

# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

*Out-of-school literacy practices – the case of Sesotho-speaking learners in Cape Town*

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A minor dissertation submitted in *partial fulfillment* of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics

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## **COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

**Signature:** T.A. Lekhanya-Tshikare

**Date:** 31 October 2017

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the out-of-school multilingual literacy practices of four Grade Seven learners aged between 13 and 14 years at Lehlohonolo Primary School (henceforth LPS) in Gugulethu, Cape Town. They come from lower-income Sesotho speaking households and live in residential areas where isiXhosa is the predominant language of interaction. LPS is one of only two primary schools in the area that cater for these Sesotho speaking learners. The Language of Learning and Teaching is Sesotho from Grade R to Three, and then changes to English from Grade Four onwards for all subjects besides Sesotho.

Located within the broader New Literacy Studies framework, this study approaches literacy as a historically and socially situated practice. It examines the learners' exposure and engagements with formal and informal texts by identifying the diverse communicative resources they have access to, and employ in, especially, out-of-school contexts. One central aim is to specify the roles of the various languages with a particular focus on Sesotho.

Using an ethnographic approach, data was gathered primarily through observations and conversations. This was complemented by the photographic documentation of literacy artefacts and semi-structured interviews with the learners, their teachers, caregivers and other household members. To gain a better understanding of their multilingual repertoires and communication networks, the learners were asked to participate in language portrait and social network communication exercises.

The core research question that informs the study is: What communicative resources do participants use in different out-of-school literacy events?

The study's main findings are as follows: (a) the learners have unique language and literacy histories with varying degrees of digital access and competence in Sesotho, English and isiXhosa; (b) standard varieties of Sesotho and English are used for academic purposes; (c) the scarcity of Sesotho literacy is highlighted by the dominant English and isiXhosa literacy

practices in out-of-school contexts, including online spaces and (d) Sesotho is used in spoken interactions at home and does not feature in leisure reading and writing.

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## **Dedications**

**Moeketsi KongoRoots Maseola:** 1978 - December 2015

**Mamone Ramone:** 1965 - December 2015

**Elma Motshumi:** 1925 - January 2016

**Thato Ramone Cekwane:** 1979 - September 2016

**Mpho Lekhanya:** 1986 – March 2017

**Lefeu Ramone:** 1963- May 2017

**ROBALONG KA KHOTSO, KHUTSO LE LERATO BARATUOA!!!**

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## **List of abbreviations**

**DCAS:** Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports

**DISK:** Deutsche Internationale Schule Kapstadt or German International School Cape Town

**DSTV:** Digital Satellite Television

**FIFA:** Federation International of Football Association

**ICT:** Information and Communications Technologies

**LPS:** Lehlohonolo Primary School

**MB:** Megabites

**MMS:** Multimedia Messages

**LoLT:** Language of Learning and Teaching

**NLS:** New Literacy Studies

**NGO:** Non- Government Organization

**NY 137:** Native Yard 137

**PES games:** Pro Evolution Soccer games

**SABC:** South African Broadcasting Agency

**SMS:** Short message service

**UK:** United Kingdom

**US:** United States of America

**UWC:** University of the Western Cape

**WCED:** Western Cape Education Department

**WCLP:** Western Cape Language Policy

## **Linguistic Data Glossing**

English is in normal font.

Afrikaans is underlined.

*Sesotho is in italic.*

*isiXhosa is in underlined and italic.*

TSOTSITAAL VARIETIES ARE IN CAPITAL LETTERS

\*\*\* replaces a person's name in the data for reasons of anonymity

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This study investigates the out-of-school multilingual literacy practices of four Grade seven learners who attend Lehlohonolo Primary School (LPS) in Gugulethu, Cape Town. LPS is one of the only two primary schools within the Cape Metropolitan Area that cater for Sesotho speaking learners. The school uses Sesotho, the home language of these learners, as a Language of Learning and Teaching (henceforth LoLT) up to Grade Three; from Grade Four onwards, all subjects, besides Sesotho, use English as the official LoLT. The learners are exposed to English, both within the institutional setting of the school, but also informally, within the local context of the neighbourhoods (Gugulethu and Philippi) and the wider Cape Town area. While LPS provides academic access to Sesotho, learners find themselves in an isiXhosa-dominant environment once they leave the school premises. Thus, they are also fluent speakers of isiXhosa, which they acquired informally from peers, siblings, parents and in their communities.

The ethnographic approach employed in this study draws on observations of the participants' out-of-school literacy events and practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the learners, their teachers and caregivers, in order to understand how they reflect on their own language and literacy experiences, histories, practices and resources. To better understand their multilingual repertoires, the learners were also asked to participate in self-report exercises: they completed language portraits and social network diagrams (following Busch, 2012 and Deumert, 2010). Where appropriate, the verbal interactions observed and recorded during literacy events were transcribed and translated for analysis, along with the collected literacy artefacts the learners accessed and/or produced.

### **1.2. Research Question and Rationale**

In-school contexts are significant for research on language and literacy acquisition and development. Nevertheless, observations of other contexts are also imperative because whether learned formally or informally “language and literacy resources merge into repertoires which reflect the polycentricity of the learning environments in which the speaker dwells” (Blommaert and Backus, 2012:15). Thus, in support of more literacy studies of out-of-school contexts, Martin-Jones and Bhatt (1998:37) state that formal school literacy is “too isolated from everyday

ways of using the written word to serve as the only source of literacy competence in society”. Similarly, Hull and Schultz (2001:604) note that researchers should “direct [their] energies toward investigating potential relationships, collaborations, and helpful divisions of labour between schools and formal classrooms and the informal learning that flourishes in a range of out-of-school settings.” These recommendations for studies on the kinds of things that the learners do with literacy in out-of-school contexts resonate with the approach taken in this study.

According to the 2011 Census, 9.6% of South Africa’s population reported English as a home language; 13.5 % reported Afrikaans as their home-languages. Collectively, the first-language speakers of the nine official African languages accounted for close to 80% of the population. In response to the country’s linguistic diversity, the 1996 constitution recognized African languages as official languages, a status that only English and Afrikaans had under apartheid. Yet, most school policies still typically favour English (and in some cases Afrikaans) as LoLT (Alexander, 2005 and Deumert, 2010). Thus, the country’s official languages do not have equality in the education system. This study contributes to the continuing debate on mother tongue education, which is aimed at correcting the uneven status quo and the inadequate African languages literacy resources in school and out-of-school contexts. It is a debate that ultimately requires an inclusive dialogue to take place between children, parents, teachers/educators, funders, publishers, researchers and policy makers.

Sesotho is one of the eleven official languages in South Africa. It is predominantly spoken in the Free State, Gauteng and parts of Eastern Cape. However, it is a minority language in the Western Cape where 1.1% of the total population reported to be Sesotho first-language speakers (Census 2011). Furthermore, the Western Cape Language Policy (WCLC, 2005:1) explicitly promotes the equality of English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. The policy recognizes Sesotho explicitly as being in need of ‘promotion’ (Paragraph 2.11), but Sesotho does not receive the same level of support as, for example, isiXhosa. For instance, LPS’ learners do not have access to Sesotho textbooks and the local public libraries prioritize the three regionally dominant languages. While it is apparent that LPS plays an important role regarding the learners’ Sesotho language use, it has restricted resources. This study shows that there is need for effective interventions to address the scarcity of Sesotho literacy for learners at school and in out-of-school context.

The study aims to answer the following core research question:

- What role does Sesotho play in the learners' out-of-school literacy practices, and what literacy resources are available to them in this language?

I will also address the following sub-questions:

- What do the observed literacy events and collected literacy artefacts tell us about Sesotho language use in out-of-school multilingual contexts?
- The study approaches literacy as a social practice and collective communicative resource (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) and asks: what semiotic and material resources do the learners have at their disposal in out-of-school contexts?
- Since literacy “practices are the social processes which connect people with one another” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000:8), this study also focuses on the social processes that are involved in literacy events by asking: to what degree are out-of-school literacy practices characterized by interactive processes such as mediation and collaboration?

### 1.3. Conclusion and Chapter Organization

This opening chapter introduced the research topic and outlined the main research questions. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 2 discusses the New Literacy Studies framework which approaches the study of literacy as a social practice. Key concepts are defined and illustrated in this chapter. The first part of Chapter 3 looks at the research sites and participants' background information. While the study focuses on the individual learners as the core participants, the households in which they live are also discussed. The second part of this chapter outlines the methodological approaches used for data collection.

The following chapters turn to the analysis of participants' literacy practices in private and public contexts. Chapter 4 discusses the presence of literacy artefacts in private living spaces, focusing on questions of visibility, exposure and access. The subsequent two chapters

foreground the analysis of observed literacy events and literacy practices. Chapter 5 turns to the idea of social capital by focusing on literacy collaboration and mediation in the context of out-of-school homework sessions. Chapter 6 analyses out-of-school literacy in a public space. I describe literacy practices during a Sunday school session and church service.

Although the households in which the participants live all fall within the lower-income category, there exist important material differences between them. These differences affect literacy practices, especially digital literacy practices. Chapter 7 focuses on the various digital resources the participants have access to and the analysis focuses on text messages. The conclusion (Chapter 8) summarizes the study's findings and outlines areas for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This thesis is located within the theoretical framework of *New Literacy Studies* (henceforth NLS) which is outlined in the first section. Following this, I introduce *literacy events, practices and artefacts* as core notions for my data analysis. Thereafter, I consider language as a semiotic resource that is employed by speakers in different contexts. I adopt an approach which neither overemphasizes, nor disregards, the idea of languages as ideological social constructs. I then turn to the question of economic and social resources in proposing *literacy mediation* and *collaboration* as distinct sociolinguistic processes. In the last section, I discuss power and practice in relation to language and literacy. In parts of my discussion in this chapter, I closely follow the work of Coetzee (2012).

### **2.2. New Literacy Studies (NLS)**

The NLS framework promotes ethnographic and locally positioned studies. It also challenges the autonomous model of literacy, which treats schooling and literacy as almost synonymous, while ignoring other types of everyday literacies. According to Baynham (2004), the history of NLS can be divided into three generations of studies over three decades.

Described as “classic studies” (Barton, 2001:93), the first generation includes ethnographic landmarks such as Street’s (1984) *Literacy in Theory and Practice* and *Ways with Words* by Heath (1983). Strongly influenced by Hymes’ (1972, 1974) ethnography of speaking, Heath’s research on two (black and white) working class communities in the USA drew attention to literacy events as key unit of analysis (see Section 2.3). Her findings demonstrated that each community had its own interactional norms for sharing knowledge during literacy events, and that these norms differed between home and school contexts. Around the same time, Street (1984) argued against the autonomous model’s implicit ideology as it celebrates Western literacy practices associated with schools and constructions of modernity. He maintained that besides school, literacy happens in various other social contexts. His research in Iran illustrated the existence of alternative literacy practices by people who would be labeled as ‘illiterate’ according to the autonomous model.

Following these foundational studies, the second generation of literacy studies provided more empirical research and further advanced literacy theory. For example, Kulick and Stroud (1990:286) cast “grave doubt on the validity of a sharp distinction between ‘literate’ and ‘non-literate’ societies.” Their study of a village in Papua New Guinea demonstrated that people actively and creatively use their diverse literate skills to fulfill everyday purposes and needs. Other second-generation studies (e.g. Gee, 1990, Barton and Hamilton, 2000, Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000 and Street, 2003) highlighted the ideas of multiplicity and social practice. Martin-Jones and Jones’s (2000) *Multilingual Literacies*, for instance, studied the connections between multiple linguistic resources and literacies. The multilingual resources of readers/writers differ in terms of structures, purposes, applications and principles from one social setting to another, and as a result, they vary in their social implications and effects (see also Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009:2). In this local study, I examine the multilingual literacy practices of four teenagers in out-of-school contexts.

In today’s world literacy is no longer simply locally situated, but it is also embedded in global practices. Important social changes are apparent with the increase in migration and the growth of new media, which facilitate translocal literacy practices. Thus, the third generation of literacy studies focuses on re-examining concepts that were once considered fundamental, and looks at the interplay of local, translocal and global practices (Lenters, 2014). This includes, for example, work on cell-phones and new media literacies (Deumert and Lexander, 2013 and Deumert, 2014). Other studies (e.g. Lankshear, and Knobel, 2003, Thurlow, 2003, Sebba, 2012 and Sebba and Dray, 2013) focus on writing and reading in different varieties of English, including its non-standard forms. Within the local contexts, studies indicate that African languages are used along with English (Banda, 2003, Deumert and Masinyana, 2008, and Dyers and Davids, 2015). These local studies show that multilingual texting is a common practice, and that users resourcefully combine the various linguistic varieties at their disposal to send texts on cell-phones.

### 2.3. Literacy: Events, Practices and Artefacts

Bearing in mind the social practice approach to literacy, this section draws on Heath (1983), Barton and Hamilton (2000), Street (2003), and Pahl and Rowsell (2012), as the points of reference for discussing the following key concepts: (a) *literacy events*, (b) *literacy practices*

and (c) *literacy artefacts*. While these notions are strongly related and intertwined, the NLS tradition typically differentiates between them for analysis purposes. This study pursues a similar approach by exploring the links between these concepts whilst approaching them as distinctive units of analysis.

In NLS, the definition of speech event by Hymes (1972:56) is broadened to include literacy events. Heath (1982a:50) defines *literacy events* as “occasions in which written language is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes and strategies”. Barton and Hamilton (2000:8) also state that these events generally occur within specific social contexts “where literacy has a role”. However, an event where a participant reads a book alone in silence or writes down a list without interacting with other speakers/writers (i.e. a monologic event) differs from one where different speakers/writers interact (i.e. a dialogic event). Paying attention to these events is essential when describing literacy as a social practice. Furthermore, the contexts of literacy events vary as they involve different settings, participants, relationships, purpose, tasks, resources, rules and consequently practices. Literacy events are informed by social, institutional and cultural norms.

*Literacy practices*, as a core unit of analysis, offer “a powerful way of conceptualising the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000:7). They refer to “what people do with texts and what these activities mean to them” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000:9) in different contexts. In other words, literacy practices are the various ways that a specific group of people speaks and thinks about, identifies with, values and makes sense of literacy. These practices thus reflect a “broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (Street, 2003:79); that is, they are rooted in language and literacy awareness, constructions and ideologies. They include observable actions (e.g. reading aloud and writing a letter) as well as mental and behavioral dispositions (thoughts, feelings, emotions, ideologies and attitudes). The latter are more abstract in nature and, therefore, not always easy to detect.

While these practices are socially and culturally situated (Barton and Hamilton, 2000), they also incorporate individual behavior and other more subjective aspects. They can conform to social

norms or transgress such norms. Furthermore, they are historically based which means that they change through time, and new practices are constantly acquired in formal and informal contexts. These practices are associated with different spheres of life, institutions, relationships and contexts in which they are typically endorsed. For instance, academic (formal) literacy practices such as essay writing and homework differ from informal literacy practices (e.g. journaling, texting, tags and graffiti) which are linked to out-of-school settings, where standard norms do not usually apply.

Lastly, *literacy artefacts* are best understood as textual and material objects that are valued or produced by a meaning-maker in a particular event (Pahl and Rowsell, 2012). Within the home contexts, they include posters, calendars, books, magazines, and newspapers. I argue that these texts are embedded in the learners' literacy practices. Similar to the way literacy events are shaped by literacy practices (Barton and Hamilton, 2000:7), literacy artefacts are shaped by the contexts in which they are produced and/or accessed. Moreover, the literacy artefacts that are accessible to speakers within certain contexts can shape literacy events and practices.

To sum up, literacy events refer to specific and situated occasions that incorporate artefacts/texts (where literacy plays a role); whilst literacy practices refer to the broader socio-cultural aspects of literacy, resulting from cultural, historical and social contexts.

## 2.4. Semiotic Resources

In this section I will discuss three sociolinguistic concepts that are important to the study of multilingual literacies: (a) *multimodality*, (b) *multilingual repertoires*, and (c) *translanguaging*. All three concepts are grounded in an understanding of reading/writing/speaking/signing as a practice which makes use of diverse semiotic resources in creating meaning. Semiotic resources are socially formed, recognized, understood and shared within particular cultural and situational contexts.

*Multimodality* calls attention to the interweaving manner in which language as a specific semiotic resource is employed alongside other semiotic resources, including speech, writing, "image, gesture, sound, posture, combinations of these and, also, silence" (Prinsloo and Baynham, 2013:xxxiii; see also Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This means that a speaker can

express ideas, thoughts, feelings, using complex combinations of diverse semiotic resources. Lin (2015:21) suggests the term “trans-semiotizing practices” to refer to these semiotic combinations. All the literacy events that I observed during my fieldwork can be considered to be “multimodal communicative events” (Stein and Slonimsky, 2006:119). For instance, the participants used speech along with facial expressions, bodily gestures and other non-verbal resources such as laughter when engaging with different texts.

Following Gumperz (1964) and Hymes (1972), *linguistic repertoire* is defined as a concept that encompasses all the different verbal communicative means that are used within a particular speech community (i.e. a specific group of people/speakers with shared rules for social interactions). This includes languages and their varieties, styles, registers, genres and so forth. Similar to other semiotic resources, normative aspects are essential to the idea of repertoire, because we make selections from an array of communicative resources in accordance with local interactional and sociocultural norms.

Recent sociolinguistic studies that have reflected on *linguistic repertoires* (Busch, 2012 and Blommaert and Backus, 2012) cite the strong normative association to a particular community as a challenge for contemporary sociolinguistic studies. Busch (2012), for instance, argues that this link is not absolute, especially within the highly diverse contexts of post-modern societies where the concepts of place, time, knowledge, identity, relationships and interaction norms are constantly changing. Thus, Blommaert and Backus (2012) recommend a reorientation away from communities towards subjects/individuals. As subjects, speakers are not necessarily tied to a specific community, place, time, knowledge and norms, as well as ways of speaking.

Instead of ‘bilingual’, I use the term ‘multilingual’ as it is generally viewed as more accurate because it highlights the various ways in which people draw on diverse linguistic resources and their multiple combinations to express meanings (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000:5). For instance, a multilingual literacy event could incorporate a formal text from a book written in a standard language variety, and then casually discuss it with others using more informal ways of speaking in the same language, as well as other languages (in both their standard and non-standard forms). Thus, an individual speakers’ multilingual repertoire constitutes one comprehensive unit.

Furthermore, multilingualism “differs in quantity, quality and function, depending on the individual’s age, his sociobiography” (Oksaar, 1983:21). Multilingualism, in other words, has cultural, historical, situational and social dimensions within the life-span of the individual. The same applies to literacy. Literacy history can be loosely defined as an account of a speaker’s relationship with various literacies from early childhood onwards (Barton, 1994). In everyday communications within particular multilingual contexts and socio-cultural norms, a speaker’s repertoire typically incorporates different languages (and their varieties) as well as different literacy practices

African social contexts are different from Euro-American migrant contexts because multilingualism is prevalent among all residents (not only migrants). This stable and widespread multilingualism (Mesthrie, 1995, Coetzee van Rooy, 2014a and Krause and Prinsloo, 2016) is associated especially with Black African urban contexts (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000, Dyers 2008; Deumert 2010). Although the focus in this study is on the urban context, the rural background of participants is noted, and it is argued that rural areas, such as Quthing in Lesotho where three of the study’s families originate from, are also multilingual because diverse languages are spoken: Sesotho along with Sephuthi, isiXhosa and isiZulu (Thompson, 1975).

