** Group responses of pilot study's informants about all readers

The pilot group indicated that Helen, the white speaker of so-called Standard South African English) was viewed as the most intelligent, assertive, dependable and as the best-educated. This is significant, as she has taught Mathematics in a first language English environment for 26 years. Julienne, a so-called Coloured English second language speaker with Afrikaans as first language was rated as the least good-looking, worst leader, least intelligent, least religious and worst educated. (It needs to be stated again that the learners are from a predominantly white English school in Gauteng; as such, they seldom hear a so-called Coloured accent.)

On analysis of the pilot group's perception of Runzi's two accents, it was interesting that the learners rated them rather similarly. For instance, the informants saw both Runzis as being

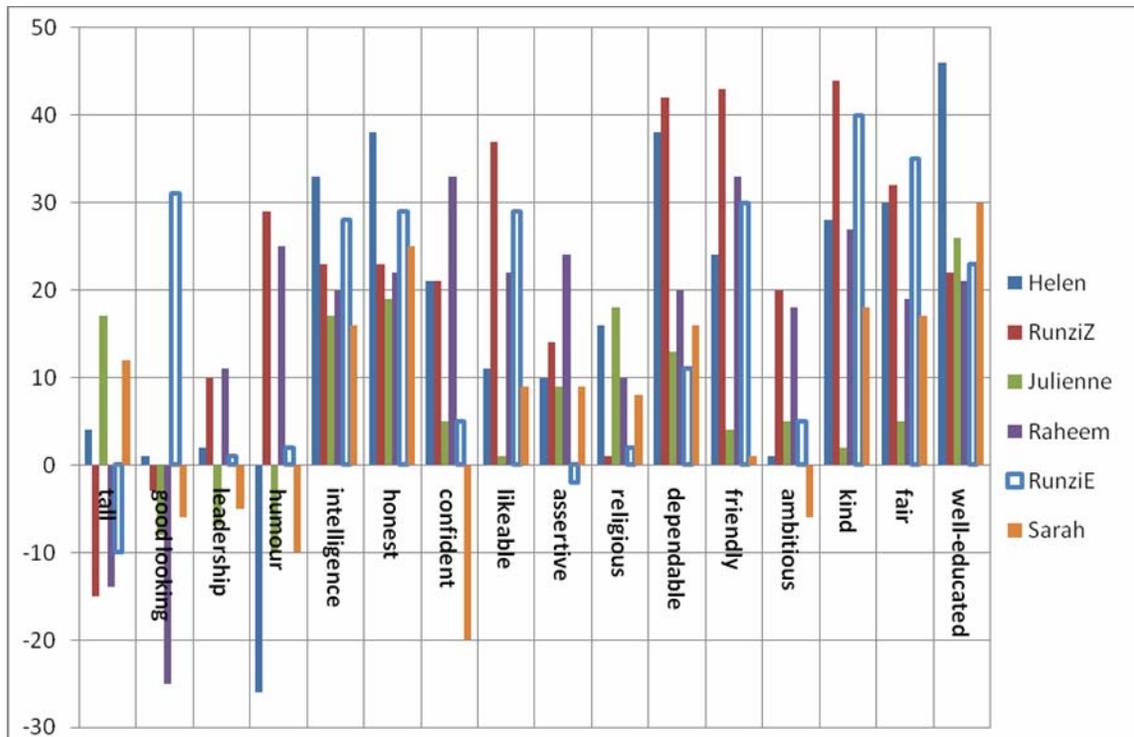
good leaders, kind and well-educated. The only differences of note were that the Zulu Runzi was viewed to be far shorter, funnier, more timid and more religious than the English Runzi.



**Graph 2:** Pilot group responses to Runzi only

#### 5.4. Responses of the Grade 8 group

The Grade 8 group of informants consisted of 28 girls. Although the whole class said they wanted to participate, during the actual data collection session one girl chose not to complete the questionnaires, leaving 27 questionnaires completed for each recording. The girl who did not want to participate decided to sit in the adjoining classroom. The results of the Grade 8 group for all six recordings are indicated in Graph 3 below:



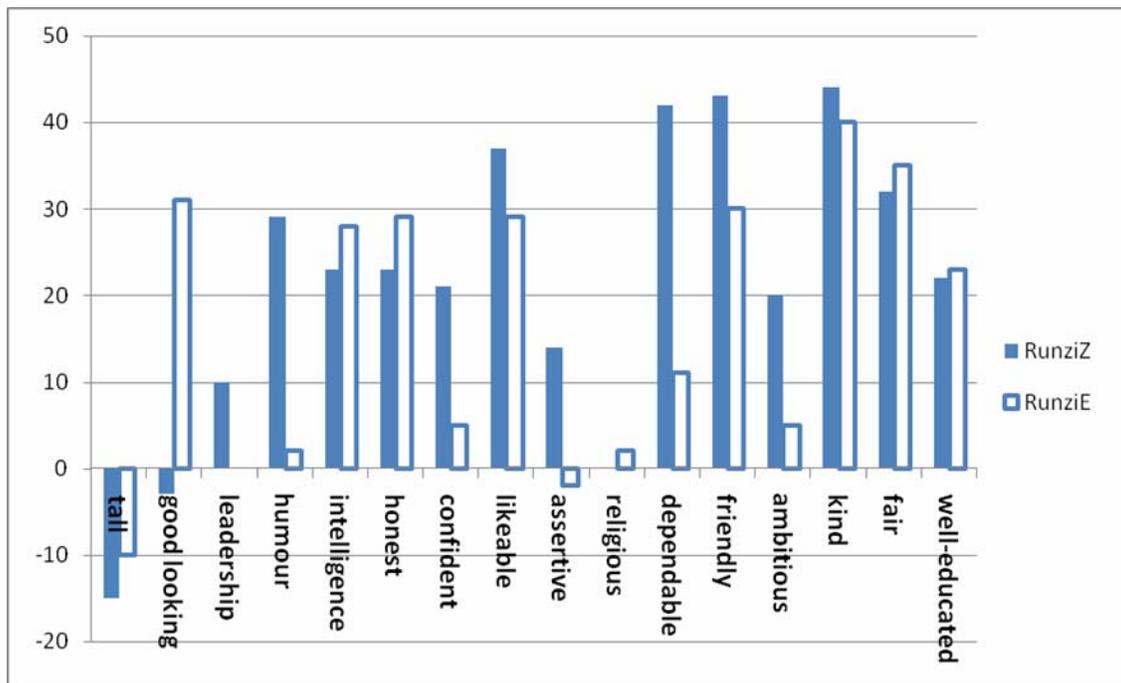
**Graph 3:** Grade 8s' responses to all readers

As can be seen from Graph 3, Helen (the white speaker of so-called Standard South African English) is regarded as the most intelligent, most honest, best educated and particularly dependable. The informants think she has no sense of humour. On the judgment of the informants, Julienne (the so-called Coloured Afrikaans-speaking teacher with 19 years of teaching experience) is the tallest and most religious, although not particularly likeable or kind. She is viewed as unattractive, lacking in leadership and dour. Raheem (the 48 year old English-speaking Indian) is seen as short, unattractive and the least educated of the six speakers. She is judged as confident, friendly and an able leader.