Some scholars argue that “languages do not exist as real entities in the world and neither do they emerge from or represent real environments” (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006:2). They propose alternative perceptions of languages as historical, social, cultural and political constructs instead of regarding them as complete and fixed entities (Heller, 2007). In order to challenge the idea of languages as objects, sociolinguists use the term ‘*linguaging*’; that is, people do not speak ‘a language’, but they communicate by ‘*doing*’ language. Garcia and Wei (2014:10) state that “we are all *linguagers* who use semiotic resources at our disposal in strategic ways to communicate and act in the world”. Lytra and Jørgensen (2008:5) also use “*linguagers*” to refer to postmodern multilingual individual speakers, especially urban youth who combine features of the various linguistic resources to which they are exposed. *Linguaging* in this current study is expanded to include *translinguaging* which has been proposed to capture “fluid [multilingual] language practices...without giving up the social construction of languages” (Garcia and Wei, 2014:5) as perceived and perceivable entities. The ‘*trans*’ prefix refers to the crossing of linguistic

boundaries in everyday communication. It is used in a similar manner in gender studies (e.g. Westbrook, 2010 and Salamon, 2010), where work on transgender challenges rigid social constructions of gender.

Within the local context, translanguaging practices “usually produce linguistic innovations with heavy borrowing from English” (Dyers and Davids, 2015:23). Foregrounding translanguaging practices also complicates traditional approaches to language shift. Ndlangamandla (2010:61) and Slabbert and Finlayson (2000:123), for example, argue that pronouncements of language shift towards English by Black African home-language users is inaccurate because respondents predominantly value their multilingual abilities, and employ diverse language simultaneously (also Deumert 2010, Mesthrie 2008). Thus, the remarkable “resilience of African languages and culture in the face of tremendous pressures” (Prah, 2010:177) and the translanguaging practices associated with them require deeper reflection.

In looking at multilingualism in the data, I adopt an integrated approach, which allows for the recognition of translanguaging as well as the idea that languages are at times powerful social constructs.

## 2.5. Social Capital: Literacy Mediation and Literacy Collaboration

Following Bourdieu’s (1986) influential categorization of types of capital, this section discusses economic capital (access to finance and wealth) and social capital (relationships, networks and membership). This categorization is significant in this literacy study on lower-income participants who have limited financial and social resources.

As a response to financial limitations, lower-income speakers typically share and collectively use their restricted literacy resources. This distinguishes them from their middle-class and upper-class counterparts who, because of their economic affluence, have superior access. For instance, Lemphane and Prinsloo (2013) found major differences when comparing the digital access, language and literacy practices of children from Black middle/upper class and Black working-class households in Cape Town. However, as I will show in my analysis, lower-income homes are not homogenous, and despite their socioeconomic similarities, the households that form part

of this study, have different levels of access to linguistic, literacy and digital resources. These result in varying social practices in out-of-school contexts.

Existing relationships with peers, household and other community members can be viewed as social capital. Therefore, when studying literacy events, it is essential to pay attention “to who is taking part, the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles” (Halliday, 1989:12). Literacy mediation and collaboration are central concepts that will be discussed in relation to homework sessions, religious and digital literacies in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. These processes are typically found in what I refer to as dialogical literacy events.

Importantly, I argue for a distinction between literacy mediation and collaboration. Whether the “reading and writing is for rather than with others” (Papen, 2010:77) is key in understanding the differences between these two notions. Thus, in a nutshell, *mediation is literacy-for-others*, and *collaboration is literacy-with-others* for mutual benefit.

Two classmates working together to complete a group assignment exemplifies collaborative work as they both make their skills and knowledge available to each another: literacy-with others. In this example, the collaborative problem-solving involves mutual rather than unilateral exchanges (Wertsch and Bivens, 1992:36). The distance (social/linguistical/psychological) that is typically associated with literacy mediation (see below) does not apply in this case (Baynham and Masing, 2000:207). Therefore, collaboration refers to co-participation by individuals who are regarded more or less as equals with comparable degrees of economic, social and cultural capital. Literacy collaboration also highlights the fact that rather than being a solitary activity, literacy is frequently a social practice which is carried out by means of “distributed capacity” (Kell, 2008: 909), involving shared resources which are unevenly distributed in society.

Mediation is different from collaboration (Papen, 2010 and Baynham 1995). For example, the main participant in Juffermans’ (2009:232) study does not feel “capable of entering the names and numbers in his booklet independently” and to compensate for his low writing skill proficiency he “appeals to people in his environment to produce the entries in his booklet”. In this case, collaboration does not apply because he asks others for assistance and does not contribute to the actual writing activity.

Baynham (1995:39) defines literacy mediators as people who make their “literacy skills available to others, on a formal or informal basis for them to accomplish specific literacy purposes”. This broad description highlights the fact that mediation roles depend on the specific literacy task at hand. Therefore, speakers from all walks of life use literacy mediators as resources in order to complete diverse literacy tasks. Kalman (1999:12) refers to scribes as “language brokers” who write texts such as letters for others via dictation. Mediators may also read aloud for the benefit of other people. This is referred to as the “mediation of a voice” (Chartier, 1992:57). I talk of digital literacy mediation more specifically in cases where digital resources are employed. Discussions of literacy mediation regularly highlight the giver-receiver power relations that exist between participants.

According to Wagner (1993:58), “the child as literacy mediator for the parent, is a topic central to literacy and education in many Third World Countries” where adults often have lower literacy competence levels. The situation is similar in migrant communities in the global North. Eksner and Faulstich-Orellana’s (2006) research on Mexican migrants in the United States, and Turkish migrants in Germany, showed that children frequently mediate texts to their parents because they acquired the host language quicker. When it occurs within multilingual contexts, literacy mediation sometimes overlaps with language brokerage/mediation (Martinez-Cosio and Martinez Iannacone, 2007). The term “multilingual language brokerage” (Morales and Hanson, 2005) has been suggested to include practices of translation and interpretation from one language to the other. This happens when people have to “engage with texts written in a language they are not proficient in” (Papen, 2010:65).<sup>1</sup>

Intergenerational knowledge and power differences are also typically found in local digital literacy events where children encode and decode texts on behalf of their elders. For example, an elderly participant may receive mediation from his/her children and grandchildren when reading and/or sending SMS messages (Coetzee, 2012:120). Consequently, at times, younger people hold key positions in certain literacy events because of their social, cultural and other kinds of capital. However, these positions of knowledge, and therefore influence, are usually restricted and temporary as elders enjoy more power in most situations.

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars (Robins, 1996, Papen, 2010 etc.) use cultural brokerage as an alternative term to describe specific types of literacy mediation which incorporate, for example, bureaucratic culture or heritage culture.

Since “nobody is in a position to possess experience and understanding of all the many genres, texts and ways of using them” (Papen, 2010:79), literacy mediators are “used in a variety of social contexts and situations by people of various educational backgrounds not only those with limited reading and writing abilities” (Papen, 2010:64). For example, even an English professor may require assistance from lawyers, tax consultants or other experts to interpret highly complex texts with specialized terminology, genres and registers that they are not familiar with (see also Barton and Hamilton, 2000, Kalman, 1999). These studies counter the “deficit discourse of literacy” (Papen, 2010:65), which is often associated with marginalized people on the periphery of societies.

In sum, while there is extensive work on literacy mediation, less work is available on collaboration, and not all scholars make the distinction I propose. However, I will show in Chapters 5 and 6 that mediation (literacy-for-others) and collaboration (literacy-with-others) are different processes.

## 2.6. Power and Practice

As social constructs that are implied in hegemonic power relations, language and literacy are discussed in this section along the following lines: (a) standard vs. non-standard linguistic varieties, (b) formal vs. informal literacy practices, (c) English (as a Western/Northern colonial language) vs. local African languages, and, finally, (d) Sesotho vs. isiXhosa. Street (2003:77) noted that NLS “entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power”. The same applies to languages. The opposing values and ideologies incorporate “processes of construction of social difference and social inequality with which they are associated” (Heller, 2007:15).

The standard or formal varieties of a language are linked to specific functions that go beyond the spoken language (Mesthrie, 2009:20). Standard languages are commonly associated with the spread of literacy in education, government and mass media. Positioned as prestigious, these formal varieties are typically connected to a society’s educated, high status and powerful

speakers. In contrast, non-standard varieties are regarded as informal and mainly reserved for casual interaction.

Rather than being demographically prevailing, English is the socioeconomically leading (i.e. hegemonic) language in post-apartheid South Africa (Alexander, 2005:12). A preference for English by speakers of African languages appears to be mainly associated with the middle class, especially those who attend multiracial schools and reside in English-dominant, formerly White suburbs, rather than the lower-income townships dwellers that attend public schools (Deumert, 2010).

The majority of South African children remain systematically marginalized because their language practices do not have a place at school: even schools in areas where African languages are dominant, often teach through the medium of English. While there is an overt promotion of multilingualism within the South African language-and-education policy, Mbatha and Plüddemann (2004:5) argue that African languages still retain a “Cinderella status in education”. The children’s home languages are rarely considered as official modes of teaching and learning. For this status quo to change, the “ever-present need for an explosion of quality African language books and other learning support materials” (Plüddemann, 2004:17) needs to be addressed.

Multiplicities and contact have long featured strongly within most African contexts (Krause and Prinsloo, 2016). Pre-colonial histories of the Southern African region, for instance, reveal extensive contacts between speakers of different languages (e.g. Sesotho and Nguni). This contact was not always egalitarian, but often reflected socio-political hierarchies. Sephuthi, a minoritised language in Lesotho and South Africa, is a case in point. The Sephuthi speaking people, who separated from the Nguni chiefdoms in the Tugela valley, travelled through the Drakensberg and settled in the Quthing district of Lesotho and the surrounding mountainous areas (Thompson, 1975:19). Here Sephuthi came into contact with Sesotho, the locally dominant language, and in some cases shift towards Sesotho occurred. Sephuthi belongs to the same Tekela subfamily of Nguni as Siswati (Bailey, 1995:41) but is linguistically closer to Sesotho. It is not recognised as an official language in South Africa and Lesotho. For this reason, some sociolinguistic scholars have argued that there have been cases where “minority languages on

the African continent have given way to other, more powerful or prestigious African languages rather than to languages of European colonialism” (Mesthrie and Leap, 2009:265).

Similarly, this study’s findings demonstrate that African languages are not only dominated by English (or other colonial languages), but that they can also be minority languages *vis a vis* more powerful African languages (in this study the locally powerful language is isiXhosa). Prior to migrating to South Africa, three of the households in this study lived in rural Lesotho where Sesotho was the dominant language. As a consequence of their migration, their home-language has become marginalized in the Western Cape where English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa dominate.

## 2.7. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework and provided definitions and illustrations for key concepts. According to the NLS approach, individuals, families and communities use, construct and value literacy differently because of their unique social and historical positions. Thus, as Blackledge (2000) notes, literacy is a socioculturally constructed activity, which varies across time as well as across diverse social and cultural settings. Connections and distinctions were made between literacy practices, events and artefacts on the one hand, and literacy mediation and collaboration processes on the other. Furthermore, power dynamics were discussed in relation to dominant and marginalized languages.

While the social construct of separate languages which form part of a speaker’s overall repertoire is important for the research question, I also recognise the translanguaging perspective which sees multilingualism as a complex and fluid practice, rather than the coexistence of separate mono-languages. The former is useful for the identification of specific linguistic varieties within literacy events, while the latter is more concerned with the different ways multilingual speakers draw on their linguistic resources.

## **Chapter 3: Research Background and Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The first section of this chapter discusses the research sites. Thereafter, I provide the background for the four core participants and the households in which they live. The second part of the chapter describes the data collection process. I conclude with reflections on the challenges encountered during fieldwork as well as its ethical aspects.

### **3.2. Background on Research Sites**

The main research sites are Gugulethu and Philippi. These are the townships of Cape Town where the participants reside. Lehlohonolo Primary School's involvement was limited to the preliminary fieldwork stages when the teachers recommended participants and facilitated the initial communications with the learners and their caregivers. However, LPS is part of the research background discussion because it is a central place for the acquisition and use of Sesotho and English literacy, and thus contributes to shaping the participants' language and literacy practices.

#### **3.2.1. Research Background: Lehlohonolo Primary School (LPS)**

Lehlohonolo Primary School is well known amongst Sesotho speakers in Cape Town. It is a co-ed, public school situated in Gugulethu's NY 137 section, just off Steve Biko Drive. In a recent article Lemphane and Prinsloo (2013: 6) stated that "[t]here is almost no Sotho/Tswana-language mother tongue education available in the Western Cape." The only other Sesotho School in Cape Town is Hopolang Primary School in Khayelitsha, which is much further from the participants' homes.

LPS' history can be traced back to St Francis Dutch Reformed School in Langa during the 1930s and 1940s (Anderson and Field, 2003:131). At the time, learners were primarily taught in English while Sesotho and isiXhosa were offered as subjects. By 1952, the school was called Moshoeshoe, in honour of the founder of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe I. It had 210 registered learners. Due to increasing numbers of learners and the limited space available, the

school relocated a few times ([www.lehlohonolops.wcape.school.za/](http://www.lehlohonolops.wcape.school.za/)).<sup>2</sup> The name later changed to *Lehlohonolo*, which means ‘luck’ or ‘blessing’ in Sesotho. The reason for this, as was explained to me in the interviews, was that it was a blessing to have a Sesotho school within a predominately isiXhosa area.<sup>3</sup>

The acting principal at LPS at the time of the fieldwork noted that there were around 300 registered learners at the school in 2014 (interview conducted in March 2015). This included 32 Grade R learners and 260 pupils from Grade One to Seven. Sesotho is used as LoLT (Language of Learning and Teaching) in the foundation phase (Grades R to Three). Grades Four to Seven learners are taught in English, with Sesotho offered as a language subject. The teachers interact with one another in isiXhosa and Sesotho, with some English. However, not all the teachers speak Sesotho. For instance, the Grade Seven English and Technology teacher is an isiXhosa first-language speaker with very limited Sesotho competence. Nevertheless, she stated that she manages to interact efficiently with her learners who are fluent in isiXhosa. Most of the learners interact in Sesotho and isiXhosa while English is mainly reserved for written texts and in-class literacy activities.

Over the years, LPS has received financial support from local and international funders. These include the Department of Human Movement Studies (University of the Western Cape, UWC), and local NGOs (Edunova and Khanya Project) in partnership with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Through information and communications technologies (ICT) initiatives and support, the school opened a computer lab in 2003. This included 20 PC workstations, one office computer and three laptops. The German International School in Cape Town (DISK) further donated computer lab infrastructure worth Rand 58,000.<sup>4</sup> The lab operated for approximately ten years. However, according to the Technology teacher, it is currently nonoperational because of insufficient funds for operations and maintenance. In 2011, Radical Learning found that the network was extremely slow, and hardware repairs and upgrades were urgently needed.<sup>5</sup> Although the caregivers do not pay any school fees, they were requested to pay Rand 200 (annually) towards computer lab costs. During their interviews, they all indicated

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<sup>2</sup> School statistics are available at: <http://wcedemis.pgwc.gov.za/wced/findaschool.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Information obtained from the Sesotho teacher and Katleho’s father.

<sup>4</sup> More information is available on [www.lehlohonolops.wcape.school.za/achievements.htm](http://www.lehlohonolops.wcape.school.za/achievements.htm).

<sup>5</sup> More information is available on [www.radicallearning.co.za/](http://www.radicallearning.co.za/).

that they cannot afford it. The learners' use of personal digital devices is prohibited within the school premises.

### 3.2.2. Research Sites: Gugulethu and Philippi

Gugulethu, Philippi and the surrounding areas have many schools and churches located within the residential areas, and most residents are able to reach these places by walking. The public infrastructure in the immediate area of the school (roads, street lights and street names) is also reasonably well maintained. Although the larger surroundings, including Nyanga and the neighboring Cape Flats areas, are known for high crime rates (Samara, 2011), the school's immediate surroundings are considered to be relatively safe by caregivers and teachers.

Philippi is larger than Gugulethu and encompasses more sub-areas, including farms, and informal settlements. Gugulethu's total population was recorded at 98,468 in 2011 with a racial makeup of 98.6% Black; Philippi's total population was 191,025 of whom 94% classified themselves Black (Census, 2011).<sup>6</sup> According to a study conducted by Stellenbosch University, the population of Philippi almost doubled in the five years between 1996 and 2001 (Erasmus and Mans, 2005:27). The population doubled again between 2001 and 2011 (Census, 2011). Such rapid growth puts pressure on infrastructure and provisions for basic services.

isiXhosa is the dominant home-language spoken by 88.6% of Gugulethu's residents and 78.69% of Philippi residents. Sesotho home-language speakers account for less than two percent in both townships. A large number of residents in both areas live in informal housing and household incomes are typically low. 71% of Gugulethu's households and 78% of Philippi's households have a monthly income of Rand 3,200 or less (Statistics South Africa, 2012).

Table 3.1 below summarizes the data obtained from the 2011 Census for both townships.

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<sup>6</sup> Census 2011 information accessed from Statistics South Africa Website 2012 publication.

Table 3.1: Summary of Census 2011 data: Gugulethu and Philippi (Statistics South Africa 2012)

	<b>Gugulethu</b>	<b>Philippi</b>
<b>Population size</b>	98,468	191,025
<b>Number of households</b>	29,577	64,411
<b>Black African</b>	98.6%	94%
<b>isiXhosa speakers</b>	88.6%	78.69%
<b>Sesotho speakers</b>	1.9%	1.1%
<b>Monthly household income less than R3200</b>	71%	78%

With regards to their socioeconomic make-up, Gugulethu and Philippi are fairly similar, but Philippi can be described as more dense, marginalised and impoverished with overcrowding and housing shortage problems, including floods and fire during the winter season.

### 3.3. Introducing the Participants

This section introduces the main participants: Mpeo Mofokeng (14), Morena Motloung (13), Moeketsi Mophuthi (14) and Katleho Mopedi (13) and the households in which they live. According to Wei (1994:74), “[the] decision to use the family as the starting point and basic unit for investigation requires careful choice of entry strategies, because the family is a ‘backstage’ of social life which is usually invisible and closed from the view of the general public”. In this study, the school helped to facilitate initial introductions to the families. However, for additional access into the participants’ private and social lives, I first had to gain each family’s trust.

#### 3.3.1. Mpeo Mofokeng

Mpeo was born in Quthing, Lesotho in 2001 and was 14 years old at the time of data collection. In 2007, her mother migrated to De Doorns in search of farm employment and Mpeo accompanied her. In 2008, Mpeo’s mother enrolled her in a local isiXhosa-medium public school named Sibabalwe. She repeated Grade One the following year and completed her Grade Five in 2013. She moved to Cape Town in December 2013 and transferred to LPS in 2014 to continue her schooling in Grade Six. Mpeo now lives with her aunt, uncle and two male cousins

in Samora (a sub-area of Philippi), in a small shack behind their grandmother's house. The shack consists of a living area with a kitchen and two bedrooms. There is a CD player, a television with four basic channels, (SABC 1, 2, 3 and ETV), and three cell-phones that belong to the older household members. Mpeo has her own cell-phone.

The family members mostly use Sesotho for interactions. Mpeo's cousin, Rethabile (12) is in Grade Five at LPS. Thato (18), who is in Grade 11 at Fezeka Senior Secondary School, also attended Lehlohonolo. The former is affiliated with LPS and offers Sesotho as a subject from Grade Eight to 12.<sup>7</sup> Mpeo's aunt explained that she and her husband never completed their primary school education in Lesotho. She works as a cleaner and earns Rand 1,500 (per fortnight). Her husband works part-time in construction and some months can go by without him getting any work. The weekly return ticket for the train that Mpeo and her cousins take to school and back is 25 Rand. Her mother sends approximately Rand 1,000 (monthly) to cover her transport and other living expenses. Since the younger family members (Mpeo and Rethabile) do not have South African birth certificates, the family does not receive any social grants for them.

### 3.3.2. Morena Motloun

Morena (13) is the youngest Motloun household member. Like his older siblings, he was born in Quthing, Lesotho. His older brother Dimpho (19) came to Cape Town in 1998 with his grandmother while Morena and his sister Mpho (14) migrated with their mother in 2004. The older siblings attended Lehlohonolo and are currently at Fezeka, where they are in Grades 12 and Eight. Morena's stepfather is isiXhosa-speaking and his family is from Gugulethu. Their home, located in Philippi, is a three-roomed shack with a sitting and kitchen area and two bedrooms. The shack has no backyard. The front yard leading into the home is less than three square metres, with other shacks attached from three sides.

The family speaks a mixture of Sesotho and isiXhosa as the stepfather's knowledge of Sesotho is limited. In her interview, Morena's mother indicated that she mostly uses Sesotho when speaking with her children, and isiXhosa when her husband and/or other isiXhosa speakers are

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<sup>7</sup> The two schools are a short walking distance from each other.

around. She emphasized that she expects her children to use Sesotho with her and encourages them to also speak, read and write in English. She stated that she does not mind when they speak isiXhosa around isiXhosa speakers. Her explanation is an example of what is called ‘family language policy’ (Fogle, 2013:83); it reflects the ways in which caretakers make decisions regarding the use of different languages within the home.

Both parents did not complete their high school education. Morena’s mother completed her Form C in Lesotho (Grade Ten in South Africa). She is currently unemployed and searching for a job. Her husband left school when he was in Standard Six (Grade Eight in the current system) and works at Linge Primary School as a foreman with a monthly salary of approximately Rand 4, 500. Similar to the Mofokeng household, the family does not receive social grants for the teenagers because they do not have South African birth certificates. They each pay Rand 6 (per ride) on township taxis to school and usually walk back home which takes about an hour.

The living area has a big flat screen television, surround sound system and DSTV (satellite TV with Rand 350 monthly subscription fee). The parents each have a cell-phone and Dimpho has a smart-phone and laptop. Compared to the other households the family pays a substantial amount towards digital resources (see Chapter 7) and entertainment.

### 3.3.3. Moeketsi Mophuthi

Fourteen-year old Moeketsi lives with his grandmother (henceforth *Gogo*, a local term for grandmother), three younger sisters and an uncle. All the siblings were born in Cape Town. Since their mother passed away in 2010, Gogo has been their main caregiver. Also originally from Quthing, the family migrated in the 1970s when Gogo first got a job as a nanny in the Eastern Cape. She retired in 1992 and moved to Cape Town. Shortly after her move, she went to fetch her children from Lesotho to come and live with her. The family lives in a four-roomed brick house that has three bedrooms and a living area with a kitchen in Philippi. There is a FM radio with a television set that had four basic channels; the two adults each have an entry level cell-phone.

The family communicates mainly in Sephuthi, which is their first-language and use Sesotho as a second language. The younger sisters Lesedi (12), Naledi (8) and Katleho (6) are in Grade Five, One and R respectively at LPS. Gogo left school in 1969 after completing Standard Six. She said to me: Standard 6 *sa Lesotho sa kgale*, ‘the old Lesotho’s Standard Six’. She receives Rand 1,500 from her monthly state pension and child support grants of Rand 320 for each of the four grandchildren. During the day she looks after her neighbours’ two children for Rand 500 each per month. Gogo pays Rand 850 monthly for her grandchildren’s school transport. The taxi fetches them from the house and picks them up after school, which is about ten kilometres away. Gogo said that while the transport cost was high, she prefers it because of safety as some of the girls were still too young to use public transport.

#### 3.3.4. Katleho Mopedi

Katleho (13) lives in Gugulethu with his mother, father and younger brother Kamohelo (10) who is in Grade Three at LPS. The father and his two sons were born in Cape Town. The boys’ paternal grandparents are from Limpopo and moved to Cape Town in 1970. The family’s intra-national migration differs from the Lesotho transnational migrant households and their heritage language is Sesotho sa Leboa (also as known as Northern Sotho or Pedi) rather than Sesotho. In his interview, the father stated that he does not have links with his family up north and he associates strongly with Sesotho from growing up in Langa amongst Basotho migrants. Consequently, he did not learn to speak his heritage language well, and is now more fluent in Sesotho and isiXhosa. This is a case of what one might call ‘linguistic realignment’: in the absence of access to Northern Sotho (which would be their heritage language) Sesotho was adopted as a family language because of its close linguistic relationship to the former.

Mrs. Mopedi is from the Eastern Cape, where she grew up isiXhosa-speaking. The boys use isiXhosa with their mother, and a mixture of Sesotho and isiXhosa with their father. The mother left school after Standard Eight (Grade Ten). She is not searching for work because of health reasons. The father obtained his senior certificate after completing Standard Ten (Grade 12) in 1988 and is the household’s sole earner. He works as a security guard for a financial firm near the city. He reported that his monthly salary was Rand 5,000, and the family receives Rand 640 in child grants. Their house which is two streets away from LPS was allocated to the family by

the state through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). It has two bedrooms, a small kitchen and separate living room. There is an old television with four basic channels and a small FM radio. The father owns a Blackberry cell-phone and the mother has an entry level cell-phone with calls and text message features.

To sum up, there are many similarities and differences across the households. Table 3.2 below summarizes the background information presented in this chapter.

Table 3.2: Summary of the participants and household background details

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Mpeo Mofokeng</b>	<b>Morena Motloung</b>	<b>Moeketsi Mophuthi</b>	<b>Katleho Mopedi</b>
<b>Age and gender</b>	14 (F)	13 (M)	14 (M)	13 (M)
<b>Place of birth</b>	Lesotho	Lesotho	Cape Town	Cape Town
<b>No of household members</b>	5	5	6	4
<b>Dwelling type</b>	Shack	Shack	Brick house	Brick house
<b>Approximate household income (in 2015)</b>	R5000	R4500	R4000	R5650
<b>Number of monthly child grants</b>	0	0	4	2
<b>Digital Communication Devices</b>	4 cell-phones	1 Smart-phone 2 cell-phones 1 laptop	2 cell-phones	1 Blackberry 1 cell-phone
<b>Digital Media</b>	FM Radio with CD player	DSTV and DVD player	FM Radio	FM Radio

The four households all have Sesotho as one of languages spoken at home. The households seem socioeconomically similar, yet there exist small but important differences. Katleho and Moeketsi live in formal dwellings and Mpeo’s home is a shack in a backyard, while Morena’s home can be classified as “a shack not in the backyard” (Statistics South Africa 2012). The Motloung family is the only one that uses the public (communal) taps and toilets. The other three households’ taps and toilets are located outside their homes, but inside the yards.

Even though the monthly incomes and expenses might seem similar, under conditions of scarcity a few hundred Rand more or less can make a difference. The Mopedi household has the smallest number (four) of members, the highest monthly income and their home is a stone's throw away from LPS. In contrast, the Mophuthi household has six household members and the lowest monthly income and school transport costs Rand 850 monthly. In addition, the undocumented migrants' status of some family members means that access to certain social and public resources is restricted. For instance, Mpeo and Morena cannot access library resources and other free public services (e.g. clinics, hospitals, etc.) because they do not have South African birth certificates.

### 3.4. Methodology

The study adopted an ethnographic approach, which is generally favoured in NLS. The primary aim was to observe events in non-school contexts and to describe the multilingual and multisemiotic literacy practices that occurred. Of particular interest are the ways in which young people with limited resources (based on their socioeconomic position) create meaning through reading and writing. This section provides an overview of the methods used for data collection.

#### 3.4.1. Data Collection Process

A triangulation approach was employed to understand participants' daily out-of-school multilingual literacy practices. Blommaert and Jie (2010:12) argue that "it is not enough (not by a very long shot) to follow a clear, pre-set line of enquiry". Thus, the data collection approaches employed were diverse and included: (a) naturalistic data gathered through observations of literacy practices and events; (b) semi-structured interviews conducted with the core participants, their caregivers, siblings and teachers; (c) language portraits and social network diagrams with the core participants; (d) photographs of literacy events and the various artefacts that the participants created, engaged with and are exposed to; and (e) electronic texts obtained from one participant's cell-phone and one father's Facebook profile.

The data was collected over a three-month period, starting with preliminary observations at LPS in March 2015. These were followed by a household literacy artefacts survey, interviews,

language portraits and social network diagram sessions, as well as further observations. The fieldwork ended in June 2015. A summary of the data collected is given in Appendix 3.

### Household Literacy Artefacts Survey/Census

Since the core participants are in the same Grade at the same school, they have access to similar in-school literacy resources including textbooks and photocopies. Literacy resources and artefacts in out-of-school contexts, on the other hand, differ from household to household. To illustrate this, I conducted a survey in each of the four living areas over a long weekend when the participants were less likely to engage with their academic work and school resources. I took photographs of the various artefacts visible in each living area and elicited information from the core participants regarding other (invisible) artefacts that they had access to. These private spaces can be viewed as an extension of the evidently multilingual linguistic landscapes (Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009) that are characteristic of local townships.

### Observations with Core Participants

The preliminary observations at LPS indicated that the learners typically used Sesotho and isiXhosa along with borrowed English words and phrases in their interactions. However, according to Blommaert and Jie (2010:3), the “researcher cannot come thundering in with pre established truths” when conducting ethnographic research. Thus, to fully understand learners’ out-of-school multilingual literacy practices and avoid preconceptions resulting from the preliminary findings, more questions had to be answered regarding their multilingual practices in out-of-school contexts. Since “asking” alone can be “the worst possible way” (Blommaert and Jie, 2010:3) to enquire about speakers’ daily conducts and routines, observations of the participants in different environments besides the school were significant. Different literacy practices and events were observed at home, church and at the local library.

Once I established rapport with the participants and caregivers, these observations were arranged for afternoons during the week when they came back from school and on weekends. After the interviews and self-reporting sessions, three weeks were dedicated to spending time with each of the four households. Field notes were complemented by digitally recorded audio and video-data, which was later transcribed and translated.

### Semi-Structured Interviews

Following Jones, *et al.* (2000), interviews were conducted and field notes were compiled to gather background information and to allow for a better understanding of the ways in which participants reflected on their own language and literacy practices and histories. Semi-structured interviews were most appropriate because the intention was to have open discussions with relevant follow-up questions for the participants (see Appendix 2). Street (2000) argued for interviews as valuable research tools because they assist the researcher in getting the participants' perceptions about their surroundings and capture their real experience. The teachers were interviewed in Sesotho and/or English at LPS during the preliminary observations while the core participants, their caregivers and siblings were interviewed at home. The caregivers' interviews focused on the Sesotho speakers because of my limited ability to converse effectively in isiXhosa.

### Language Portraits and Social Network Diagrams<sup>8</sup>

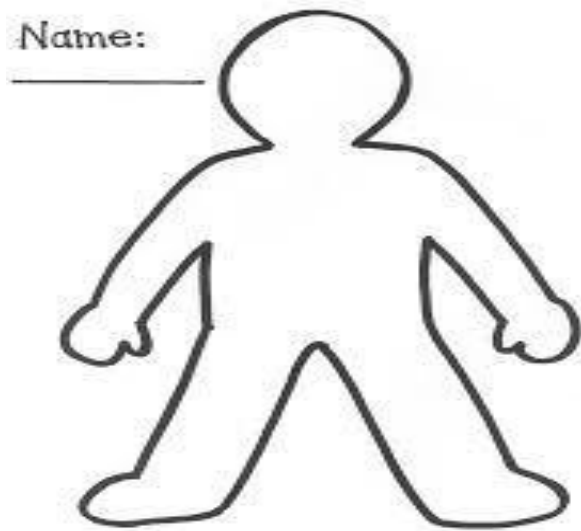
To understand language patterns in the home and within the participants' immediate social networks, language portraits and social network diagrams were used. These sessions took place after the interviews and were approximately 30 minutes in length for each participant. Since the study aimed to assess the literacy resources that were available to participants, I only provided them with the blank templates for the exercises but did not provide pencils and pens. They consequently had to use their own writing tools. Mpeo had blue, purple and yellow pencils, while Morena had red, orange and blue pencils. Moeketsi had two pencils (orange and purple), and two pen markers (red and green). According to Rule and Lyster (2005:10), there exists a "high correlation between low educational levels, poverty, overcrowding, poor lighting, lack of access to books and so on." However, students from low-income households can also overcome limited resources creatively. For instance, Katleho had only two pencils (brown and blue). He improvised for variety by using lighter and darker shades of them along with his normal (black) pencil.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 6.

The language portrait methodology was a valuable tool for gathering data from the participants. Busch (2012) draws on this multimodal approach to understand how speakers experience and conceptualize language and multilingualism. With language portrait exercises, “it is up to the participants to define categories, to decide what is considered a “language” or a “code”, and how different linguistic resources are related” (Busch, 2012:511). Participants were provided with an empty body-shaped silhouette (reproduced in Figure 3.1) and asked to think about the languages they know (writing and speech), the languages they like the most, the ones that they dislike, are exposed to, or want to learn. Following this they were asked to place these languages on the body.

Figure 3.1: Blank Language Portrait Template



As individuals, we do not live in isolation. We are members of families and communities, which are social entities with unique historical, linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds. These communities are referred to as social networks. To understand the core participants’ social networks, a methodology developed by Deumert (2010) was adopted. The participants were provided with a page that had a big blank circle in the middle and they were asked to indicate the following: (a) their seven closest contacts including peers and family members; (b) the language/s or variety of languages used, and (c) the mode of communication (spoken/written/digital) used with each contact.

I emphasized that the learners could use the language/s of their choice in their portraits and diagrams. Mpeo, Morena and Katleho used English. This might suggest that they associated the exercise with in-school practices, which are predominately in English. In my view, their language choice in these sessions restricted how they expressed themselves in both writing and speech. After the diagrams were completed, I asked them to narrate and elaborate on their multimodal texts in conversation and took notes. They enjoyed colouring in the silhouette and writing down the languages and other information, but they did not seem to enjoy the follow-up discussions. Even after I indicated that the exercise was meant to be a fun event, they still continued their presentations in a highly formal and stilted manner. Only Morena confidently read aloud from his diagram and portrait. Mpeo and Katleho read their written annotations with low voices and did not elaborate on them. In contrast, Moeketsi wrote his texts in Sesotho and enjoyed the entire exercise which provided him with an opportunity to practice Sesotho literacy. His narratives were presented confidently, and he expressed himself comprehensively, without reliance on the written text.

#### 3.4.2. Safety Concerns and the Cell-phone as “a Digital-Research-Assistant”

Since safety was a concern during fieldwork, visits solely took place during the day. While I felt safe during my visits to each home, I ensured that I left before sunset to avoid walking and using public transport at night. I felt safer having a cell-phone with me because I could update others about my whereabouts. During the fieldwork, my phone was also a valuable means of communication with participants and used as a “digital research assistant” (Pelckmans, 2009:31). I used it for video and audio-recordings of literacy events and to capture photographs of the participants and artefacts. Mpeo’s SMSs were also collected by forwarding them to my cell-phone. I was responsible for all the costs associated with the transfer and reproduction of such data. The following section considers the ethical matters that arose during the research.

#### 3.5. Research Ethics

The research design was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Linguistics Section in the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Cape Town. Since the learners were in their early teens, caregivers were requested to sign parental consent forms for them (see Appendix 1). However, the teenagers’ consent was equally

important, and I made sure that they understood their rights. During my introductory meeting at school with them, I stated that their participation was not compulsory and only those who were interested in taking part in the research should take parental consent forms home. A letter explaining the research aims and my contact details accompanied these forms. The adults and teachers who participated in the research gave consent in their own personal capacities. To protect their identities, the learners and their family members were given pseudonyms.

There were minor challenges with establishing relationships during the preliminary stages of the research. To overcome them, I adopted Milroy's (1987) "friend of a friend" approach. Given that I do not live in the same neighbourhood, the school and teachers were the 'friends' I declared for assurance of good faith. This helped me with rapport building and lessened the distance with the caregivers. Furthermore, as time went on, it became easier for me to connect with the families because of our shared Sesotho culture and background. For instance, upon hearing my first name and surname, Mpeo's grandmother realised that we shared the same clan and this established a strong bond between us (see Appendix 7).

Since I too am a Sesotho speaker and grew up in Lesotho, my position as an outsider was mainly a consequence of social class differences. According to Sultana (2007:375), the "class and educational differences remain trenchant markers of difference, and often precondition exploitation in the research process." To ensure that the participants did not feel exploited, I reminded them that they had the right to pull out of the research at any time even after giving consent. They understood that there was no financial compensation offered for their voluntary participation, nevertheless, I still felt a moral obligation to show my appreciation. I regularly brought vegetables, fruits and treats (e.g. sweets, cool drinks, toys) for the particular home I was visiting. These small gifts were appreciated and over time they were expected during my visits.

Deportation back to Lesotho was a constant threat for the undocumented migrants in the Motlounge and Mofokeng households. Thus, the respective caregivers were initially reluctant to participate as they did not want to risk exposing their illegal status. While the ongoing xenophobic threats in townships around the country are less threatening for Lesotho migrants, because South Africa has its own Sesotho speaking population, some of the participants were

still wary of possible attacks on them.<sup>9</sup> I overcame these challenges by assuring them that their identities would be protected and their participation would not threaten them in any way.

### 3.6. Conclusion

The first part of this chapter discussed the research background including the households' language practices, migration histories, living arrangements, digital media access and socioeconomic positions. The strong connection between the lower-income contexts and restricted resources, including digital access, was highlighted. The migration status of Lesotho citizens has implications for access to public resources. This varies from intra-national migration (Cobbe, 2012). While Katleho and Moeketsi have access to the free library and other resources such as social grants and free medical care, Mpeo and Moeketsi are unable to access these services because of their undocumented migrant status. The homes were identified as the central spaces for the use of Sesotho in spoken interactions, while LPS is the focal point regarding the provision of literacy in the language. Besides the Sesotho literacy provisions, LPS is also unique because it caters for these undocumented migrant minors. After completing their primary schooling, the main participants will likely enroll at Fezeka Secondary, which – although English medium – offers Sesotho as a subject.

The final section described data collection process. Here, the combination of observations and semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights into the participants' "situated particularities" (Rampton, 2006:394) and their daily conduct with literacy and languages. In line with Hymes' (1977) argument that observations of people's ways of speaking need to be complemented by self-reports, participants described, and reflected upon, their own linguistic repertoires. The following chapters focus on the analysis of the data, starting with the artefacts present in each household's living area.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information, visit [www.sahistory.org.za/.../xenophobic-violence-democratic-south-africa](http://www.sahistory.org.za/.../xenophobic-violence-democratic-south-africa)

## **Chapter 4: Literacy Presence at Home: Artefacts in Private Spaces**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter builds on the principle that literacy always exists within a social context by illustrating the distinctive presence of literacy artefacts within each home. To assist in the analysis, I conducted a mini-census/survey of the literacy artefacts in the four homes during a weekend over the Easter holidays when I knew that the learners did not have any homework or studying for school. The focus is on traditional print-literacies that are visible in the living areas. They include posters, calendars, books, magazines and newspapers. I would talk to the participants about the artefacts, thus giving rise to research-induced literacy events. The following aspects of the documented artefacts will be discussed: (a) their physical attributes; (b) the language/s used in the texts, and (c) the participants' engagements with them. I argue that visibility of, and exposure to, literacy does not always translate into use, and that invisibility does not necessarily imply lack of access or use.