Sarah is a highly qualified teacher with MBChB and MA (Psychology) degrees. She has taught Mathematics and Science for 10 years. The Grade 8 group, based on their perception of her speech sound, viewed her as unmotivated, unsure, lacking a sense of humour and fairly unattractive. Sarah is perceived as well-educated yet the least intelligent of the speakers. It could be that this negative assessment is as a result of her being the final reader to which the

informants listened – the informants could have been suffering from “listener’s fatigue” at this stage.

Consider Graph 4, which shows the judgments of the Grade 8 learners on English Runzi and Zulu Runzi:

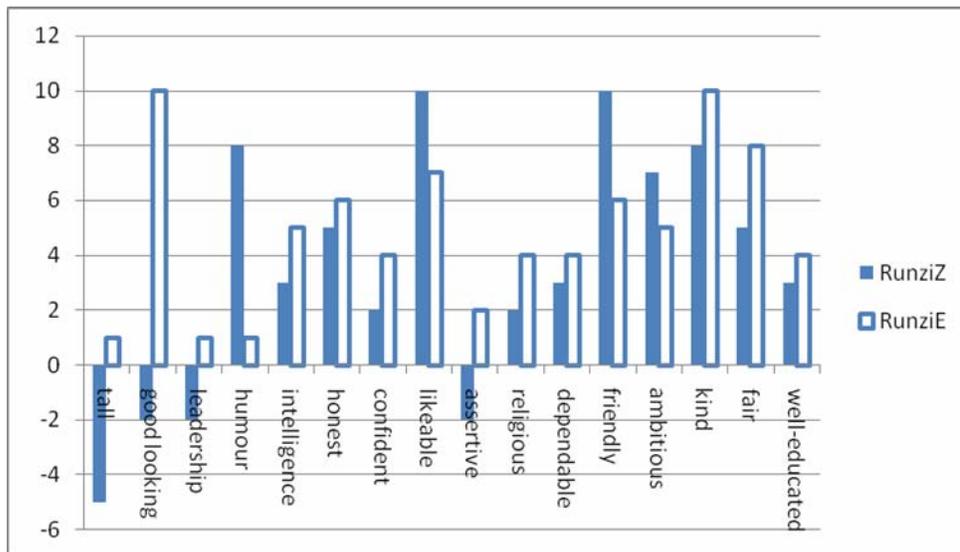


**Graph 4:** Grade 8s’ responses to Runzi only

The analysis of the Grade 8 group’s perception and interpretation of Runzi’s two spoken discourses indicate that the English Runzi is taken to be more intelligent and better educated than the Zulu Runzi. The English Runzi is also taken to be better looking, more honest and more reasonable than the Zulu Runzi. The Zulu Runzi is however, seen as far more dependable and friendly than the English one. She is also seen to have a sense of humour and is likeable and kind, as shown in Graph 4.

Of the 27 Grade 8 informants, six were English-African language bilinguals, namely A10, A11, A12, A17, A23 and A25. For interest’s sake, I present their collective judgments on all readers here. One would expect that these learners are very familiar with English second

language accents and that they would possibly<sup>7</sup> view at least Zulu Runzi to be part of their “ingroup” and thus rate her favourably. As can be seen from Graph 5, this was not the case. These learners perceived English Runzi to be more intelligent and better educated than Zulu Runzi. Overall, they judged English Runzi better than Zulu Runzi in 12 of the 16 categories.



**Graph 5:** English-African language bilingual Grade 8s’ responses to English and Zulu Runzi

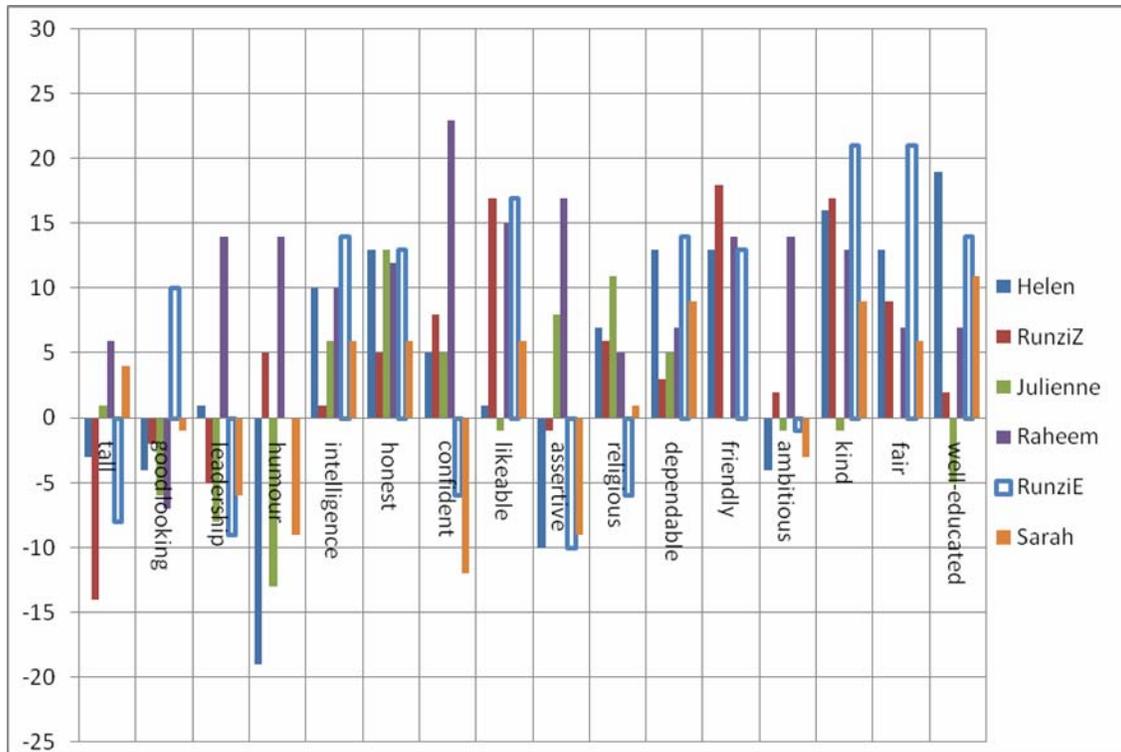
### 5.5. Responses of the Grade 12 group

There were 14 informants in the Grade 12 group. The results of their judgment are indicated in Graph 6 below. As can be seen from this graph, Helen (the White speaker of so-called Standard South African English) is judged as honest dependable and well-educated. As was the case in the pilot study and Grade 8 group, the Grade 12 informants think she has no sense of humour. The learners perceive Helen as fairly confident but not particularly likeable.