### **4.2. The Mofokeng Family**

There were no magazines, newspapers, Bibles or books visible in the Mofokeng's living area. Mpeo's aunt explained to me that she insists on cleanliness and keeps an orderly home. She said that schoolbooks should be packed away when the teenagers are not using them; she perceives them as making a mess. The visible literacy artefacts in the living area included fridge magnets and stickers that Mpeo and her aunt got from friends, shopping and work. These stickers were used to decorate the fridge, and no notices or lists of any kind were attached on them. They were mostly image-based, but some contained single words such as 'love', written on a glitter and pink heart.

In addition, there was a calendar on the wall, which had Afrikaans and English texts in the logo: 'Kekkel En Kraai' and 'Cackling And Crow'. The caption below the logo of this particular marketing artefact was also bilingual: 'Van die plaas na die tafel' and 'From the farms to the table'. It incorporated a picture of fresh and frozen chicken products and contact details of the poultry business. The calendar was covered by a clear plastic sleeve and did not have any

written reminders of upcoming events. There was also a framed soccer poster (Figure 4.1) on the living area wall.

Figure 4.1: Framed FIFA Confederation Cup poster with a picture of Steven Pienaar



This poster combined text, colours, fonts and images. The Afrikaans text in Appendix 4A is accompanied by a picture of Steven Pienaar; a well-known South African soccer player, in action during the 2009 FIFA Confederation match between Bafana-Bafana and Spain. According to Mpeo's uncle, he acquired the poster from a friend after the matches on the schedule had already been played. Therefore, while the poster's main function was to provide schedules of the upcoming 2009 matches, he obtained it because it had a photograph of his favourite soccer player. An informative literacy artefact was thus turned into an aesthetic artefact.

During the survey, Mpeo had explained to me that she did not know Afrikaans well and had never learned to read or write in it. However, when I took a photograph of the poster, she read the Afrikaans text in a soft murmur before providing a translation into English for me. She explained that she had once heard her older cousin and his friends read and translate the text on the poster into English. She remembered this earlier event, which helped her understand the text.

Mpeo also mentioned that she reads her grandmother's Sesotho Bible when she accompanies her to church. In addition, she has access to old lifestyle magazines (mostly written in English), including *Drum* and *True Love* which she usually pages through when she visits her grandmother in the main house. The grandmother, who is a seamstress, has been collecting these texts over the years from friends and relatives for creative inspiration.

The Mofokeng home was the only one where Afrikaans texts were present among the visible literacy artefacts but their textual content can be considered secondary to their aesthetic function. Their visibility implies permanent exposure with the possibility of engagement (as illustrated above). Unlike the visible Afrikaans literacy – a language that does not feature at school – the English magazines and Sesotho Bible are an extension of her in-school practices. Regardless of their invisibility within her primary home, engagements with the latter can be considered as valuable for Mpeo's overall linguistic and literacy development.

### 4.3. The Motlounge Family

As in the case of the previous household, the Motlounge living area is very neat and few literacy artefacts are visible. Similar to other informal housing environments with insufficient

infrastructure and services, overcrowding and leaks in the roof were a serious problem. The untidy outdoors contrast the very clean environment inside of these homes which “represents the public face of the family and self, and its presentation in terms of cleanliness, tidiness, taste and style” (Ronald, 2008:50). Morena’s mother indicated in a casual conversation that she and her husband did not own any reading materials. She said that as a precautionary measure, documents, electronics and furniture were covered with plastic, or stored away when not used. She added that while her older children were good at keeping their small home neat and their books in schoolbags (which, in turn, were kept in a trunk), Morena’s books got dirty and damaged regularly because he left them lying around. Similar to Mpeo’s aunt, the “neatness” principle (see, for example, Douglas, 1991) was explicitly articulated in her comments. She associates it with freeing space within the small shack, and protecting objects from water, dust and other damage. This has consequences for literacy access and visibility.

Only two literacy artefacts were visible in the living area: a Father’s Day card inside a plastic sleeve was attached to a fridge magnet, and a laminated calendar was fixed on the wall (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Calendar on the wall



The blend of modalities in the calendar is evident with the use of different texts, fonts, sizes, and images. Besides the primary function (i.e. displaying days, weeks and months of the year and holidays), this calendar is promoting Christian ideology.

During our conversation, Morena indicated that he knew how to read the short English texts on the calendar and the card. Following this he explained that the calendar was from church, and the card was a free promotional gift handed out at the mall around Father's Day the previous year. Before I could ask a follow-up question, he got up from the couch and started to read the vision and mission statements aloud from the calendar. He clearly articulated the words and

performed the recital with lots of confidence. Once he was done, his aunt, who was also present, asked if he was just reading or if he understood what the text meant. He answered that he understood the meanings. Since the calendar and card were the only two print artefacts visible in the living area, it is possible that he had read the text on them many times before. Although it seemed like he was reading, it is also possible – as in the case of Mpeo – that he was performing the texts from memory for me. Nonetheless, these everyday texts and regular engagements with them are potentially beneficial to developing his English reading skills.

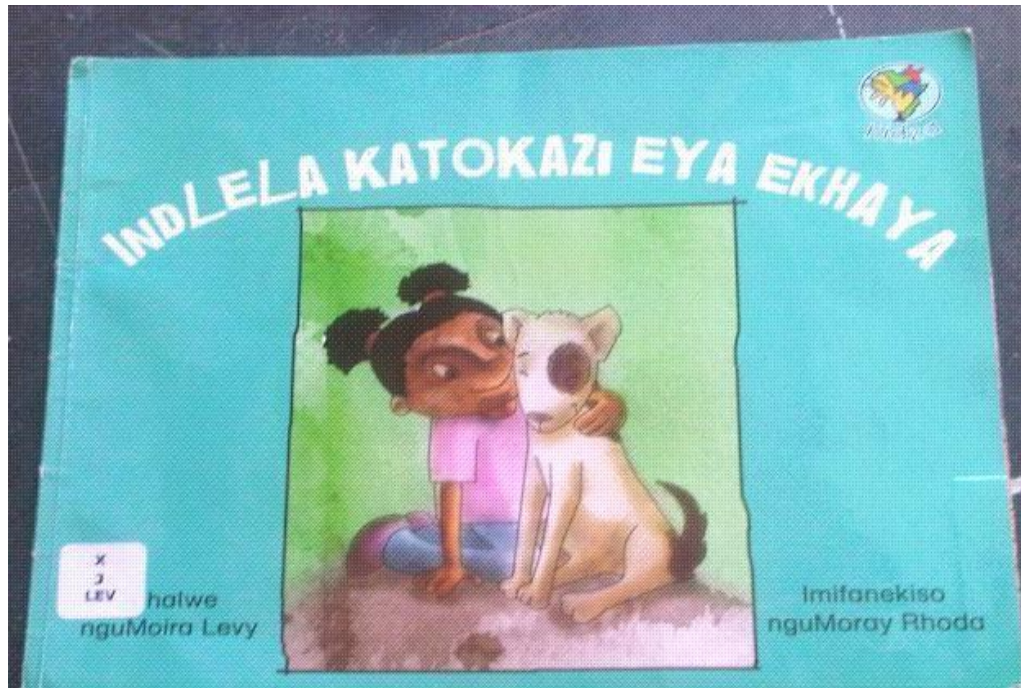
#### 4.4. The Mophuthi Family

The literacy artefacts visible in the Mophuthi family living area included the LPS 2015 fundraising schedule and a calendar on the fridge door. The texts were in English, with some dates on the calendar circled with a pen. Various artefacts were also placed on many surfaces, including the floor, in the living area. Among them were the siblings' academic literacy resources from school and several children's books from the local library.

Gogo's Sesotho Bible, written in Lesotho Sesotho orthography, was on the kitchen table. It was the only adult literacy material observed. The Bible has been much used and no longer had covers. Gogo said that she did not allow anyone else to read from it. It used to belong to Moeketsi's great-grandmother and when she passed away, Gogo inherited it. She brought it with her when she migrated from Quthing in the 1970s and regularly reads from it to her grandchildren. According to her, these Bible reading sessions are meant to keep her grandchildren engaged with Sesotho texts during holidays so that they do not struggle when schools re-open. She usually reads parts of text and then asks them questions about it in Sephuthi mixed with Sesotho. She said that if she would read to them for longer periods without engaging them, the younger girls, especially, would lose interest and start becoming restless. Consequently, she normally incorporated text comprehension questions, scaffolding them in the two languages used in the home. This practice facilitates her grandchildren's engagements with Sesotho literacy. These intimate religious teaching moments are likely to have positive implications for language development and exemplify out-of-school literacy mediation (as discussed in Chapter 2).

In addition, Gogo said that she encouraged her grandchildren to read their school books and other texts at home during school terms and holidays. At her insistence, books like the one in Figure 4.3 were borrowed from the library by Moeketsi and his younger sisters. Gogo added that she would prefer that they read Sesotho instead of isiXhosa books, but the latter were not available at the public library (see Chapter 1).

Figure 4.3: Photograph of the book cover: *Indlela kaTokazi Eya eKhaya* from the local library



According to Gogo, her grandchildren are allowed to select whatever books they want to take out on loan from the library. More often than not, they chose isiXhosa books with lots of images and limited text. I counted eight such children books, which were all written in isiXhosa, around the living room area. Generally they are educational stories about moral topics such as honesty and perseverance. Among these was the isiXhosa version of *Penny's way home* by Moira Levy (2012). This version was translated by Kidza books' translator Fikiswa Magqashela as *Indlela kaTokazi Eya eKhaya*. The book teaches children about willpower and determination through a story of a small dog that goes through many hardships but eventually finds its way home.

This home was the only one with ample library resources visible. The siblings have unsupervised access to these literacy artefacts. Books such as the one above are highly

multimodal. In this case, the cover page had a light blue background and the title was in a large white font accompanied by a colourful illustration of a little girl and a dog. Given were also the author's and illustrator's names. This combination of modalities continues throughout the book with verbal (linguistic) and non-verbal (visual) elements (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). While these different modes can be engaged collectively to construct meaning, during observations, I noticed that the siblings focused primarily on the visuals. This practice where certain elements of a text are skipped is a meaning-seeking, selective and constructive practice (Goodman, 1985).

Thus, in contrast to their school literacy practices, which generally promote the 'logic of writing', the siblings' reading of library books appeared to be centered more on the 'logic of the image' (Kress, 2001). Since the siblings did not have adequate competence in written isiXhosa, they focused on the images to construct meaning from them through informal discussions that, again, employed a mixture of Sesotho and Sephuthi. Yet, despite this and the fact that Moeketsi's language portrait indicated that his competence in isiXhosa was restricted to speech, he read the titles of some of the books for me as a kind of confirmation that he knew how to read isiXhosa. This suggests some level of skill development in isiXhosa literacy.

#### 4.5. The Mopedi Family

The Mopedi family's living room had mostly adult-oriented literacy displayed on the shelf and coffee table (Figure 4.4). This included newspapers, advertising material, school books, a telephone directory, a Bible and a hymnbook. I was told that the majority of these literacy resources belonged to the father. However, Katleho said that he also browsed through English magazines like *Drum* and *TV Plus*, mostly looking at the pictures. This is similar to the selective, image-oriented reading described above for the Mophuti family. The *Pick and Pay* calendar on the coffee table remained spotless with no visibly marked dates or hand-written notes.

Figure 4.4: Literacy artefacts on the Mopedi's coffee table



Even though their prepaid telephone service had long been disconnected due to lack of funds, the family still receives the local telephone directory. The father said that when a new one comes, he usually throws out the older one, and added that he does not really use them. Katleho and Kamohelo mentioned that they sometimes paged through the directory pages, looking up their friends' and teachers' surnames. When they were bored, one brother would find random names in the directory and the other one had to look them up as fast as they could. This game is a creative literacy practice, focusing on the reading and identification of names (as a particular type of text).

Katleho indicated that he uses his school books (visible on the coffee table) for leisure reading during holidays. The isiXhosa Bible and hymnbook belonged to the two brothers who share them at home and church (see Chapter 6). The parents each have their own religious texts, which are kept in their bedroom. The Mopedi household had a strong presence of isiXhosa texts (and speech) because the mother is an isiXhosa first-language speaker.

Unlike the library books, the telephone directory and Bible did not contain images and the brothers deeply engaged with their textual content. Although the Mopedi household members had access to the library, they did not use this free service. This further emphasizes that access and exposure to resources does not always translate into their use.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

This chapter looked at the visibility of print-literacy artefacts across the four homes' living areas. It is evident that different living conditions influence the visibility and exposure to literacy artefacts within the homes. There are also important differences between the different households and the learners have full, restricted and mediated access to a range of literacy resources. The families that live in formal houses had more visible literacy presence than the shack dwellers that, because of the cramped living conditions, make every effort to keep their homes 'neat'. As already indicated in Chapter 3, Mpeo and Morena do not have access to library books because of their undocumented status. However, access to certain resources does not always translate into use: the Mopedi brothers have the required documents but did not access any library resources. Appendix 4B summarizes the visibility of literacy artefacts in the four homes, and the languages used in them. Participants have access to literacy in various languages, including not only English and Sesotho (which are taught at LPS), but also isiXhosa and Afrikaans. I suggest that the visibility of literacy artefacts at home can be understood as a form of exposure, but invisibility does not mean lack of access. The subsequent chapter looks at literacy events where learners are 'doing homework' which entails reading, interpreting and producing various academic-oriented texts.

## **Chapter 5: Collaboration and Mediation -Academic Out-of-school Literacy Events**

### **5.1. Introduction**

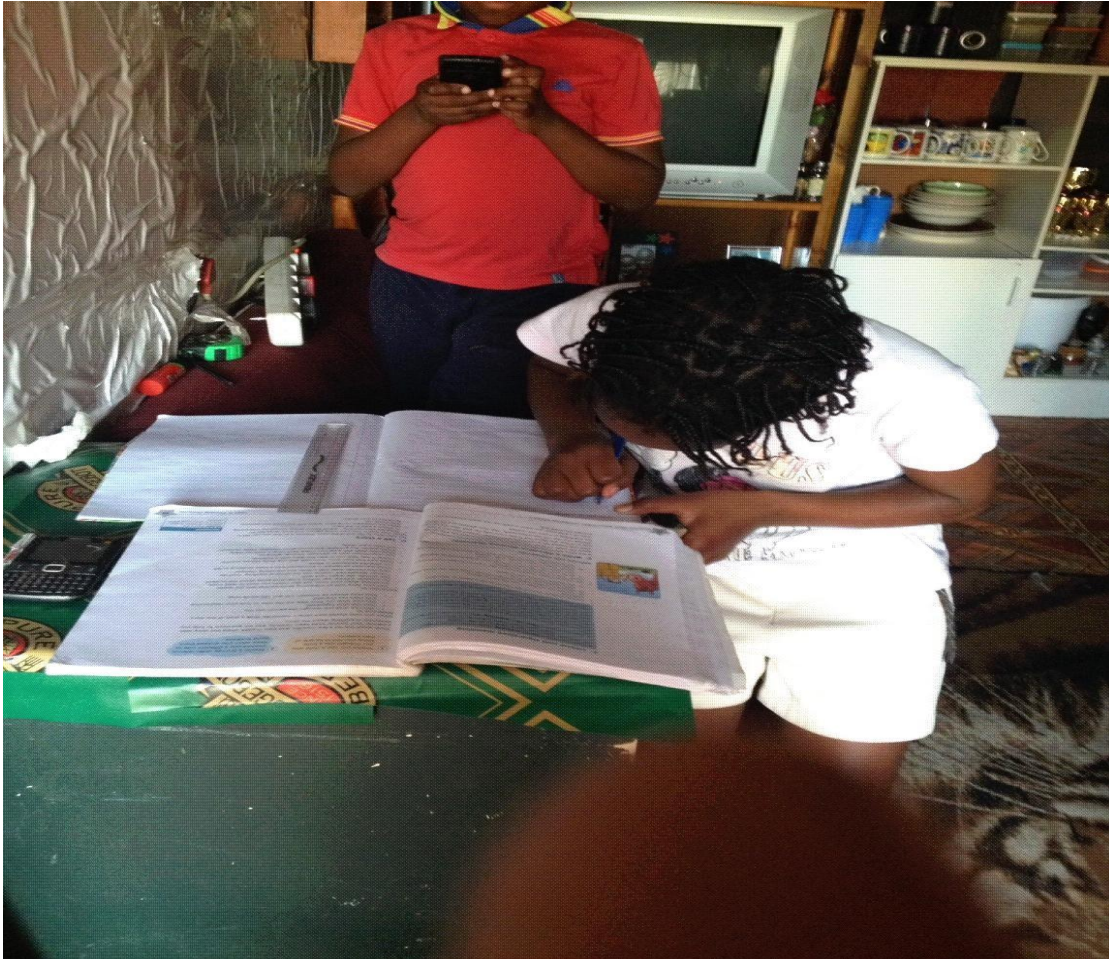
This chapter focuses on homework sessions as examples of out-of-school literacy events that are associated with the learners' prescribed school learning. They include Mpeo's English homework, Morena's Sesotho homework (both at home), and Moeketsi's Technology homework at the public library. The following components are discussed: (a) the setting, (b) participants, their roles and relationships, (c) purpose and outcome of the task, and (d) employed literacy tools, electronic devices and digital services.

Since the private and public spaces where the learners complete their homework involve a range of co-participants, their literacy engagements are typically "collective and collaborative, and interpretations of texts are co-constructed" (Coetzee, 2012:116). As argued in Chapter 2, it is analytically helpful to distinguish between literacy collaboration and mediation. To contrast and specify these social processes, the first session describes a collaborative relationship and the remaining examples illustrate different types of literacy mediation.

### **5.2. Literacy Collaboration: Mpeo's English Homework**

The adults were still at work and no other household members were around when Mpeo, Rethabile and I arrived at their home on one Thursday around 4:30pm. The home was quiet except for the occasional interactions between the cousins, and some outside noise. The television was switched off and the shack's living area was fairly dark as it has only one small window. In an effort to save the limited prepaid electricity units, Mpeo dealt with the poor lighting inside by opening the front door, thus increasing the amount of natural light. Shortly after our arrival, she sat on the edge of the old couch to use the makeshift desk that was facing the door to complete her homework (see Figure 5.1). Her improvising demonstrates creative ways of dealing with limited resources.

Figure 5.1: Mpeo and Rethabile doing homework



Doing homework together is a consequence of the cousins' confined living conditions, with only one small, communal living area. Mpeo (14) is the primary author with Rethabile (12) as her co-participant. Rethabile stood next to her as she started reading the textbook instructions below aloud (before copying them in her exercise book):<sup>10</sup>

You have probably heard someone say: I am so hungry I could eat a horse. This is a figurative description.

(a) Write your own Figurative description of the following feelings. Start each one with 'I am so ...' or 'I could...' bored, angry, hungry, happy, tired, and excited.

(b) When you have finished, choose four and draw them to show their literal meaning.