During this assessment, Julienne (so-called Coloured Afrikaans-speaking) is judged the most religious speaker of the six, although not particularly likeable or kind. She is viewed as unattractive, lacking in leadership qualities and humourless. Julienne is also perceived as the least educated speaker. Raheem (who read with an Indian accent) is perceived as the best

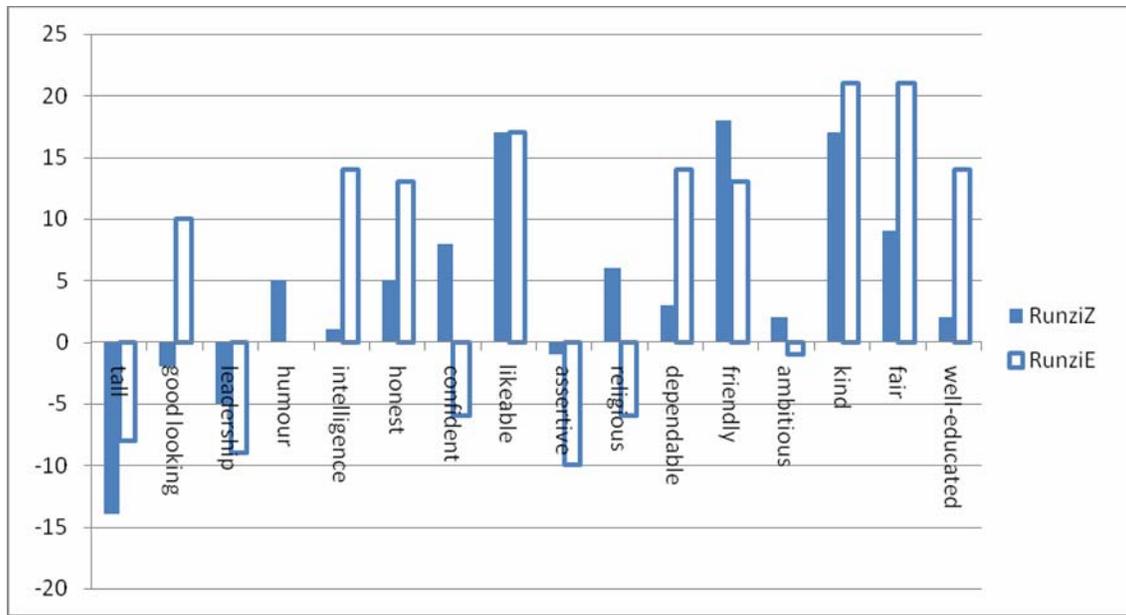
<sup>7</sup> I use *possibly* here, because the linguistic identity of these learners is not known: though speaking an African language, they may not primarily identify with speakers of African languages, as adolescence is the developmental stage in which one is still searching for one’s identity (see Section 3.3).

leader and the most ambitious of all the speakers. She has the best sense of humour and, as was the case in the Grade 8 group, is perceived as the most able leader of all the readers. The Grade 12 group perceived Sarah to be the least confident of all the speakers but as fairly well-educated and dependable. As with the Grade 8 group, the perception of Sarah and Helen differs and may be due to ‘listener fatigue’. (See Section 5.4)



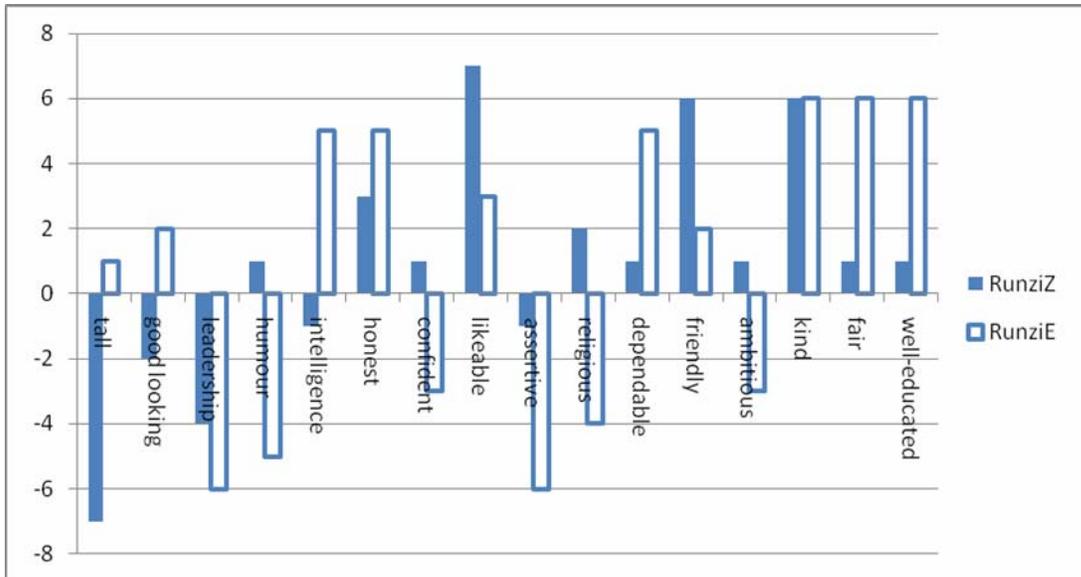
**Graph 6:** Grade 12s’ responses to all teachers

The analysis of the Grade 12 group’s perception of the English Runzi is that she is well-educated and intelligent. This was the assessment made by the Grade 8 group too. The English Runzi is, once again, seen to be better looking, more honest and more reasonable than the Zulu Runzi, and the latter is, once again, more friendly than the former. The English Runzi is perceived as being more religious and confident than her Zulu counterpart.



**Graph 7:** Grade 12s' responses to Runzi only

Of the 14 Grade 12 learners who participated in this study, six were English-African language bilinguals, namely B1, B3, B5, B9, B10 and B13. As I did for their Grade 8 peers, I present their collective judgments on all readers here. Again, one would assume that these learners are familiar with English second language accents and that they would judge Zulu Runzi favourably, seeing that she is possibly a member of their ingroup (or at least *one* of their ingroups). As can be seen from Graph 8, this was not the case. A possible reason for this is that the learners may have become accustomed to hearing first language English accents at this school, that a Zulu accented Mathematics teacher was perceived critically.



**Graph 8:** English-African bilingual Grade 12s' responses to English and Zulu Runzi

The Grade 12s perceived English Runzi to be more intelligent and better educated than Zulu Runzi. Although they judged English Runzi best in only seven of the 16 categories, the indication remains that the Grade 12s perceive English Runzi as having the qualities that would make a superior Mathematics teacher to Zulu Runzi, namely better leadership skills, more intelligent, fairer and more educated. As was the case with their Grade 8 peers, the Grade 12 English-African language girls perceived English Runzi to be more attractive than Zulu Runzi, but to a lesser extent.

## Chapter 6:

### Discussion

#### 6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish whether accent stereotyping of teachers is prevalent in the Mathematics class in an independent girls' high school environment and if this stereotyping lessens the more mature the learners become. A discussion of the results presented in Chapter 5 follows. This discussion is structured in such a manner as to test the two hypotheses set in Chapter 1.

#### 6.2. Hypothesis 1: High school girls are intolerant of teachers with non-standard English accents

Twenty eight female Grade 8 learners were asked to participate in a matched-guise technique in order to test Hypothesis 1.<sup>8</sup> This hypothesis proposed that high school girls view teachers with non-standard accents negatively. A number of other researchers worldwide had found this to be the case,<sup>9</sup> and the data obtained in this study also appear to bear out this hypothesis.

In general, the results indicate that the Grade 8s view the three English first language speakers as better looking and more honest than the second language speakers (refer to Graph 3 in Chapter 5). These results were expected, as the learners were primarily English first language speakers, and the English first language readers thus formed part of the learners' "ingroup". The three English first language speakers were also perceived as well-educated and intelligent. The differences between Helen and Sarah are discussed in section 5.5. This outcome was also somewhat predictable: in South Africa in the past (and some would argue that this is still the case), Black people were the recipients of inferior education, and English was (and still is) a second language of many Black South Africans. It could thus be that the

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<sup>8</sup> Although the Grade 12 results should also have been discussed here, I will discuss only the Grade 8 results where I consider Hypothesis 1 and then turn to the Grade 12 results later, when considering Hypothesis 2.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Young (cited in Sayahi 2003:109) investigated how English speakers and Spanish speakers of English as a second language were perceived. She also utilised the matched-guise technique, her results indicating that "both language choice and accent are undoubtedly influential on the linguistic attitudes of listeners" (Sayahi 2003:110).

learners are unconsciously drawing on their knowledge of the quality of education previously received by this group of second language speakers of English.

When comparing the ratings of English Runzi and Zulu Runzi, this accent prejudice becomes more evident (refer to Graph 4 in Chapter 5). One of the major discrepancies between the two sets of judgments seems to be when analysing the Grade 8s' responses to the speaker's appearance as imagined on the basis of spoken language features only: they perceive English Runzi as being far better looking than the isiZulu-accented person.

Surprisingly, the height assessment of both English Runzi and Zulu Runzi is similar. This could either be coincidental or due to Runzi's voice being high-pitched. It could be that the Grade 8 learners thought of her as being petite due to this high pitch. It does seem absurd that an assessment of height can be based purely on a voice recording. This is a criticism of the matched-guise technique as discussed in Section 4.6.

Both Runzis were perceived as being well-educated; this could be due to the fact that the learners would have assumed that a Mathematics teacher would have to be a university graduate to teach this subject at high school level. Hence the assumption drawn could be that these speakers both have at least one degree and as such can be categorised as well-educated.

The assessment of the speakers' sense of humour is not surprising, though. The stereotypical mathematics teacher tends to be solemn during a Mathematics lesson, due to the nature of the subject being taught. Past experience may have made the learners think that Mathematics teachers in general have no sense of humour. Zulu Runzi was perceived as having an excellent sense of humour, as was Raheem who spoke with an Indian accent. The question that arises is whether the learners perceive isiZulu and Indian accents as comical (and thus rated these speakers as having a good sense of humour) or whether there were other grounds for this judgment.

Zulu Runzi is perceived as being more likeable, friendly and kinder than English Runzi. In fact, Zulu Runzi is rated the most likeable, most dependable, friendliest and kindest of all the speakers. These are qualities associated with caregivers or nurturers, and most of the learners – if their parents employed caregivers – would have had a first language speaker of a Nguni language (such as isiZulu) take care of them. The question is thus raised as to whether these

positive personality traits are an indication of Zulu Runzi's accent being reminiscent of that of a caregiver in the learners' youth.

The Grade 8 learners perceived Zulu Runzi to be the most ambitious of all the speakers. This could be because the learners perceive first language speakers of isiZulu to be persons who may have been disadvantaged in the past. For this individual to teach Mathematics, she would have had to be ambitious, as she typically would have had to overcome inferior education during her school years (as mentioned earlier) to attend university and attain a degree in Mathematics.

When focusing on the responses of the English-African language bilingual Grade 8 learners only, a startling result was that of the rating of the teachers' appearance. The English-African language bilinguals thought English Runzi to be far better looking than Zulu Runzi. Based on this, the assumption is that these learners think that speakers of so-called Standard South African English – by implication, Whites – are physically more attractive than speakers of an African language. This could be an over-interpretation of this rating, but it is important to consider the possibility that the Black learners perceive African people as being less attractive – for adolescent girls, this may have ramifications for their self-esteem (refer to Section 3.3).

This assessment has vast implications for a school that embraces the concept of diversity. The school's diversity policy states that, "When we talk about diversity, we wish to emphasise particularly, the dimensions of race, gender, ability, religion, culture and socio-economic position" (see Appendices F and G). Furthermore, the school's transformation policy indicates the desire "to develop learners who celebrate diversity and who are comfortable with debate and discussion". Adherence to these policies seems essential, as from the analysis of the obtained data, the adolescent girls are not "celebrating diversity", and English-African bilingual adolescent girls in particular will require assistance in developing a pride in themselves and, perhaps, their culture.

### **6.3. Hypothesis 2: high school girls' become more tolerant of their teachers' non-standard English accents by Grade 12.**

Munro et al. (2006:71) state that it is “particularly important to recognise that experience with accented speech influences people’s attitudes and their responses to it.” I will now discuss whether a 4-year increase in experience of accented speech of teachers influences learners. The hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) was that perceptions of accented speech become less negative as high school girls becoming more socially aware and tolerant. Whether this was borne out by the obtained data will now be discussed. It is important to remember that these particular Grade 12 learners did not participate in this study as Grade 8 learners, thus the two study groups consist of completely different participants.

The judgments made by 14 Grade 12 learners in a matched-guise experiment were compared to those made by the Grade 8 learners in order to test Hypothesis 2. These results were not as expected. The hypothesis stated that learners will become more accepting of accented speakers as they mature but this is not the case. In most cases, the Grade 12s perceived the three English first language speakers as intelligent and the better educated of the six speakers (refer to Graph 6 in Chapter 5). These three speakers were also viewed as dependable but lacking in assertiveness, confidence and having no sense of humour, and this differs from the judgments made by the Grade 8s.

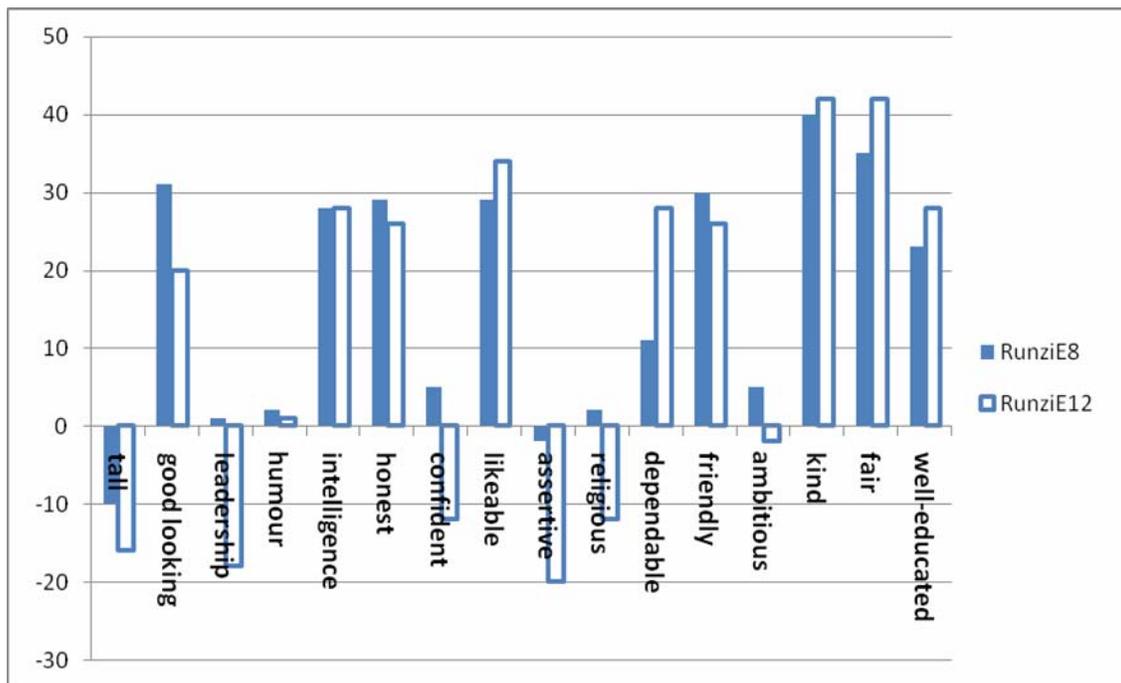
Apart for the discrepancies in Runzi’s assessments (discussed shortly), the surprising outcome in the Grade 12 data is the negativity surrounding Julienne’s accent. Not only is Julienne Afrikaans-speaking, she has a distinctive so-called Coloured accent. Julienne was perceived as the least educated, kind, likeable, friendly and fair speaker but as the most religious speaker. In contrast, Raheem’s dominant Indian accent had a far better reception. She was regarded as being the best leader and the most confident, most assertive and most ambitious of all the speakers. Raheem was also perceived as having the best sense of humour. These positive attributes could be due to the manner in which Raheem read the passage: She spoke clearly, enunciating each word.