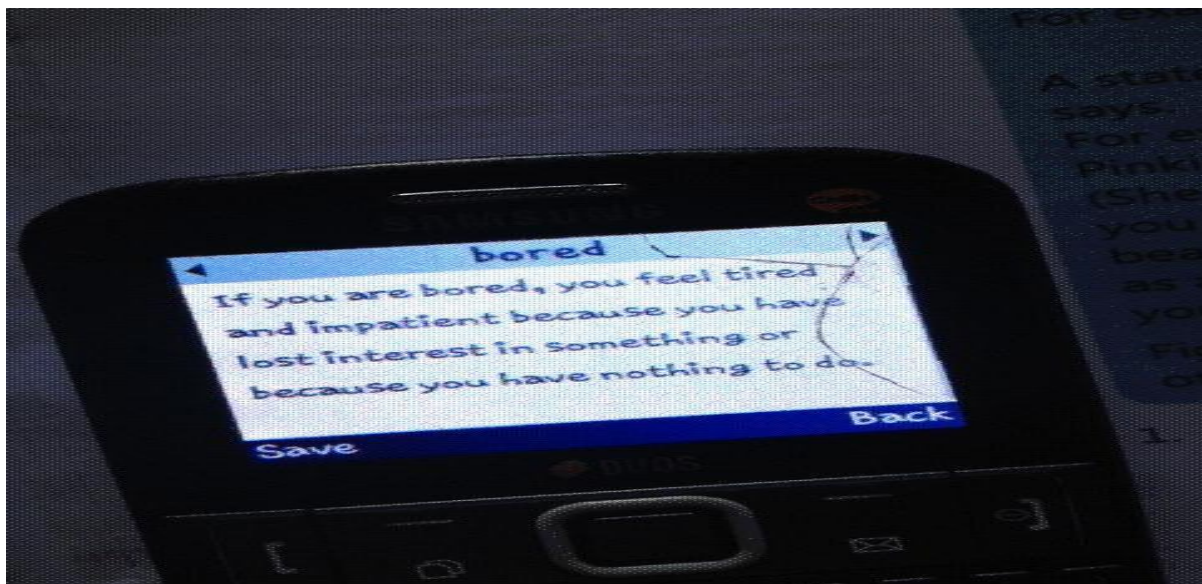
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<sup>10</sup> Lloyd, G., Avery, D., Edwards, V., Gordon, J., Aston, P., Hendricks, S. and Hendricks, R. (2013). *English Today: Grade 7 Learner's Book*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

The homework's objective was to educate learners about the difference between figurative and literal meanings in English. This multimodal assignment firstly required the learners to construct sentences which express feelings figuratively, and secondly to produce drawings representing their literal meanings.

To assist her with this exercise Mpeo accessed her cell-phone, which has an offline dictionary (Figure 5.2). Mpeo added that sometimes she uses the cell-phone dictionary to check meanings for fun; a literacy practice which provides a playful opportunity for English vocabulary development. She also uses its calculator when doing Maths homework.

Figure 5.2: Mpeo's cell-phone with the offline dictionary open on 'bored'



When asked to elaborate on her cell-phone use for academic purposes, Mpeo said: '*Ke sheba dictionary haeba ha ke tsebe lebitso le bolelang*' ('I consult the dictionary if I do not know the meaning of the name'). Rather than using *lentswe*, which is Sesotho for 'word', Mpeo uses '*lebitso*', which is Sesotho for 'name'. This word choice shows influence from isiXhosa where *igama* is used for both 'name' and 'word' in colloquial speech. This suggests the possibility that there exists an urban version of Sesotho in Cape Town which shows influence from isiXhosa.

Example (1) shows an interaction where the cousins are reading the electronic text on the cell-phone and debate the construction of a figurative sentence using 'bored'. This spoken interaction is multilingual, mixing English, Sesotho and isiXhosa.

**(1) MPEO:** [Picks up her cell-phone to look up the word 'bored' in the dictionary.]  
*Bona e reng.* ('Look at what it says.') [The two cousins silently read the electronic text on the cell-phone.]

**MPEO:** *Mmm, nka reng?* ('What can I say?') I am so bored that I can...

**RETHABILE:** *Andiyasi* ('I don't know'), maybe so bored that I can play with someone who is dead. [They both laugh].

**RETHABILE:** [laughing as he shrugs his shoulders] *Ewe, ausi Mpeo!* ('Yes, sister Mpeo!')

**MPEO:** I am so bored that I can play with someone who is dead, *wena wa hlanya Rethabile* ('you are crazy Rethabile') I am so bored that I can [She pauses for a moment before she writes.]

**RETHABILE:** [Reading Mpeo's text] I am so bored that I can play with someone who is dead. *Eya, wa bona!* ('Yes, you see!') [Smiling and looking pleased.]

The cousins' interactions were playful and good-natured. There are positive implications to this "collaborative production" (Prinsloo, 2005:175) for academic practices as participants are likely to engage with texts more effectively when they are enjoying themselves. Mpeo laughed at her cousin's sentence and he responded to her hesitation with a firm tone: '*Ewe, ausi Mpeo*' ('Yes, sister Mpeo'), thus reassuring her confidently that this was indeed a possible sentence. She finally decided to go with his sentence.

Example (2) shows that the cousins did not always agree with each other. Rethabile challenged Mpeo's proposed sentence and in response to her cousin's objection, she, in turn, challenged his knowledge of township dogs. Again the interaction is multilingual.

**(2) RETHABILE:** [Reading from Mpeo's exercise book] I am so excited that I can play with a dog sies *ausi Mpeo!* ('No way/ yuck sister Mpeo!')

**MPEO:** *Re ka reng hee? Keng, ha o tsebe ho na le ntja tse eseng mqodoyi tse clean?* ('What can we say now? What, don't you know that there are dogs that are clean and not mangy?')

**RETHABILE:** [Shakes his head, showing a facial impression of disgust]

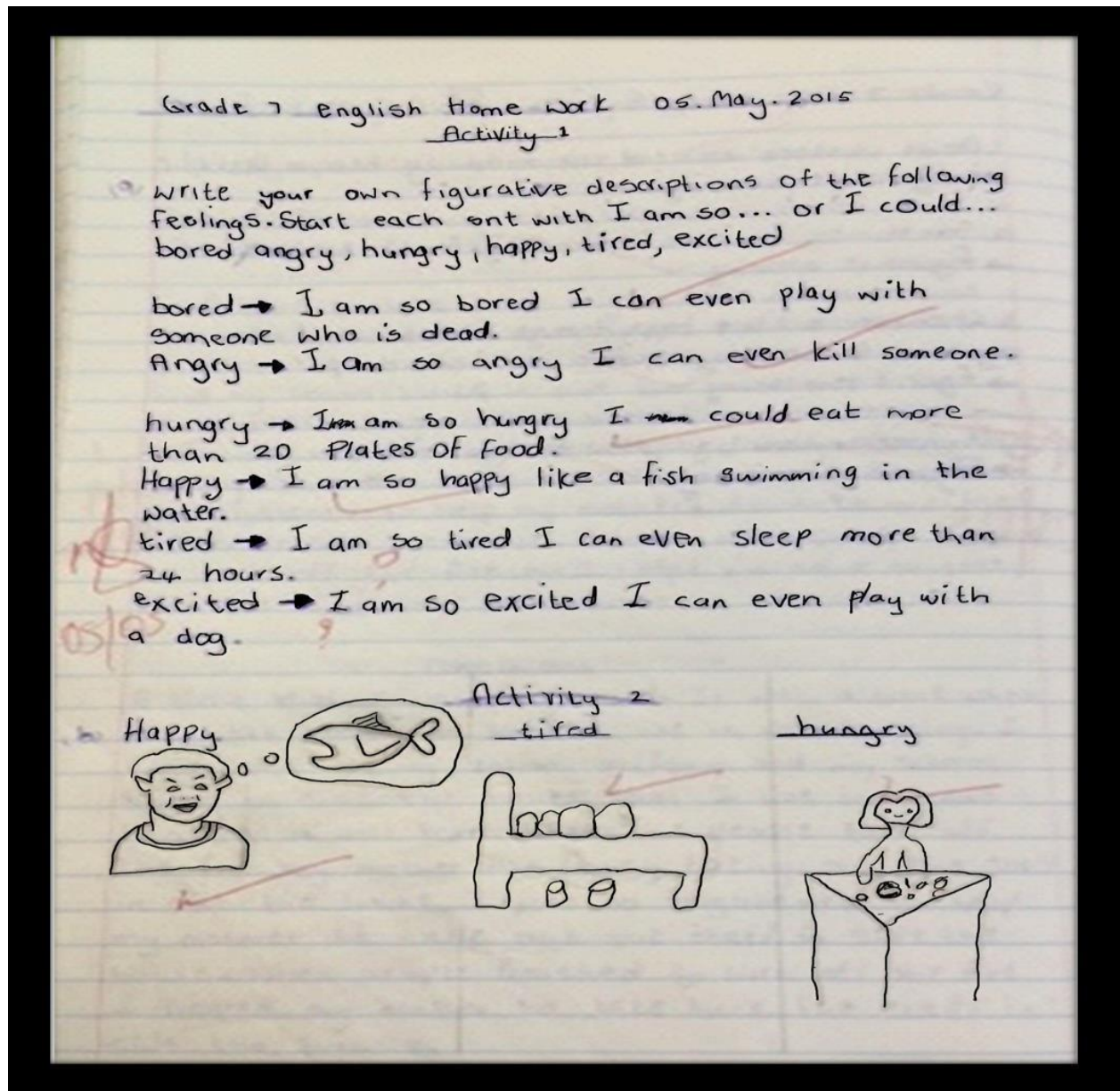
**MPEO:** *O lebetse ke figurative eseng nnete?* ('Have you forgotten that it is figurative and not true?')

**RETHABILE:** [Silent.]

Rethabile objects after reading Mpeo's sentence. This is followed by the use of 'sies' which is an Afrikaans word commonly used in translingual informal speech to express repulsion; in this case his repulsion for the mangy dogs commonly found in the township. In response to Rethabile's objection, Mpeo questions his knowledge of township dogs. Her utterances are in English when reading and Sesotho when speaking, except when she uses one isiXhosa word, 'mqodoyi,' ('mongrel/mangy dog'). By shaking his head, together with the disgusted look on his face, Rethabile reiterates his earlier objection to which Mpeo further retaliates, this time, by questioning his knowledge of figurative and literal meanings.

The cousins' frankness in their challenges with each other indicates their equal relationship. However, Mpeo, as the author of the homework, had the final say, and she wrote down her defended sentence. Her sentences are correctly formed and spelled according to Standard English orthography (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: A photograph of Mpeo's completed homework with drawings



After completing all the sentence constructions, Mpeo was getting ready to pack away her books, when Rethabile pointed to Section (b) which Mpeo had missed. He looked puzzled and asked what 'literal' meant. Mpeo answered: 'ha ele nnete' ('when it is true') and then asked Rethabile: 'Under happy *nka* draw-*isha* eng?' ('What can I draw under happy?'), to which he replied: 'Andiyazi, draw-*isha* happy face' ('I don't know, draw a happy face'), and they both laughed. The overall grammatical structure of Mpeo's utterances is associated with Sesotho, but

the adaptation of the borrowed verb ‘draw’ is typical of isiXhosa speech. In Sesotho it would be: *nka droya eng* (what can I draw?).

Mpeo drew a happy face as per Rethabile’s recommendation and added a fish to indicate the literal meaning of her figurative sentence. Her second drawing depicts a tired person sleeping on a bed, and the hungry-feeling drawing has a person sitting on a table with lots of food on top of it.

Even though English texts were at the core of this literacy event, the talk surrounding the text production was multilingual with Sesotho, isiXhosa and English words. The isiXhosa-Sesotho language contact situations described above would be a worthy topic for future linguistic analysis as many local studies have focused more on the contact between English and the various African languages.

The cousins’ speech illustrates translanguaging discussed in Chapter 2. It refers to the “shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah, 2011:401, see also Garcia and Wei, 2014, and Blackledge and Creese, 2010). The notion of translanguaging highlights the fact that languages as societal constructs should not be seen “unquestionably as set categories” (Busch, 2012:506), rather they are ideologically reified, especially, in educational settings. Mpeo’s informal digital writing (see Chapter 7) also bears a resemblance of this complex fusion in language use.

This example showed the reciprocal nature of the co-participation that is typical for literacy collaboration. The social/linguistic/psychological distance typically associated with mediation (see Section 5.3 and 5.4) did not apply to the cousins who were only two grades apart at LPS. Literacy collaboration is a suitable term to describe their interactions because of the give-and-take aspect (i.e. both cousins made their skills and knowledge available to each other). Most of the sentences and drawings emerged in playful conversations. A task that might have otherwise been tedious became enjoyable.

### 5.3. Literacy Mediation: Morena's Sesotho Homework

On this particular day, Morena arrived home around 4pm from school. The main participants in this event were Morena and his mother. Mrs. Motloung's friend was visiting, and together they watched and commented on a DSTV Nigerian movie while he did his homework. The visiting friend was cast in the role of the 'overhearer' (Goffmann, 1979) and did not actively participate in this literacy event. After he finished eating, his mother instructed him to begin with his homework. While the living area is a confined space, it is slightly bigger than Mpeo's home. Unlike Mpeo's make shift table, Morena sat on a fairly new couch (Figure 5.4) and used the glass coffee table as a writing surface. The shack's big window and the open door ensured adequate light.

Figure 5.4: A photograph of Morena doing his homework

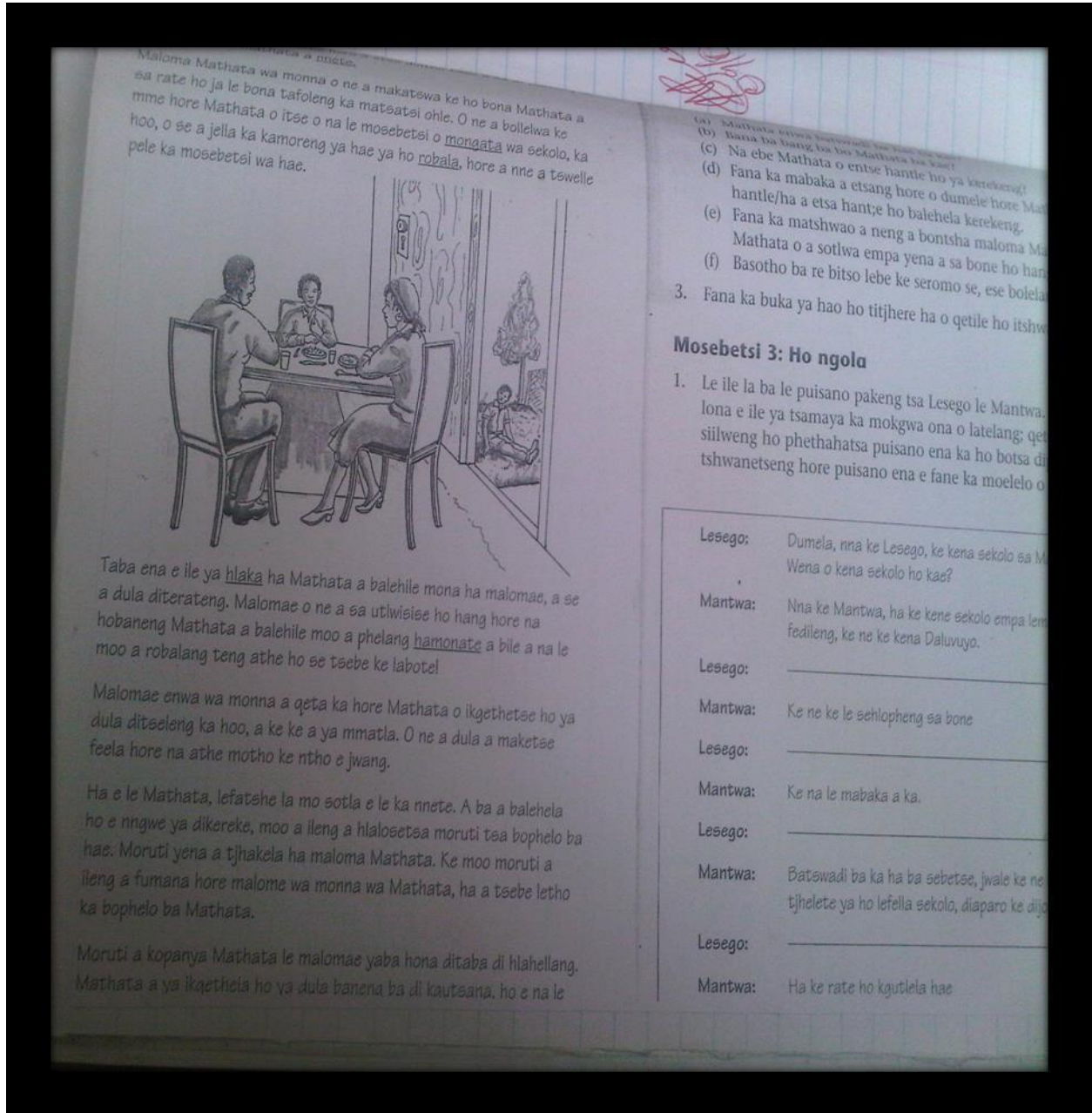


It appeared that, at times, TV noise distracted Morena and he took almost an hour to complete his rather short Sesotho homework (reproduced in Appendix 5 with translations). Occasionally, the mother would catch him watching the movie and instruct him to stop.

The school's limited resources are evident in the observed event, especially when it comes to Sesotho literacy. LPS' learners are not provided with Sesotho textbooks. They are given

photocopies as their main Sesotho literacy resource. These photocopies are then pasted into exercise books (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Morena’s exercise book with pasted Sesotho comprehension text and questions



This particular homework was meant to advance the learners’ Sesotho comprehension skills and cultural knowledge. It focused on a story with a character named *Mathata* (which means ‘problems’ in Sesotho). The lesson looked at a particular Sesotho proverb: *Basotho ba re bitso*

*lebe ke seromo*, ‘Basotho people say a bad name is a curse’. This proverb reflects the belief that a person’s name defines who they are and influences the bearer’s character (Guma, 2001). It also suggests that a good name is reassurance of the goodness implied in it. Thus, if one names a child *Lehlohonolo*, that child is going to be a ‘blessing’ and ‘lucky’, while a child named *Mathata* will have a difficult life. In some instances however, children are given prominent tribal names which are linked to greatness regardless of their exact meaning. As seen in my introduction with Mpeo’s grandmother (Chapter 3), such names are easily recognised by other kinfolk and they usually feature in family history narratives and clan recitals.

When Morena came across something he did not understand in the homework, he would ask for his mother’s assistance. However, she also requested confirmation from me at times. My responses here temporarily made me leave my ‘observer’ role and I became an active participant. The transcription in (3) is a conversation of Sesotho kinship terms that took place during the homework session. Morena interrupted his mother’s conversation with her isiXhosa-speaking friend to ask a question.

(3) **MORENA:** *Mama kutheni apha ba bhalile malome wa monna le malome wa mosadi maar malome e le monna? E wrong ne’ mama?* (‘Mom why have they written *malome* who is a man and *malome* who is a woman when *malome* is a man? It is wrong, right mom?’)

**MOTHER:** *Ka Sesotho mosadi wa malome le yena o bitswa malome. Na ke right ausi Tlalane ha ke re malomae wa mosadi le yona e right?* (‘In Sesotho the wife of your maternal uncle is also called *malome*. Am I right sister Tlalane when I say maternal uncle’s wife (*malome*) is also right?’)

**TLALANE:** *Ke nnete mme.* (‘It is true mother.’)

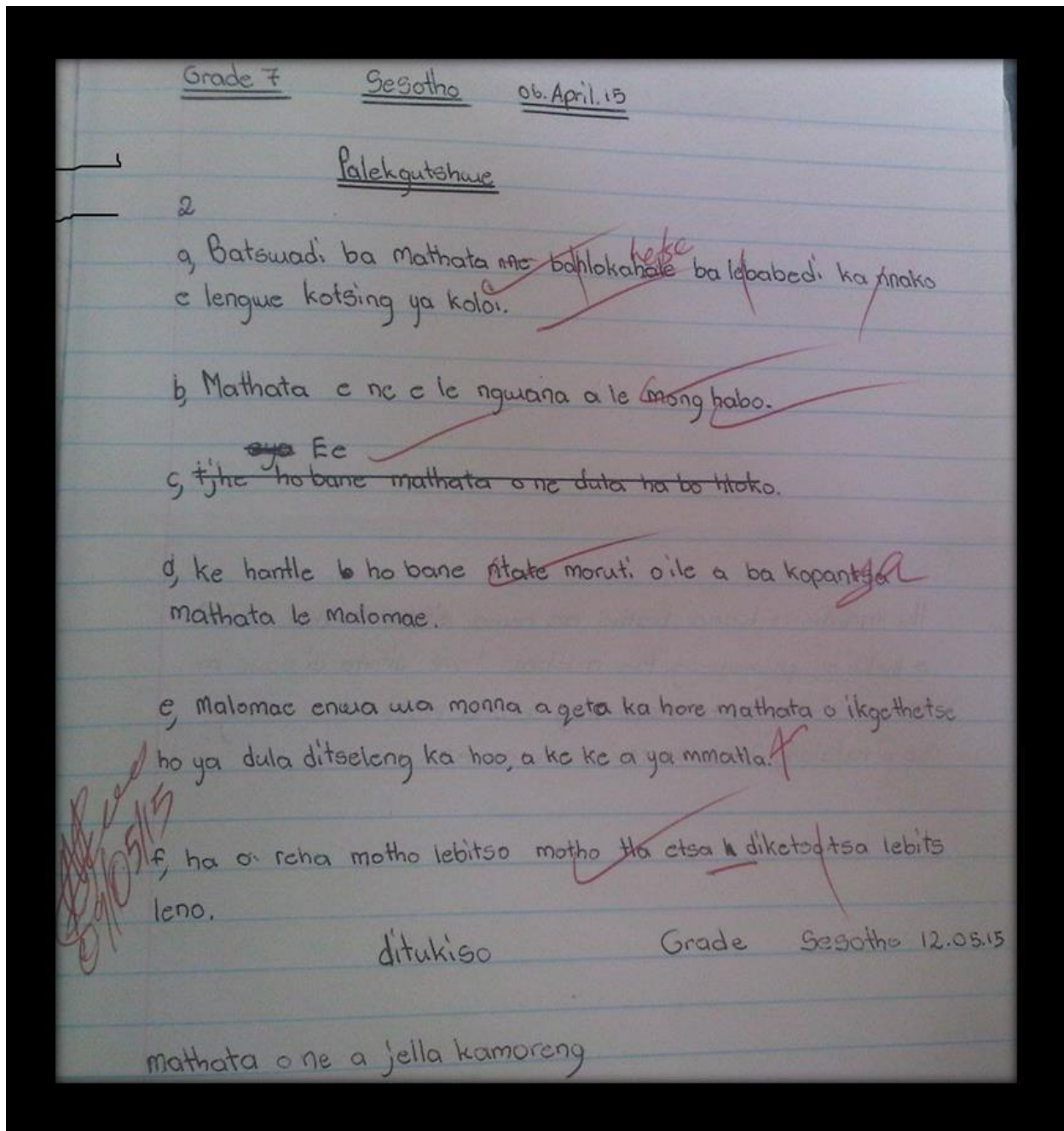
**MOTHER:** [Reads through Morena’s answer and then responds] *O right le mona hobane ka ntle ho mabitso a relletweng, ha ke re lebitso lebe ke seromo, ke re motho o etsa dintho tse tshwanang le lebitso la hae.* ‘That’s why’ *Maki a dula a re makatsa tjena.* ([‘Morena] you are right here because besides clan names, when I say a bad name is ominous, I am saying that a person’s actions will be similar to the meaning of their name

and that's why Maki [short for Dimakatso – the maternal aunt's name which means 'surprises'] is always surprising us.)

Morena started his question in isiXhosa, possibly to accommodate his mother's friend. This suggests that presence of bystanders can influence language choices in multilingual contexts.

The "principal motive for accommodation" (Giles, *et al.* 1991:37) was most likely not to exclude the isiXhosa-speaking visitor. His switch back to Sesotho would not be considered as impolite because it is "attributed situationally to extenuating circumstances" (Giles, *et al.* 1991:29); that is, because his question has no direct relevance to the visitor, he can ask it in a language that is not known by the visitor. Morena also used Afrikaans words maar, 'but', and the discourse marker ne' which are common features of colloquial urban Sesotho speech in Cape Town. The mother used Sesotho throughout with some inserted English words and phrases. This literacy event was thus again multilingual, but somewhat more focused on Sesotho (when compared to Mpeo's English homework where the talk showed more English and isiXhosa influence). It is also possible that Morena's knowledge of Sesotho kinship terms (i.e. *malome* as a male only) is influenced by Nguni where umalume is maternal uncle and his wife is umalumekazi. Figure 5.6 is a photograph of Morena's answers with corrections.

Figure 5.6: Morena's Sesotho comprehension answers with corrections



The teacher marked all his answers as correct except (e) which requested substantiation that Mathata was mistreated, yet his uncle did not notice (for example, the fact that the uncle did not notice that Mathata was forced to eat alone). Other minor mistakes include: (a) *bahlokahale ba lebabedi* and *nnako*, which the teacher corrected by separating the words and adding the appropriate suffix: *ba hlokahetse ba le babedi* ('they have both passed away') and by deleting

the extra ‘n’ for *nako* (time). In (d) *kopantsa* is corrected to *kopanya* (‘arranged for them to meet’).

This maternal literacy mediation (LeVine, 2012) indicates “the importance of the mediator as cultural broker... [that helps] to understand the ideological meanings of texts” (Papen, 2010:72). It incorporated Sesotho (texts and speech) without translations or interpretations from/into other language/s.

#### 5.4. Digital Literacy Mediation: Moeketsi’s Technology Homework

The observation described in this section was the only time during the entire fieldwork that I observed a participant using a PC and internet services. Moeketsi reported that he rarely used these resources and solely accessed them for homework purposes. Even though the personal use of digital devices at school was prohibited and the computer lab was not operating (see Chapter 3), his teacher had nevertheless encouraged the class to conduct online searches for their homework, and to only consult printed texts if they did not have out-of-school digital access.

During consultation with the teacher the following day, I discovered that the homework instructions given in class the previous day were unclear to most learners. She said she always encourages her learners to access digital resources to complement information in their textbooks. However, without the necessary digital services within the classroom context, she could not show them effective ways of doing this. Consequently, learners lack the necessary skills and struggle to use these resources effectively even when they do have access.

I asked if she thought the misunderstanding could have resulted from her limited competence in Sesotho to explain the English instructions to the learners who have inadequate English competency. Her response was that all the learners are relatively fluent in isiXhosa and she frequently uses this language to explain difficult English concepts and instructions. When she senses that her explanations in isiXhosa are not sufficient, she enquires from other learners if they understood. If they did she asks them to explain in Sesotho to the rest of the class. This incorporation of the languages used by the learners at home into the formal lesson is viewed “as a pedagogic tool to enable [effective] teaching and learning” (Childs, 2016:22).

At Gogo's insistence, the local library space, which is two streets away from the house, was often used for Moeketsi's homework. There were four computer workstations for patrons, and each user was entitled to 45 minutes of access per session. Moeketsi's first session started at 3:30pm and when it ended, he logged on again using his sister's details. His homework instructions were as follows:

- 1) Write a definition of a shell structure
- 2) Write a definition of a frame structure
- 3) Write a definition of a solid structure.<sup>11</sup>

After logging in, Moeketsi opened Internet Explorer, typed 'Google' and then selected *google.co.za*, which opened a search window. He read through the instructions in the textbook, and then typed 'shell structures' in the search box. When the results page came up, he copied the short and incomplete texts that appeared on the results page –such as the examples given in Figure 5.7 – into his exercise book without clicking of the links (which would have given him access to the full, non-truncated text). In other words, he treated the summary results provided by the search engine not as hypertextual fragments, but as full texts and answers to the question.

Figure 5.7: Partial-screen shots of Google results page for shell structures

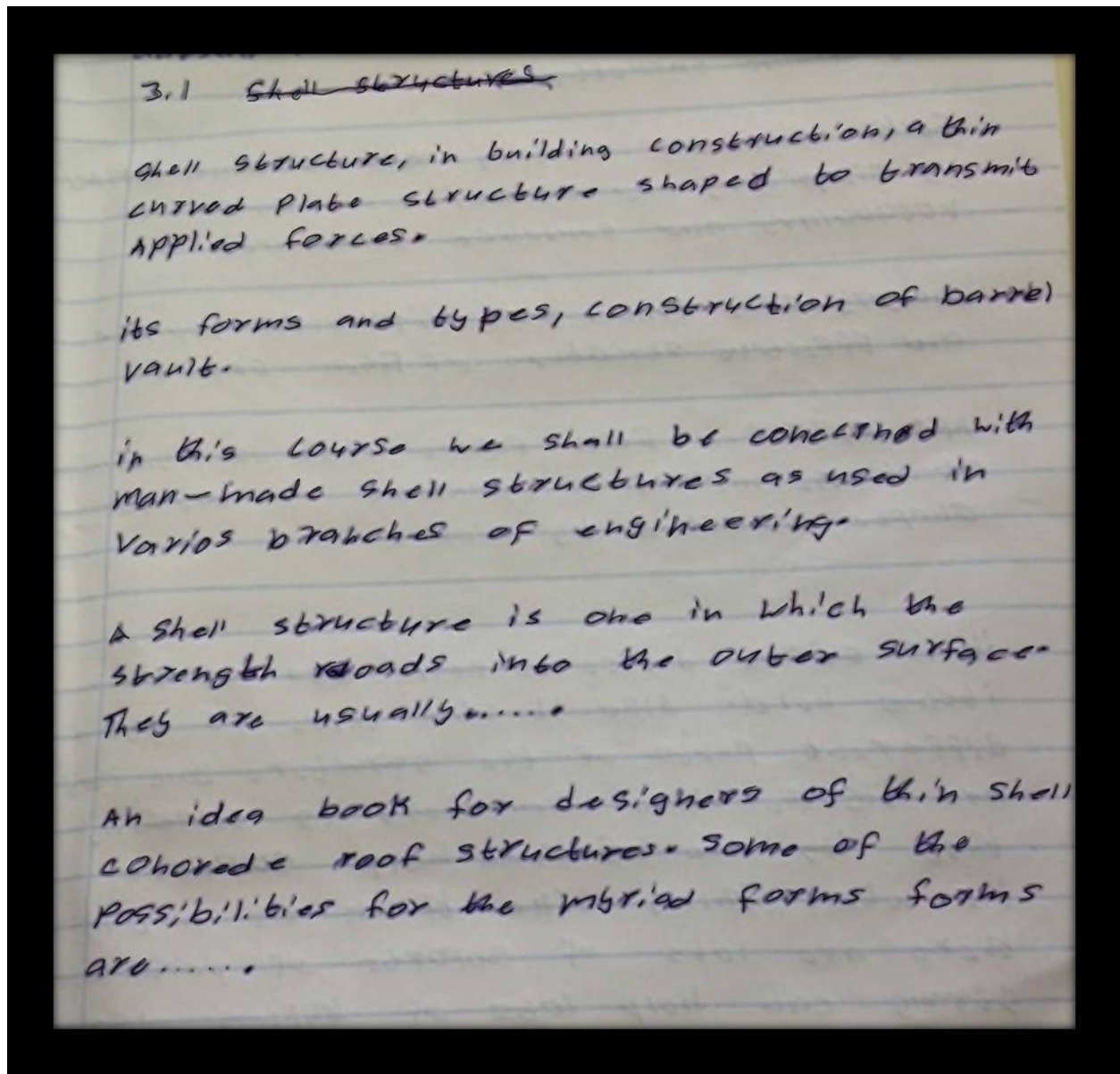


He then copied several of these fragments into his exercise book (Figure 5.8).

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<sup>11</sup> Clitheroe, F., Goosen, A., Kathan, V., Mlambo, T., Roebert, M., Sargeant, I., Scheepers, H., Smit, R., Turley, C. and Walstra, K. (2013). *Platinum, Technology: Grade 7 Learner's Book*. Cape Town: Pearson.

Figure 5.8: Moeketsi's copied electronic texts directly from Google results page: shell structures



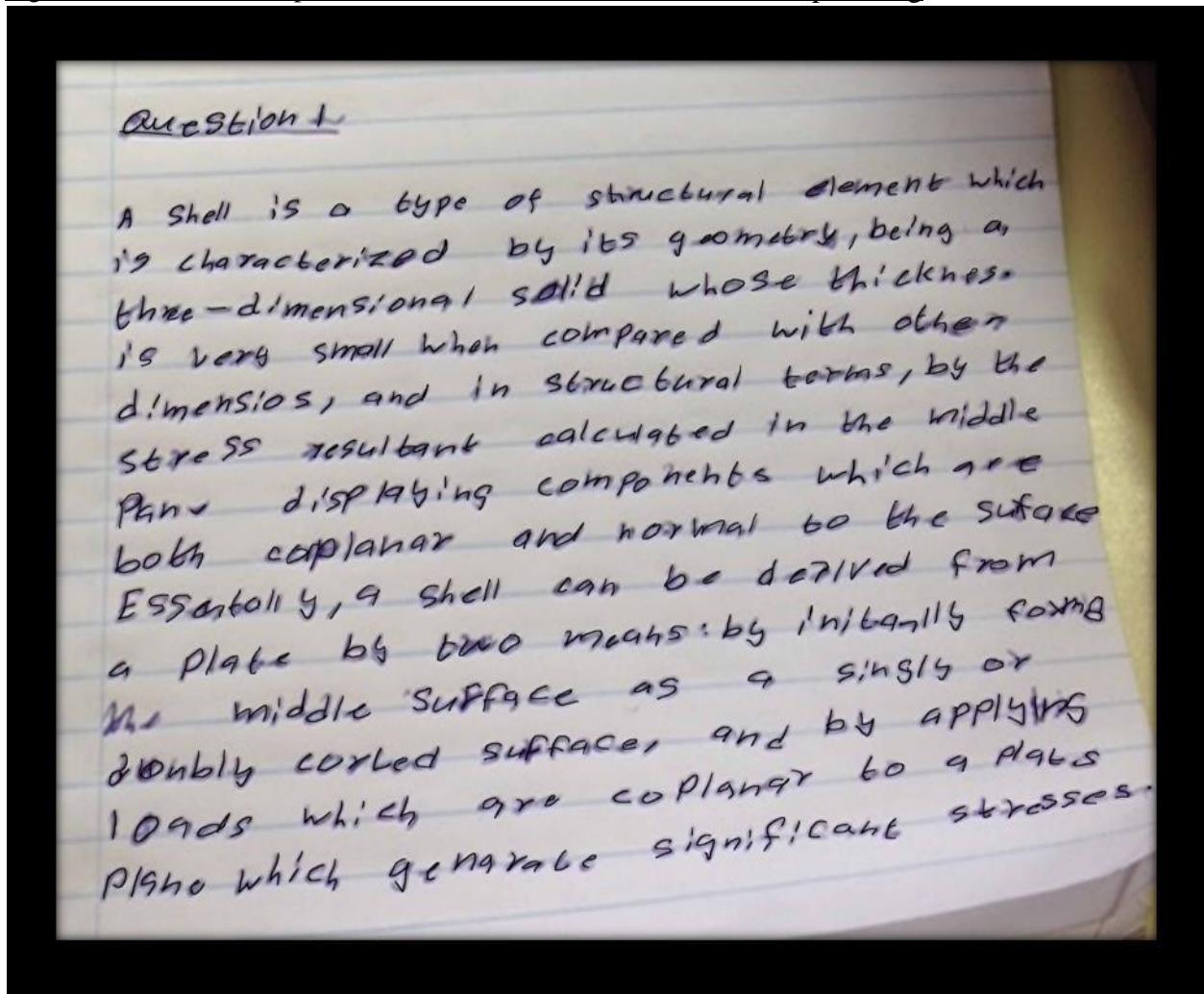
Moeketsi copied most texts in a style that combined creativity and reproduction. He consistently omitted the generic details with the website link and title. This suggests some level of engagement with the electronic texts, making a distinction between relevant and non-relevant information. The electronic texts are copied almost verbatim. The copied versions are slightly shortened by skillfully omitting certain words or phrases of the fragmented texts. In the last entry, 'concrete' is spelt incorrectly as 'coherede' and Moeketsi also repeated 'forms'. He seemed to be in a rush to copy as many result entries as possible because of the time-limit per session and as a result, his handwriting was not always easy to read.

About halfway into the session, when Moeketsi had written down almost two pages of partial definitions, a young man of approximately 18 years, who had been sitting on the computer next to him, started whispering to him. I could not make out everything they said, but I did hear the young man's repeated instruction: GELEZA *qala* MFETHU, *jonga!* ('Read first my brother, look!'). After this, he looked at Moeketsi's books, and then browsed the data on his screen before taking the mouse to click on a web-link. He explained to Moeketsi that he was supposed to choose a result, open it and read the entire text before copying. The capitalized words in the whispered exchange form part of spoken isiXhosa, reflecting a casual register associated with the local slang often referred to as Tsotsitaal which is used within, especially, urban male peer groups to establish solidarity (Ntshangase, 1995, Hurst and Mesthrie, 2012 and Brookes and Lekgora, 2014). The formal variety alternatives would be *funda* ('read') and *mfowethu* ('my brother'). However, the insertion of the slang variety into isiXhosa speech does not imply two distinctive linguistic varieties. Rather, it is considered as a manifestation of one linguistic repertoire. Moeketsi nodded when the older teenager spoke and proceeded to copy the text below from the opened link on wikipedia.org:

A shell is a type of structural element which is characterized by its geometry, being a three-dimensional solid whose thickness is very small when compared with other dimensions, and in structural terms, by the stress resultants calculated in the middle plane displaying components which are both coplanar and normal to the surface. Essentially, a shell can be derived from a plate by two means: by initially forming the middle surface as a singly or doubly curved surface, [1] and by applying loads which are coplanar to a plate's plane which generate significant stresses. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell\(structure\)\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell(structure))))

The original text is technical with long sentences and professional jargon. Moeketsi made an effort to accurately copy this definition into his exercise book in Figure 5.9. However, his verbatim copy is unreferenced, raising the question of whether such practices (which seem to be encouraged by the teachers) blur the line between own-words and other's-words (with implications for plagiarism in education).

Figure 5.9: Moeketsi's copied text on shell structure definition on wikipedia.org

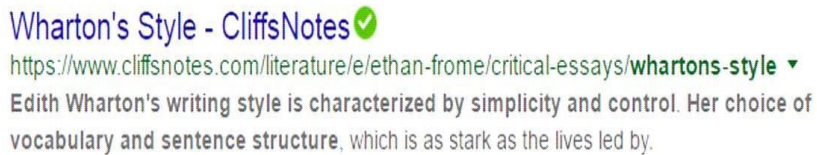


Since he was still rushing, his handwriting is not clear at times. Besides this, the copied text mirrors the electronic text word for word including punctuation and capitalization. After Moeketsi copied this text, he made contact with the teenager who got up from his chair and helped him again by finding information on solid structures. Shortly after copying it, his first session ended.