When comparing English Runzi and Zulu Runzi, accent prejudice becomes evident (as was the case for the Grade 8 learners), thus refuting Hypothesis 2 (refer to Graph 7 in Chapter 5). Although Zulu Runzi is perceived as being friendly, religious, confident, likeable and blessed

with a sense of humour, the positive attributes stop there. Not only is English Runzi viewed as more intelligent than Zulu Runzi, she is also perceived as being more educated – as was the case in the Grade 8 judgments of the two Runzis. Like their younger counterparts, the Grade 12 learners thus still judge the same person disguised by the research methodology, in two different manners on the basis of that person’s accent alone.

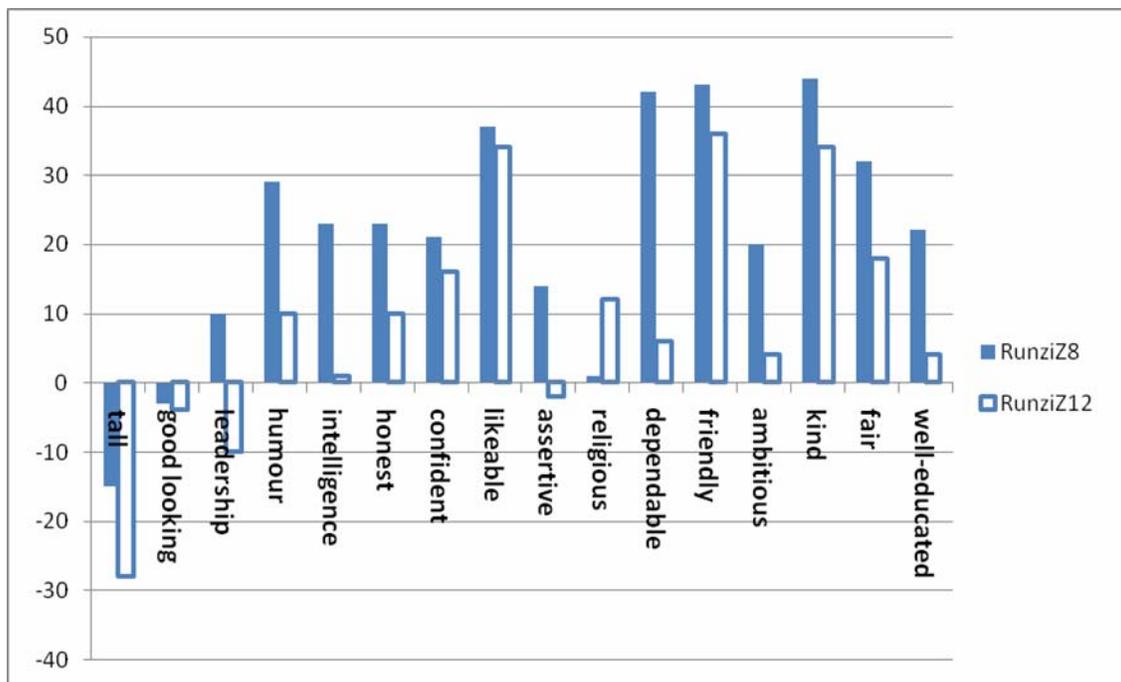
In Graphs 9 and 10 below, a comparison is presented of the responses of the Grade 8 and Grade 12 learners with particular reference to Runzi’s two accents. To enable an accurate comparison despite the difference in number of respondents in each grade, the Grade 12 scores were doubled.

Graph 9 indicates the numerous similarities in the perceptions of the two grade groups of English Runzi. These Grade 8 and Grade 12 learners would perceive the English accent as familiar, therefore the many positive attributes (English Runzi would be seen as belonging to the learners’ “ingroup”). The largest discrepancy is the perception of leadership skills, where there was an 18-point difference between the two grades. Nine of the 16 areas of assessment were within 6 points of one another, indicating that generally the Grade 8 and 12 perceptions of English Runzi are similar.



**Graph 9:** Grade 8s’ and 12s’ responses to English Runzi

An analysis of the responses to Zulu Runzi reveals fewer similarities (see Graph 10): Where the Grade 8s thought that Zulu Runzi was intelligent and well-educated, the Grade 12s did not. Generally, the Grade 12s seem to be more critical of Zulu Runzi than are the Grade 8s. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is refuted. It could be that the Grade 12s' judgments were influenced by their concerns about their final examinations. The data were collected one month before the final Matric examinations; at this stage, the Grade 12s may have perceived an English second language Mathematics teacher as being a frustration because they need to understand and comprehend every aspect of a Mathematics lesson in order to obtain high marks in their final examinations – the Grade 8s final examinations are not as important as those of the Grade 12s, and the Grade 8 examinations were also further away from the data collection date than were the Grade 12 examinations.



**Graph 10:** Grade 8s' and 12s' responses to Zulu Runzi

## Chapter 7: Conclusions

*“Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world.”*

– Joseph Conrad

[The question arises: what is the “right” word, or more specifically, what is the “right” accent? - LG]

### 7.1. Summary of findings

The current South African school curriculum includes lessons on the issues of discrimination and prejudice, so the learners who participated in this study should have been aware that the perceptions they hold of others may not reflect the true characteristics of these persons. Despite this, but in accordance to what has been shown worldwide, accent prejudice is a reality in the classroom.

One purpose of this study was to establish whether high school girls perceived their beginner, non-standard accented high school Mathematics teachers negatively; the results indicate that they indeed do. Although these teachers are viewed as having some positive attributes, namely kindness, friendliness and being likeable, these are hardly the most important attributes indicating a good Mathematics teacher. The attributes that the learners might perceive as being good qualities for a Mathematics teacher include being well-educated, intelligent, fair and dependable, all of which the learners attributed to the teacher with a familiar, accent. As such, there is an indication that accent stereotyping does occur.

The second purpose of this study was to establish whether the perceptions that the learners have of their beginner, non-standard accented high school Mathematics teachers became less negative as the learners matured. The learners’ perceptions of the beginner teachers did indeed change in certain respects from Grade 8 to Grade 12, but the Grade 12s seemed to be more critical of the non-standard accent, with particular reference to level of education and intelligence.

## **7.2. Implications of the study for educational practice**

Although this study focused on beginner teachers, its results may be of value not only to non-standard accented beginner teachers, teacher trainers, heads of schools and teacher-mentors, but also to experienced teachers entering a teaching environment in which their accent may be perceived as “different”. A non-standard accented beginner teacher, regardless of the subject being taught, will need to be aware that learners may present with accent prejudice. This beginner teacher needs to acquire resilience and ask for assistance in the pronunciation of particular subject terminology that is key to learner understanding. Accent modification (as discussed in Section 2.6) could be an option for non-standard accented teachers mainly where learners’ comprehension of key terminology may be affected and only if such modification is self-initiated by the teacher concerned.

Mendelowitz and Ferreira (2007:15), both in the field of teacher training, have indicated that there is an awareness that second language English-speaking learners feel “disadvantaged and excluded particularly in educational contexts.” Those who train teachers should take note of this, and in a multilingual and multicultural context such as South Africa one should consider developing skills in student teachers to cope with discrimination on all levels, including accent prejudice. Whereas this might assist these students to cope with accent discrimination once they are practising their profession, it may also make them aware of their own possible biases towards learners with certain accents.

A teacher-mentor is recommended for all beginner teachers, but especially for non-standard accented beginner teachers. A mentor-teacher can support the beginner teacher to grow in confidence, assisting with pronunciation of key subject terminology in a discrete manner. The beginner teacher can observe the mentor-teacher in the classroom, thereby learning the practical aspects of teaching and the widely accepted pronunciation of key words relevant to their subject.

School heads should be aware of the potential for accent prejudice. A well-qualified, successful teacher with years of experience in one educational environment may be the victim of accent prejudice if she/he displays what seems to be a non-standard accent in a different educational environment. If such a teacher comes from a teaching environment in which his/her accent was acceptable to most learners, the teacher may become despondent

when faced with accent prejudice in the new environment. The head of the school should ensure that such a teacher is continuously supported, making pronunciation assistance available if requested by the teacher.

From the above, it may appear as if I am suggesting action and change on the part of the teachers only. This is not the case. This study has indicated that learners judge their teachers on the basis of accent (and I am not suggesting that this is the only aspect on which learners' entire judgment is based); therefore the learners themselves need to be educated as regards sociolinguistic variation and the fact that all languages and all varieties of any specific language are equal, linguistically speaking but not socially speaking. Because the South African school system is still not fully integrated as regards ethnicity and socio-economic status, it is possible for learners to be educated in "islands", e.g. in an almost exclusively Standard South African English-speaking school located in an affluent suburb of a major city (such as the school in this study); in a township school attended by almost exclusively poor learners with an African language as home language; in a rural Afrikaans-medium former Coloured-only school attended by only those local children whose parents cannot afford to send them to a former Model C school. This entails that the school is not necessarily representative of the South African society – not in terms of the ethnic diversity and also not in terms of languages, language varieties and accents present in the general population of this country. As such, the school does not necessarily prepare learners for the general diversity found in society at large. If our school system is delivering young adults (referring to the Grade 12s here) who are not tolerant of linguistic or other diversity and who cannot appreciate the contributions made by those who are and/or sound "different", then the nature of the current curriculum needs to be reconsidered. It does not appear as though the current curriculum content on issues of discrimination and prejudice are rendering the desired results; other ways should be sought to make learners aware of their unconscious perception formation on teachers and the effect this can have on learners' classroom behaviour.

### **7.3. Shortcomings of this study**

This study has limitations, the most apparent being that only females were included as informants and as readers. The question remains as to whether boys have the same perceptions about non-standard accented beginner teachers as girls do, and whether learners' perceptions of male and female teachers with the same accent differ. All the readers in this

study were women and the question raised by a Grade 8 learner after the completion of the data collection, “Ma’am, why were there no male teachers speaking?”, revealed that a study including beginner teachers of both genders may well elicit differing results. It is recommended that future studies on accent prejudice include participants from both genders.

A second limitation was the type of school where the research was conducted. The school is a predominantly White, independent school which is certainly not representative of the learner population of South Africa. Further studies on accent prejudice in government schools may produce different results, although research conducted worldwide indicates that accent prejudice is prevalent in all types of schools.

The matched-guise technique is not without its difficulties that have elicited criticism. Problems with this technique were addressed in Section 4.5. The limitations of this technique then become inherent limitations of the study in which it is used.

A fourth limitation of this study is the limited number of readers included and that only two of the passages were read by the same speaker. The difficulties in obtaining speakers who could authentically use two South African English accents were mentioned in Section 4.6. In future studies of this nature, more reader pairs should be included, possibly making use of professional actors as “natural persons” who can speak with more than one accent are not available.

Although accent modification was discussed, I did not ask the teachers their opinions on the potential worth of this approach. Future studies could address this limitation of this study. The manner in which to introduce accent modification into South African schools to assist non-standard accented teachers is a further area for future research on this topic.

#### **7.4. Concluding remarks**

With fewer teachers graduating annually and the teacher crisis growing in South Africa, it is essential that we retain the well-qualified teachers currently employed. If these teachers are non-standard accented teachers who may encounter accent discrimination, they need support to manage accent prejudice or to avoid it completely. Boyd (2003:132) states that in her investigation into non-standard accented teachers in Sweden, “both adults and young people”

found that language was blamed for nearly “all the problems of communication or pedagogy.” This study was intended to make a limited contribution to managing accent prejudice by showing that it does indeed occur in classrooms, also in multicultural ones, even where teachers have excellent academic qualifications and learners are mature (referring to the Grade 12s in this study). Seeing that these learners have had teaching on the topics of discrimination and prejudice, without much success as far as accent prejudice is concerned, we now need to find more creative and deliberate ways of avoiding discrimination against teachers who do not speak English as a first language.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire completed by informants

## CONFIDENTIAL

8A

Age:

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What is your home language?

---

Which languages can you speak?

---

How long have you been at this school?

---

Where were you at primary school?

---

# CONFIDENTIAL

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross [X] where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	Tall							short
1	Entertaining		X					boring
2	Good looking							unattractive
3	A great leader							A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour							Has <b>no</b> sense of humour
5	Intelligent							unintelligent
6	Honest							dishonest
7	Confident							unsure
8	Likeable							hateful
9	Assertive							timid
10	Religious							Not religious
11	Dependable							Unreliable
12	Friendly							Reserved
13	Ambitious							Unmotivated
14	Kind							Cruel
15	Fair							Biased

16	well-educated							Uneducated
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**Appendix B: Example of answered questionnaire (Readers 1 – 3) - Grade 8**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Age: 14

What is your home language?  
English

Which languages can you speak?  
Afrikaans

How long have you been at this school?  
10 months

Where were you at primary school?  
Crawford Lanehill,  
Michael Mount  
Waldorf School

**CONFIDENTIAL**

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross [X] where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	entertaining		X			boring
1	tall			X		short
2	Good looking			X		unattractive
3	A great leader				X	A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour				X	Has no sense of humour
5	intelligent				X	unintelligent
6	honest	X				dishonest
7	confident			X		unsure
8	likeable		X			hateful
9	assertive			X		timid
10	religious		X			Not religious
11	dependable		X			unreliable
12	friendly	X				reserved
13	ambitious				X	unmotivated
14	kind	X				cruel
15	fair	X				biased
16	well-educated	X				uneducated