Moeketsi logged on for the second time. As he was about to consult with the older teenager again, the librarian made a signal for them to keep quiet. They both complied and Moeketsi had to continue the online search by himself. He returned to his original approach and typed 'frame structures' into Google, thus misspelling 'frame'. This led him to information on Ethan Frome's

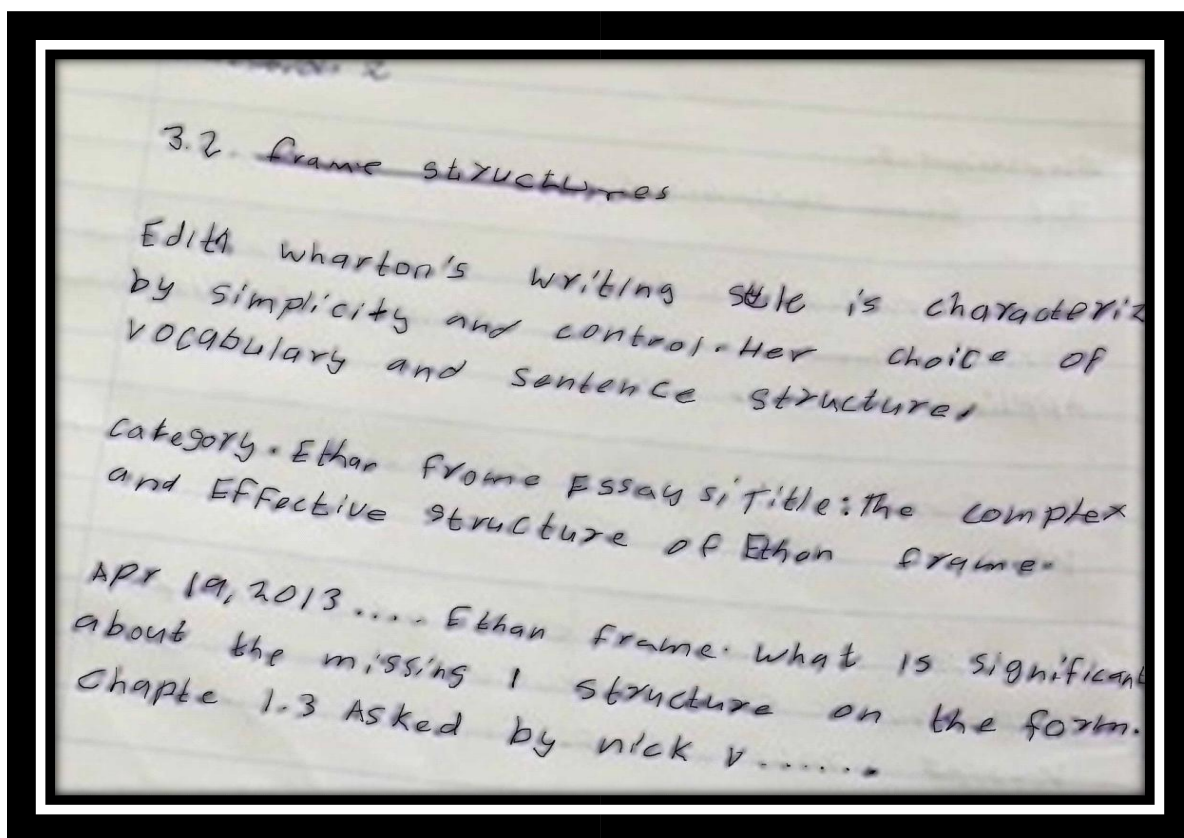
critical essays on Edith Wharton's novels. These essays are available on numerous websites including cliffnotes.com (see Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10: Partial screen-shot of Google results page for 'frame structure'



As in the previous case, Moeketsi started copying the text directly from the results pages, (see Figure 5.11), seemingly oblivious to the fact that the topic was no longer about technology or structures.

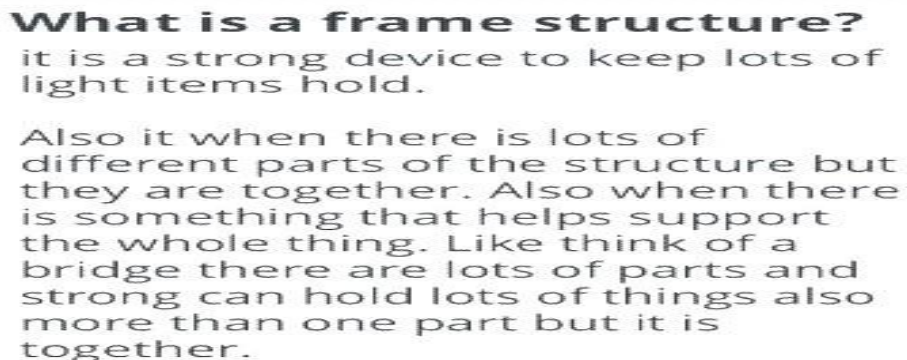
Figure 5.11: Moeketsi's direct copying from Google results page for 'frame structure'



Thus, despite the older teenager's earlier explanation, Moeketsi still copied text directly from the results page and did not click on the text to obtain access to the webpage. Since all literacy skills including online search skills need practice (not just verbal explanation), and Moeketsi did not get a chance to practice them because of the strictly timed sessions, it is thus, possible that he did not fully understand the instructions or forgot them.

After he finished copying the third entry, the librarian came over and looked at his screen. She alerted him to his spelling mistake in the search window: 'frame' not 'frome'. She whispered something in isiXhosa before opening a few search websites including google.com and ask.com. Then she typed the question: 'what is a frame structure?' into the respective search windows. She chose different links and was redirected a few times before she settled on a text on frame structures on quizlet.com (Figure 5.12), which she instructed Moeketsi to copy. This out-of-school interaction was similar to that of a teacher at school.

Figure 5.12: 'Frame structure' definition: partial screen-shot from quizlet.com

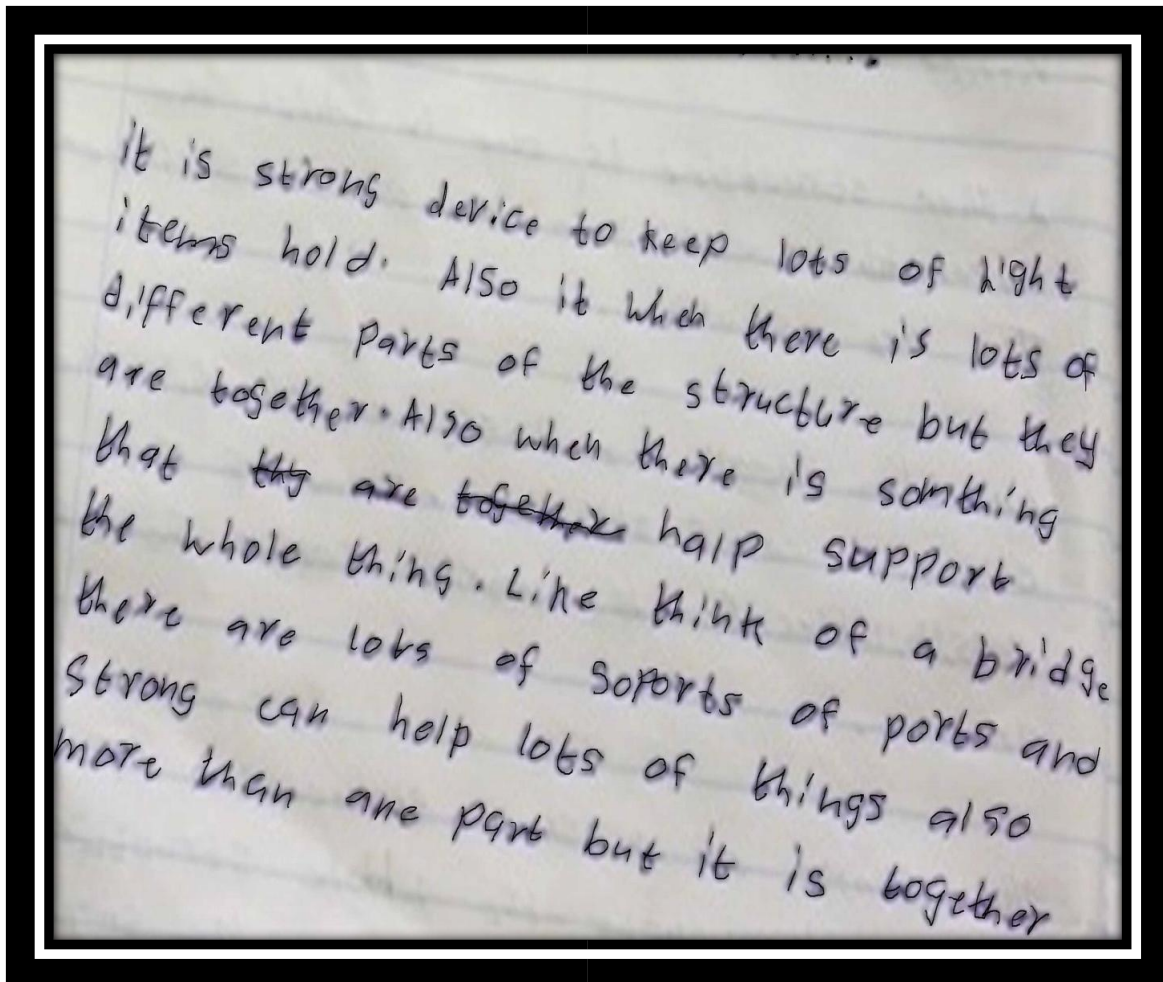


**What is a frame structure?**  
it is a strong device to keep lots of light items hold.

Also it when there is lots of different parts of the structure but they are together. Also when there is something that helps support the whole thing. Like think of a bridge there are lots of parts and strong can hold lots of things also more than one part but it is together.

This text is short but not well formed; indeed it is almost incomprehensible. This implies some limits of using the Internet for Primary school learners, especially those whose mother tongue is not English. It is unlikely that such texts would be helpful to the junior local students who are participants in this study. Nevertheless, Moeketsi copied the entire text (Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13: Moeketsi's copied text on frame structure from quizlet.com



Again, Moeketsi was writing hastily in an effort to copy the electronic text word for word before his time would run out. Grammatical errors in the original texts are repeated in the copied text. In the first sentence, he omitted the indefinite article 'a' from the original text. In the second sentence, 'something' is spelt without the 'e', 'help' is copied as 'halp', and 'lots of parts' becomes 'lots of soports of parts'.

When I asked Moeketsi about his experience afterwards, he confirmed that he was in a rush. He explained that he did not use any specific copying strategies or text selection criteria and was not familiar with other websites besides Google. He said that it was the first time he had received assistance when conducting online research at the library.

In contrast to the home contexts, Sesotho speech did not feature in this public context. As it seems, the digital texts were regarded simply as textual images that Moeketsi had to reproduce faithfully in order to complete the homework. This is possibly a consequence of his limited linguistic (i.e. English) competence, constrained digital access and inadequate knowledge and skills required to conduct searches online. These limitations shaped the literacy practices enacted in the event and prompted digital literacy mediation.

## 5.5. Conclusion

The homework sessions discussed in this chapter show that the participants' out-of-school academic practices varied, reflecting their socioeconomic realities, relationships, living arrangements, knowledge, skills and access to certain spaces. Challenges such as overcrowding, poor lighting, and lack of access to books, and other resources were evident, but participants found creative ways to deal with them (Rule and Lyster, 2005:10).

The findings show that literacy events typically tend to be multilingual and multimodal with texts (i.e. written, printed and electronic), speech and non-verbal (e.g. drawings and gestures) modes. Sesotho dominated home interactions and public interactions were predominantly in isiXhosa with borrowed English words. The mono-languages (Standard Sesotho or English) of the school-mediated texts are thus surrounded by diverse forms of multilingual informal speech.

The learners worked together with others (i.e. collaboration) and accepted or requested help from others (i.e. mediation). The data showed varying degrees of success as restrictions within particular contexts (e.g. library noise monitoring and strictly timed PC sessions) may impact the outcomes.

## Chapter 6: Literacy Practices at Church –Mopedi Family

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter further illustrates the existence of literacy in out-of-school contexts by discussing events observed at Sinethemba Church in Gugulethu where the Mopedi family is actively involved. The focus is on a Sunday school session followed by the Mopedi brothers' public religious performance in church. Almost exclusively in isiXhosa, these two religious events are contrasted in the last section of the chapter with a multilingual literacy event at the church. The analysis further illustrates that literacy mediation and collaboration are valuable social processes in out-of-school contexts.

### 6.2. Religion Practices and Language Choices

Religious practices can be described as “goal-oriented sequences of activities organized around sets of beliefs, values, symbols, artefacts, narratives, and rituals” (Kapitzke, 1995:3). They typically take place at a particular place of worship. The regular interaction between the written and oral modes of language in religious practices has been highlighted in many studies (Heath, 1982b, and McMillion and Edwards, 2008). The particular congregation's shared linguistic repertoires will most likely determine the language/s used for worship. Languages are important semiotic resources for religious expression.

In his interview, Katleho's father stated that when he was younger, living in Langa, he used to own a Sesotho Bible. The church he attended there offered services in isiXhosa with Sesotho interpretations for the benefit of the substantial number of Sesotho-speaking congregation members. However, because of transports costs his family now attends the church in Gugulethu which is closer to their home. The church offers isiXhosa services, but no services in Sesotho.

He said he started reading the isiXhosa Bible to his sons when they were infants and still regularly reads it aloud, while they follow the text in their own Bible. Through this religious literacy practice, they have acquired proficiency in reading isiXhosa, a language that is not taught at LPS.

Some studies have emphasised the role of church leaders in shaping language choice and language use in their respective congregations. For instance, in her case study of an exceptionally multilingual urban church leader, Coetzee-van Rooy's (2014b) highlights the leader's awareness and knowledge of his congregation's collective multilingual needs. However, sometimes church leaders may struggle to make appropriate multilingual provisions for their congregations and some prefer to employ English-only during offered sermons/services, establishing it as a lingua franca (Venter, 1998). The church discussed here differs from the multiracial churches reported in the other studies, and there was no need for other languages besides isiXhosa for religious expressions since all members of the congregation were fluent speakers of isiXhosa. Thus, the described linguistic practice in this example differs from the intensive multilingualism that has been reported for many African urban contexts (Mesthrie, 1995, Coetzee-van Rooy, 2014a&b and Krause and Prinsloo, 2016). However, I will show in the final section of this chapter that, although isiXhosa is the main language used in the church, English features in particular contexts.

### 6.2.1. Attending a Sunday School Session

I met Katleho and Kamohelo at their home on a Sunday at 8:45am and together we walked to the church, which is about 15 minutes away. The church is best described as a large shack-like structure with walls and a roof made out of corrugated metal sheets nailed together on wooden frames. The building can accommodate over two hundred people. It has four windows and a single door with a banner: 'Welcome to Sinethemba Church'. Usually, the service, which lasts for about two hours, starts right after the Sunday school session, around 10am.

There were 12 students: five girls and seven boys between the ages of five and 14 were attending the Sunday school, which takes place inside the church building. It is meant to start at 9am and to continue for an hour; however, the teacher in charge only arrived at 9:20am, while more attendees were still arriving. Those who had been on time played inside the churchyard to pass time. Upon her arrival, the teacher told them to go inside, unpack chairs and to position them near the back-end of the church.

Before officially starting the session with a prayer, the teacher instructed the students to sing a hymn in isiXhosa, which they sang from memory. Following this, they sat down and the teacher asked if they had done their homework which required them to read parts of the Bible and practice certain Psalms and verses during the week. They collectively responded that they did their homework. There were five Bibles and six hymnbooks which the children shared during the session. The Mopedi brothers and a few older students had brought their Bibles to church. Prior to her reading and elaboration of the Psalm of the day, the teacher instructed them to take out the available Bibles and find the page where the Psalm was written.

After explaining the Psalm, she asked them questions to ensure that they understood the text's meanings. Similar to McMillion and Edwards' (2008:325) findings on African American children's church literacy practices, the teacher habitually told and retold various Bible stories and recited verses in the course of the lesson. She then instructed them to repeat the verses after her, both in unison and individually. Their "choral repetitions" (Wright, 2001:62) and recitations are not only a learning tool, but also illustrate "the inherent power of the text" (Herbert and Robinson, 2001:127) that is associated with most religious practices. The teenagers, like Katleho (Figure 6.1), followed the teacher's reading in their own books. The younger children, who lacked reading competence, observed and imitated them. They had memorized some of the verses and hymns but performed them in a way that mimicked reading (i.e. by pretending to read from the texts).

Figure 6.1: A photograph of Katleho reading a hymnbook during the Sunday school session



The Sunday school involved children and an adult who teaches them various “ways to use and interpret the Bible” (Povedaa, *et al.* 2006:265). The older students like Katleho seemed to enjoy the session and paid attention, while the younger students needed some talking to by the teacher towards the end as they were getting restless and bored. This particular literacy event highlights the connection between the orality and literacy in religious practices.

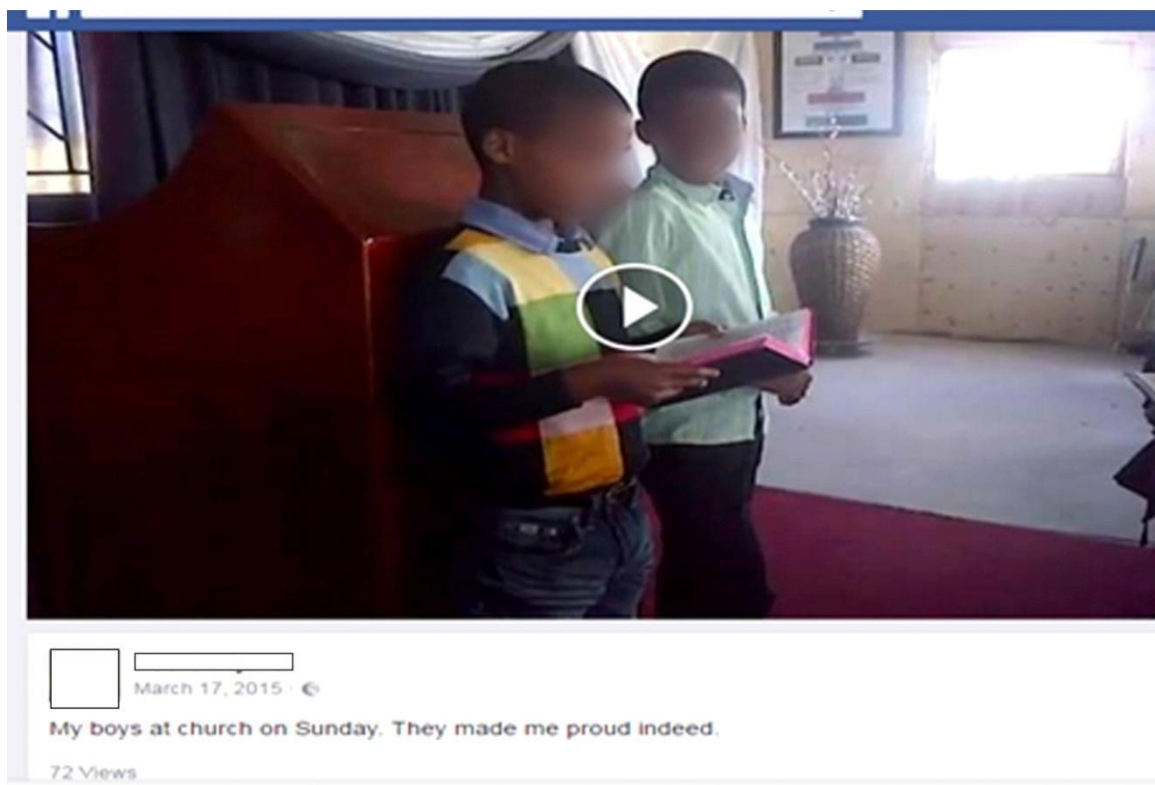
As the main literacy mediator, the teacher’s role involved teaching Bible studies, and monitoring the attendees. She also expected them to complete religious ‘homework’, a term which connects the Sunday school to academic practices. The comprehension of the Biblical texts is at the center of her mediation. Even though, the attendees were hardly ever required to write anything down, the Sunday school developed isiXhosa language skills through reading, reciting, singing hymns and questions-and-answers. Some of these literacy practices are done collectively (i.e. choral or collaborative); however, the teacher also asked the students to make individual contributions.