**CONFIDENTIAL**

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross [X] where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	entertaining		X			boring
1	tall			X		short
2	Good looking			X		unattractive
3	A great leader			X		A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour			X		Has no sense of humour
5	intelligent		X			unintelligent
6	honest	X				dishonest
7	confident		X			unsure
8	likeable	X				hateful
9	assertive		X			timid
10	religious		X			Not religious
11	dependable		X			unreliable
12	friendly	X				reserved
13	ambitious			X		unmotivated
14	kind	X				cruel
15	fair	X				biased
16	well-educated	X				uneducated

**CONFIDENTIAL**

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross [X] where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	entertaining		X			boring
1	tall			X		short
2	Good looking			X		unattractive
3	A great leader			X		A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour			X		Has no sense of humour
5	intelligent		X			unintelligent
6	honest	X				dishonest
7	confident		X			unsure
8	likeable		X			hateful
9	assertive		X			timid
10	religious		X			Not religious
11	dependable		X			unreliable
12	friendly	X				reserved
13	ambitious			X		unmotivated
14	kind	X				cruel
15	fair	X				biased
16	well-educated	X				uneducated

## Appendix C: Example of answered questionnaire (Readers 4 – 6) – Grade 12

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
18

What is your home language?  
English

Which languages can you speak?  
E, Zulu

How long have you been at this school?  
5 years

Where were you at primary school?  
St. Katherines & St. Andrews

**CONFIDENTIAL**

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross (X) where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	entertaining	X	booring
1	tall		short
2	Good looking	X	unattractive
3	A great leader		A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour	X	Has no sense of humour
5	intelligent	X	unintelligent
6	honest		dishonest
7	confident	X	unsure
8	likeable		hateful
9	assertive		timid
10	religious	X	Not religious
11	dependable		unreliable
12	friendly	X	reserved
13	ambitious	X	unmotivated
14	kind		cruel
15	fair		biased
16	well-educated	X	uneducated

**CONFIDENTIAL**

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross (X) where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	entertaining	X	booring
1	tall		short
2	Good looking		unattractive
3	A great leader	X	A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour	X	Has no sense of humour
5	intelligent	X	unintelligent
6	honest	X	dishonest
7	confident	X	unsure
8	likeable	X	hateful
9	assertive	X	timid
10	religious	X	Not religious
11	dependable	X	unreliable
12	friendly	X	reserved
13	ambitious	X	unmotivated
14	kind	X	cruel
15	fair	X	biased
16	well-educated	X	uneducated

**CONFIDENTIAL**

After listening to the recording, indicate by using a cross (X) where you would position the speaker on the table below.

What do you think this person is like?

i.e. 2 1 0 1 2

1	entertaining	X	booring
1	tall		short
2	Good looking	X	unattractive
3	A great leader		A poor leader
4	Has a sense of humour		Has no sense of humour
5	intelligent	X	unintelligent
6	honest	X	dishonest
7	confident	X	unsure
8	likeable		hateful
9	assertive	X	timid
10	religious	X	Not religious
11	dependable	X	unreliable
12	friendly	X	reserved
13	ambitious	X	unmotivated
14	kind		cruel
15	fair	X	biased
16	well-educated	X	uneducated

## Appendix D: Letter of permission to complete research

20 Louis Road  
BORDEAUX  
2194  
8 September 2009

The Rector  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Lowry

### REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT [REDACTED] GIRLS' COLLEGE

I am currently doing my MPhil in intercultural communication through Stellenbosch University and would like to request permission to do my research at [REDACTED] Girls' College.

My research proposal has been accepted by the university and my supervisor is Dr Frenette Southwood of the Linguistics Department at Stellenbosch University. Her contact details are:

Tel +27 (0)21 8082010  
Fax +27 (0)21 8082009  
fs@sun.ac.za

I am investigating the extent to which learners stereotype second language English speaking teachers by accents. With an ever-increasing teacher shortage in South Africa, particularly in mathematics, I am most concerned about retaining quality teachers. Unfortunately it seems as though some learners judge second language teachers as being less educated if they mispronounce words. With the business world offering more competitive salaries, some mathematics teachers may lose confidence in their ability due to this stereotyping by learners and leave the teaching profession.

My research will take the form of a questionnaire using the matched guise method. The Grade 8 and 12 learners will listen to two recordings using the same speaker. The speaker will give the same five minute mathematics lesson twice: once using an accent that the learners would associate with an English speaking white South African and the second accent would be associated with a South African whose first language is not English.

The results of this research will be strictly confidential and only the people involved in the assessment of my thesis will have access to it. I will forward a copy of my research findings as well as a copy of my completed thesis to the school for your perusal.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Linda Galanakis

## Appendix E: Consent form sent to parents of Grade 8 informants

### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study of intercultural communication. The general purpose of successful intercultural communication is to create shared meanings between different people in a communicative situation. You were selected as a participant in this study because you are an English-speaking mathematics student.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to listen to a few voice recordings of a mathematics lesson and fill in questionnaires about the communication you hear. In total, the exercise will take 12 minutes.

The results of this study will help linguists ascertain how successfully intercultural communication occurs in the mathematics classroom. The information obtained in this study will be completely confidential and no-one will ever know your name.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and permission has been granted by Mr Lowry and Mrs Acquisto for me to complete this study.

If you would like a copy of the results of the study, please let me know. I can be contacted on 011-577-6300 or 20 Louis Road, Bordeaux.

You will be offered a copy of this consent form to keep. You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read all the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate. If you need any further information before you can make such a choice, please contact me; I will gladly answer all questions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant (*over 18 years of age*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of guardian if under 18 years of age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Thank you.*

*Linda Galanakis*

*Senior English teacher*

*Campus learnership co-ordinator*

## Appendix F: Statement of Transformation

Page 1 of 2



### ██████████ COLLEGE STATEMENT: TRANSFORMATION AT THE COLLEGE

As a South African, Methodist Church School we commit ourselves to becoming a more diverse school in terms of both our student and teacher bodies. We strive to be a school where each individual feels welcome and affirmed, and where each one is encouraged to explore and develop their cultural and religious identity as South Africans and as global citizens/ leaders. Within our College we want to develop learners who celebrate diversity and who are comfortable with debate and discussion, because the College provides a safe space within which we can all explore difference, experience dissonance and recognise our common humanity.

We recognise that to achieve this we, both as individuals and as a College – *One & All*, have to constantly explore our assumptions, challenge our prejudices, learn to understand the experience of others and allow each one to be him / herself. We believe that this builds on our tradition of critical thinking and our core values. It is recognised that this is not easy and will involve a lot of hard work.

We want to do this because it underpins the values that we espouse as an institute of education and we believe it is a crucial part of building leaders. It is necessary to master these challenges if we are to grow individuals who can lead in the complex world in which we live and work.

When we talk about transformation, we would usually include the dimensions of race, gender, ability, religion, culture and socio-economic position. However, in the context of where we are as a country and as a College, for the purposes of this statement and in defining the role of the Transformation Committee we wish to focus only on the dimension of racial transformation. A separate process and strategy will be implemented to address the issues associated with gender differences. There has been a process in place for several years that has started addressing diversity in abilities. Focusing specifically on the dimension of race is not intended to indicate in any manner that the other dimensions of transformation are unimportant or have been or are being adequately addressed. The dimension of racial transformation is so important at this stage of the College's development that it requires the dedicated and focussed attention that will be provided by the Transformation Committee.

Our commitment to transformation does not in any way contradict our Methodist identity and our commitment to the values in The ██████████ Charter, *vis-à-vis*:

“██████████ strives for excellence in all spheres and a continuation of its fine reputation as a leading South African school at the cutting-edge of innovation and educational issues.

██████████ encourages learners to do their personal best, fostering a healthy sense of competition while at the same time teaching learners to work collaboratively. It encourages and teaches a sense of self-confidence, self-discipline, humility and respect avoiding any form of arrogance.

”

\\StJoan\SI.Lowry\5-██████████\Strategic Thinking\Priorities\Transformation\Statement on Transformation\Transformation\_statement\_final.doc

██████████ recognises the need for both educators and parents to provide educational resources and support. All our learners develop a love for learning, through effective communication, respect and courtesy, which forms the basis for the partnership between parents, learners, teachers, management and support staff."

All decisions at the College are subject to four key criteria:

- The values espoused by the College, as articulated in the ██████████ Charter.
- The Methodist Church identity of the College.
- Excellence in education, as articulated in the ██████████ Charter.
- The long-term sustainability of the College.

The College has developed a plan of transformation to realise the intentions of this statement. Each individual school has also developed plans so that the College can achieve its transformation goals. The Transformation Committee, a sub-committee of the College Council, will monitor the College's implementation of its transformation strategy. Transformation remains a central plank of the short, medium and long-term strategy of the College.

There are five goals around which the strategy is built.

Goal 1: To foster and communicate our commitment to transformation and our Statement on Transformation so that it is understood, accepted and supported by all stakeholders

Goal 2: To establish an environment:

- That is welcoming to all;
- Where learners, parents and staff value themselves and learn to respect differences that exist in our society;
- That understands that we are united in diversity and that diversity brings strength;
- That promotes dissonance and discourse in a safe space, within a framework of ethical and value based rules, and which leads to a greater understanding of the social relevance of identity and transformation.

Goal 3: To continue to transform the learner population in terms of race.

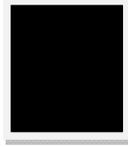
Goal 4: To ensure that the College Staff is more diverse in terms of race.

Goal 5: As an institution, the College is committed to assisting in the transformation of the South African economy by supporting in our procurement and tendering policies BEE compliant companies.

**ADOPTED BY THE COLLEGE COUNCIL: 19 MARCH 2009**

## Appendix G: Diversity Policy

Policy - Diversity Strategy Public - Final - 5 March 2007 (2).doc



██████████ COLLEGE

### DIVERSITY STATEMENT: 2010

As a South African, Methodist Church School we commit ourselves to becoming a more diverse school in terms of both our student and teacher bodies. We want to be a school where each individual feels welcome and affirmed, and where each one is encouraged to explore and develop their cultural and religious identity as South Africans and as global citizens/leaders. Within our school we want to develop learners who celebrate diversity and who are comfortable with debate and discussion, because the school provides a safe space within which we can all explore difference, experience dissonance and recognise our common humanity.

We recognise that to achieve this we have to constantly explore our assumptions, challenge our prejudices, learn to understand the experience of others and allow each one to be him/ herself. We believe that this builds on our tradition of critical thinking and our core values. It is recognised this is not easy and will involve a lot of hard work.

We want to do this because we believe it is a crucial part of building leaders – it is necessary if we are to grow individuals who can lead in the complex world in which we live and work.

When we talk about diversity, we wish to emphasise particularly, the dimensions of race, gender, ability, religion, culture and socio-economic position.

Our commitment to diversity should not in any way contradict our Methodist identity and our commitment to the values in The ██████████ Charter, vis-à-vis:

“██████████ strives for excellence in all spheres and a continuation of its fine reputation as a leading South African school at the cutting-edge of innovation and educational issues.

██████████ encourages learners to do their personal best, fostering a healthy sense of competition while at the same time teaching learners to work collaboratively. It encourages and teaches a sense of self-confidence, self-discipline, humility and respect avoiding any form of arrogance.

██████████ recognises the need for both educators and parents to provide educational resources and support. All our learners develop a love for learning, through effective communication, respect and courtesy, which forms the basis for the partnership between parents, learners, teachers, management and support staff.”

All decisions at the College are subject to four key criteria:

- The values espoused by the College, as articulated in the S ██████████ Charter.
- The Methodist Church identity of the College.
- Excellence in education, as articulated in the ██████████ Charter.
- The long-term sustainability of the College.

The Strategic Plan (2005-2008) sets the following Goal for diversity at the College: The diversity of students and staff will be increased (Goal 9). The following will indicate the extent to which the Goal is achieved by 2010:

- Diversity will be clearly defined in terms of race, gender, academic ability, religion, wealth and disability.
- Specific goals/ targets will be set for each area of diversity.
- There will be a growth in diversity year by year.
- There will be a plan in place to define the market for diverse candidates.
- Facilities for the disabled will be in place.
- The academic support programme will be fully staffed and effective.
- A greater number of families will be able to afford [REDACTED]

All Heads, Deputies and campus shared services Directors met in workshops in late 2006 and early 2007 to discuss in more detail the above strategic goal. This Diversity Statement comprising five goals on Diversity and an implementation strategy was developed at these workshops.

Each school that makes up the [REDACTED] College village of schools will develop their own implementation plan of the five goals at their own school. These plans will be adopted in each of the schools by the third term 2007.

**Goal 1**  
**To foster and communicate our commitment to diversity and our diversity statement so that it is understood, accepted and supported by all stakeholders.**

**Indicators by 2010**  
All stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, Council members etc) will understand and most stakeholders will support our diversity strategy.

**Goal 2**  
**To establish an environment:**

- **That is welcoming to all;**
- **Where learners, parents and staff value themselves and learn to respect differences that exist in our society;**
- **That understands that we are united in diversity and that diversity brings strength;**
- **That promotes dissonance and discourse in a safe space, within a framework of ethical and value based rules, and which leads to a greater understanding of the social relevance of identity and diversity.**

**Indicators by 2010**

- The physical and interpersonal environment will be welcoming to all.
- Diversity will be valued and celebrated.
- Debate will be encouraged especially around issues of identity and diversity.

**Goal 3**

**To continue to diversify the learner population in terms of race and ability and, if possible, socio-economic status.**

**Indicators by 2010**

- Increase the numbers of learners of colour by at least 5% - from 2007 figures by 2010, across the College.
- Continue with our current approach, as defined in the Learning & Teaching Policy, regarding disabled students.
- By 2010 we will have developed a strategy to increase our socio-economic diversity.

**Goal 4**

**To ensure that the College Staff is more diverse in terms of race, gender, abilities, opinions and cultures.**

**Indicators by 2010**

- Meet our Employment Equity Plan targets.
- Parents and learners will be more accepting of teachers from diverse backgrounds.
- All levels of school administration, management and governance are more representative.

**Goal 5**

**As an institution, the College is committed to assisting in the transformation of the South African Economy by supporting in our procurement and tendering policies and other business practices companies owned by blacks, women and small business economic empowerment.**

**Indicators by 2010**

- The College will understand the BEE Scorecard published at the end of 2006, and will use this to set specific targets for its procurement policy.
- A Procurement Policy will be adopted and will govern all procurement in the College by January 2008.

**ADOPTED BY THE COLLEGE EXCO: 05 MARCH 2007**  
**TABLED AT COUNCIL: 15 MARCH 2007**