The sessions are meant to prepare them to participate in worship services with adults (McMillion and Edwards, 2008:325). This is further illustrated by the Mopedi brothers' church performance which I discuss next.

### 6.2.2. A Collaborative Religious Church Performance

On this particular Sunday, it was the Mopedi brothers' turn to recite the Psalm of the day at the church service. About an hour into the sermon, the Sunday school teacher started a hymn and the congregation followed her tune as she escorted the brothers to the altar. Kamohelo was the first to speak (example 1). Their father recorded the performance with his cell-phone and later, he posted the video (Figure 6.2) on his Facebook timeline (further discussed in Section 7.2).

Figure 6.2: A screen-shot of video and caption on Mr. Mopedi's Facebook timeline



It is important to note that in preparation of this performance, other literacy events had taken place at home, a more intimate space. Katleho reported that his younger brother did not yet know how to read isiXhosa and, during the week, he repeatedly helped him with his Psalm

recitation practice at home. Even earlier that morning during our walk to church, he had insisted that Kamohelo recites the Psalm one last time. This suggests that he had an invested role as his younger brother's literacy mediator.

The presentation by the two brothers started with Kamohelo, who recited a verse from the Bible.

**(1) KAMOHELO:** Ndisabulisa gutat' umfundisi nomam' umfundisi, notata, noomama, nomntu wonke osecaweni ngona phakade Amen. ('I greet father bishop and mother bishop, fathers and mothers and everyone present in church, forever Amen.')

**CONGREGATION:** Amen [with some audible laughter from the front where the two boys are standing and Katleho also smiles]

**KAMOHELO:** ilizwe lethu sizifumane encwadi Iindumiso119 verse 11 epha ezantsi e631. ('Our scripture/reading today is found in Psalm 119 verse 11 and down below the [page] number is 631.')

**CONGREGATION:** Alright...Okay

**KAMOHELO:** Masifundeni abo ba ifumane. ('Let us read those who found it.')

**CONGREGATION:** [laughter], oh God, Jesus, Well done...

**KAMOHELO:** Ndiyibeke intetho yakho entliziyweni yam ukuze ndingoni kuwe. Ziyaphela apho isifundo zethu ngoko, ngona phakathi Amen. ('I have put your Word in my heart, so that I might not sin against you. Our teaching for today ends here, forever Amen'.)

**CONGREGATION:** Amen... [Followed a hymn]

Kamohelo started by greeting the congregation and then informed them of the Psalm and page number. This was followed by ngona phakade Amen ('forever Amen'). The congregation members enjoyed this and reacted with exclamations and laughter. Along with 'Amen' and 'Jesus', the congregation also shouted a few other English words commonly used in isiXhosa as validations and encouragement like 'well done' and 'alright'. He waited for their responses to calm down before he continued with the introduction and recitation of the Psalm. He concluded by informing them that his reading/recitation was finished. This was followed by another ngona

*phakade* Amen to which the congregation again reacted positively. After this it was Katleho turn to speak.

As he began his presentation, Kamohelo was slightly uneasy and nervous, but the congregations' encouragement seemed to improve his confidence. Even though he knew the Psalm by heart, it still appeared as if he was reading from the Bible. In fact, his eyes were fixed on the pages throughout his presentation, from his greeting, introduction and Psalm recitation to the conclusion. He only looked up once he was done. According to Heath (1982b:93), "speech events may describe, repeat, reinforce, expand, frame, or contradict written materials, and participants must learn whether the oral or written mode takes precedence in literacy events". It is possible that Kamohelo had learned through observations that the written mode takes precedence over the oral mode in religious practices. However, his focus on the text could also be a reaction to stage fright, or a fear that he might forget the Psalm's words. After the performance, he said he was so nervous that he started sweating so much that he had to take off his jersey, but he was also very happy because his brother, father and other adults congratulated him.

Kamohelo regularly observes his father's public performances at church as well as rehearsals of the performances at home. His use of the 'Forever Amen' phrase, in particular, emulates part of the father's religious repertoire. His regular observations of religious performances in church also meant that he knew when to keep quiet and wait for the congregation's reaction to his utterances before continuing with his recital/reading.

Katleho's performance in example 2 below repeated the Psalm recitation and offered further interpretation. He started with the same greeting as Kamohelo and then continued in a monologue-kind of utterance.

**(2) KATLEHO:** *Ndibulisa utat' umfundisi nomam' umfundisi, noomama nootata, nomntu wonkeecaweni. Mna ndizothetha ngoverseeleven. Ithi, "Ndiyibeke intetho yakho entliziyweni yam ukuzendingoni kuwe." La mazwi abhalwa ngubawo uDavide owayemthanda uThixo, noThixo wayemthanda njengo bawo uSamuyeli owayekhulele etempileni kaThixo. Umama kaSamuyeli, umam' uHana, wayengenamntwana, waya etempileni wacela uThixo amphe*

umntwana. Wathi lomntwana uzomnikela etempileni. Yiyo lo nto uSamuyeli ekhulele etempileni; wayithatha intetho kaThixo wayifaka entliziyweni yakhe; yiyo lo nto emsulwa phambi kobuso bukaThixo. Namndifuna ukuthi kwintanga zam, eSunday School, siyithathe ngoku intetho kaThixo ukuze sikhulekuye.

**CONGREGATION:** Amen, praise God! [Before breaking into a song]

**KATLEHO:** ('I greet father bishop and mother bishop, mothers and fathers, and everyone present in church. I, myself, will speak about verse eleven. It says, "I have put your Word in my heart, so that I do not sin in You." These words were written by father David who loved God, and God loved him too, like father Samuel who grew up in the temple [in the house of God]. Samuel's mother – mother Hannah – had no child; she went to the temple and asked God to give her a child. She said that this child will be my offering to the temple. And this is why Samuel grew up in the temple, loving the Word of God and putting it in his heart; this is why he is pure before the face of God. I, too, want to say to my age mates at the Sunday school, let's take the Word of God now so that we grow in Him.')

**CONGREGATION:** Amen, praise God! [Before breaking into a song]

His speech was mainly in isiXhosa with few borrowings from English: ('ngoverse eleven and eSunday school'). The biblical names are also localized into isiXhosa by adding the 'u' prefix: (e.g. 'uDavide, uSamuyeli and uHana'). After he concluded, the congregation shouted 'Amen and praise God' before starting a hymn as the boys left the altar.

In comparison to Kamohelo, the older brother's voice was slightly louder and steadier. He also looked up throughout his presentation with a big smile on his face which suggests that he was comfortable and perhaps not too nervous. However, Katleho's performance was overall more monologic and elicited fewer audience reactions. While the congregation seemed to enjoy both performances, their verbal responses to Kamohelo were more openly encouraging as he was still new to these public performances. They did not laugh during the older brother's performance as it might have been viewed as disrespectful. This observation is supported by Katleho's commentary afterwards. He said that he had practiced his speech and knew what he was going to say as he had done similar performances many times before. This implied that he had more experience and therefore required less encouragement.

Since Kamohelo's reading/recitation was complemented by Katleho's speech, their performance can be seen as an example of a collaborative literacy event. This collaboration was further expanded by the congregation's choral feedback.

### 6.3. A Special Church Literacy Event

As the Sunday school session (in Section 6.2.1) was coming to an end, the pastor's wife came to the teacher and said she needed the children to write their names and ages in a register, which was going to be used for gift presentations towards the end of the church service. I provided the pastor's wife with a sheet of paper and pen for the register, because the teacher did not have either with her. She said that nowadays she and other congregation members only brought their cell-phones and biblical texts to church because they can use their phones to note important information down. The pastor's wife agreed with her statement. This suggests a possible shift from handwriting to electronic writing. It also highlights that writing does not feature much at church, at least not in the predominant way that reading and interpretations of religious texts do.

The pastor's wife divided the page into four columns with 'name' and 'surname', 'gender' and 'age' as headings. These were written in English. She then instructed Katleho in isiXhosa to take responsibility for the register compilation. He happily obliged. Katleho went to each child and asked them to write their details down, or if they were too young, he wrote for them. He also helped others who knew how to write their names and age by explaining, in isiXhosa, that gender meant 'boy or girl'. This is another example of literacy mediation as he acted as a scribe and also supported others with their writing in this event.

The sermon's last session included the secretary's reading of notices in isiXhosa. This is usually followed by a closing prayer and one final hymn before the congregation members leave the church. However, on this Sunday, once the notices had been read out, the pastor started to read out an English letter from an NGO. This organization usually donates gifts for the church's children during Christmas time but, the previous year, due to unforeseen problems, they were delayed and could only be handed out in March. The pastor repeated the letter's contents in isiXhosa before reading the conclusion in English: 'As always we hope the little boys and girls that receive these gifts will grow up to be God loving and valuable members of the Christian

Community.’ After this, the pastor’s wife started calling out the children by name from the register to collect their gifts. An example of such a gift is given in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: A photograph of one of the boys’ gift boxes



The brothers and other children were excited when they were called to the altar, where they each had to pose for a photograph holding their individual gift boxes. Afterwards most of them started reading and comparing the English texts (e.g. ‘Operation Christmas Child Samaritan’, ‘Purse’, ‘Boy’, etc) written on their boxes. There was also multimodality at play as the texts were accompanied by pictures of Christmas trees, stars, different colours, fonts and other images. The gifts thus provided them with further opportunities for literacy development, this time in English.

I regard this particular event as ‘special’ because it only happens once a year and as such, it is not part of the church service’s regular sequence of events. The multilingual (English and isiXhosa) literacy practices enacted during this event are not religious, at least not in the way that scripture recitations and Bible readings are. Katleho’s assistance with the register included writing, which is not a typically required literacy skill at their church.

#### 6.4. Conclusion

This chapter emphasized the importance of religious literacy in out-of-school contexts and further highlighted the significance of collaboration and mediation. Reports about a shift towards English amongst Black South Africans, “particularly in the sphere of religion” (Kamwangamalu, 2006:94) are not supported by this example. The church uses isiXhosa almost exclusively. While this shift might apply to the Black middle-class, especially English-dominant suburbs dwellers, it is not applicable to this study’s lower-income township learners. Furthermore, the church provided the brothers with valuable opportunities to develop isiXhosa literacy, a type of literacy that does not feature at school. However, their literacy practices were largely limited to reading and not writing.

## **Chapter 7: Digital Access**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The lower-income group to which the participants belong has been described as having very limited access to digital resources (Lemphane and Prinsloo, 2013). In addition, the learners have no digital access at LPS (see Chapter 3). Digital literacy resources (e.g. cell-phone, computer, and laptop) are generally regarded as valuable for literacy development, and there is broad agreement in the literature that language and literacy practices cannot be studied without giving attention to these digital resources (Luke and Luke, 2001). Chapter 5 has already discussed two examples of digital access: Moeketsi's use of the library computer in completing his Technology homework and Mpeo's cell-phone dictionary use for her English homework. In contrast, the discussion in this chapter looks at digital leisure literacies. The chapter contains three case studies: (a) the Mopedi family's engagement with Facebook, (b) text messages composed by Mpeo and (c) Morena's digital practices (gaming, picture editing). The analysis focuses on language choices and multilingual practices. For reference, I draw on local research conducted by Deumert and Masinyana (2008), and Dyers and Davids (2015) on mobile communication and multilingual texting practices.

### **7.2. Mopedi Brothers: Reading Facebook Texts**

Mr. Mopedi owned a prepaid Blackberry phone and during the fieldwork period, he was active on Facebook. Sometimes he allowed his sons to access his timeline on the phone. His posts were about personal and family experiences, religion, politics and societal issues. They were written in English and/or isiXhosa. Following the church performance discussed in the previous chapter, he had posted a short video of his sons with the caption: 'My boys at church on Sunday, they made me proud indeed' (see Figure 6.2).

This recontextualization from one context into another was achieved by firstly video recording the performance and then, secondly, posting it online where it could be distributed to a larger audience. This means that Mr. Mopedi detached (i.e. decontextualizes) his sons' performance from the church context and inserted (i.e. recontextualizes) it online (Bauman, 2004:4 and

Deumert, 2014:83). Further recontextualization into the academic writing context takes place with this analysis, which adds transcriptions, translations and interpretations. This process of recontextualization online also involves the reconfiguration of the participants, their roles and relationships. For instance, the congregation's role as the church audience is expanded to include all those who viewed the performance online. Once the online friends liked or commented on the post, they became text producers, and by engaging with these new digital texts Katleho and Kamohelo, in turn, also became part of the online audience to their own performance and its remediation.

Since these digital texts were essentially online interactions between Mr. Mopedi and his Facebook friends, they can be said to constitute adult literacy practices. Although his sons did not directly communicate with anyone on the online platform, the example shows that learners are exposed not only to conventional texts, but also to informal digital texts. While I did not observe the actual online literacy events where these texts were read, mediated and discussed by the Mopedi household members, I nevertheless interpret the narratives of their engagements with them (articulated in interviews and conversations) as evidence that these texts provided opportunities for the brothers to access diverse multi-literacies.

The post received over 20 'likes' and 13 comments including Mr. Mopedi's video caption. The people commenting were mostly other adults with whom he communicates in offline contexts as well. They include two church members, three family members and friends as well as acquaintances from work. The post and comments are provided below in Table 7.1 with the senders' relationship to Mr. Mopedi indicated.<sup>12</sup>

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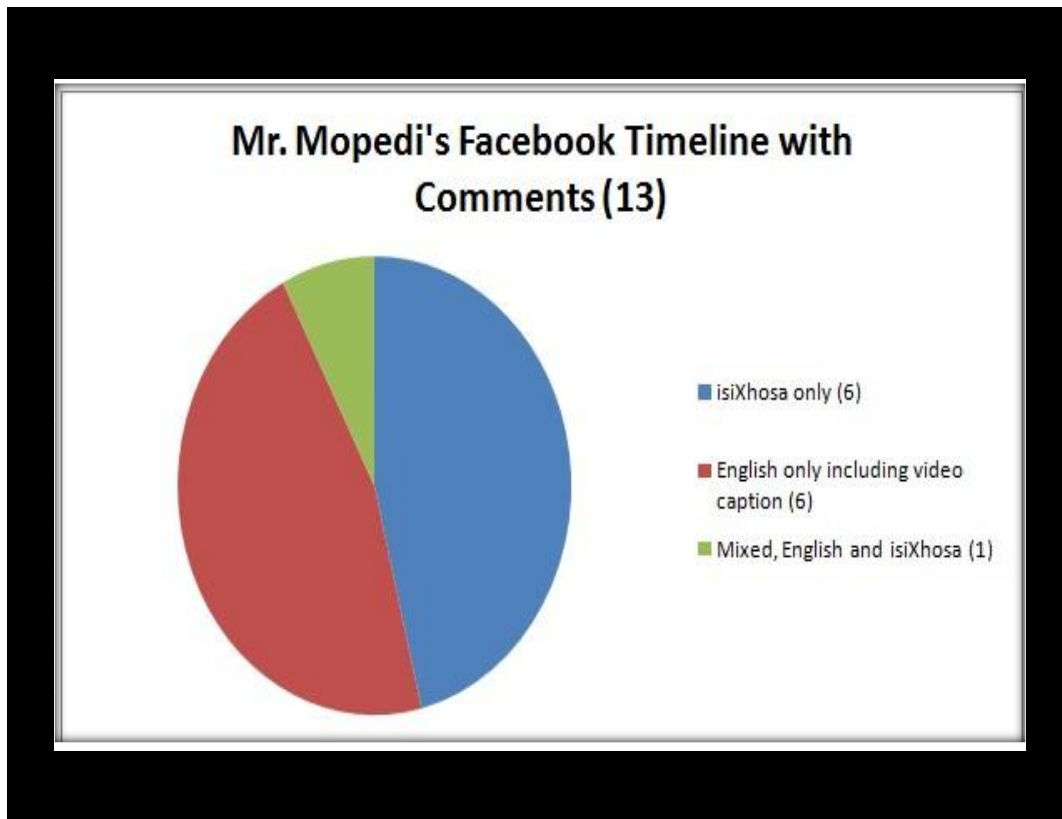
<sup>12</sup> Mr. Mopedi gave me consent to use the data collected from his Facebook profile. For confidentiality, his name and all his friends' names and other personal information have been blacked out. Where names are used in their comments, in the reproduced texts, they have been replaced with \*\*\*

Table 7.1: Mr. Mopedi's Facebook timeline with comments

No.	Sender	Comment	English Translation
1	Mr. Mopedi (video caption)	My boys at church on Sunday, they made me proud indeed.	
2	Mr. Mopedi's sister	<i>Heeeee, abatshana bam madoda. Tsiiiiii amadodana ase Baptist.</i>	Hey my nephews are goodness! Phew! They are the young men of Baptist.
3	Family church friend	<i>Bagotywa besebancinci.....</i>	They are trained while they are still young.....
4	Mr. Mopedi (response to comment 3)	<i>Ayikho enyindlela.</i>	There is no other way.
5	Mr. Mopedi's Coworker	<i>Bavumeleni abantwana baze kum ngokuba bukumkani bamazulu bobabo.</i>	Let the children come to me because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.
6	Mr. Mopedi's old high school friend- Cape Town	Yes my brother, I was very impressed to see him. Like father like son...	
7	Mr. Mopedi (response to comment 6)	<i>hahahahahahahaha.....utsho ***?</i>	hahahahahahahaha.....you don't say ***?
8	Mr. Mopedi's brother	I'm proud of them 2	I'm proud of them too
9	Mr. Mopedi's friend- Pretoria	Gud boys n dey must keep up de gud wrkx	Good boys and they must keep up the good work
10	Mr. Mopedi's cousin	Continue moulding these young men, Cuz. May they grow to be God-fearing men. Hats off to you, Cuz.	Continue moulding these young men, Cousin. May they grow to be God-fearing men. Hats off to you, Cousin.
11	Mr. Mopedi's male friend-Cape Town	<i>ngamagorha lawo</i>	those are heroes, indeed
12	Mr. Mopedi's church friend- Cape Town	am heppi 4ur boys ma 4rnd u de best father big ups	am happy for your boys my friend you are the best father big ups

The chart in Figure 7.1 summarizes these comments according to language choice.

Figure 7.1: A chart summarizing the comments on Mr. Mopedi's Facebook timeline according to language choice (N= 13)



The analysis shows that comments are mostly in either English or isiXhosa, with only one multilingual comment posted on the timeline. The English comments incorporate the Standard orthography as well as an informal variety associated with mobile communications (including medium-specific respellings and lack of capitalization/punctuation). Table 7.2 summarizes the non-standard forms used in the comments and provides standard alternatives.

Table 7.2: Informal English Texting conventions from Mr. Mopedi’s Facebook timeline

Informal English	Formal Alternatives
2	Too
N	And
Dey	They
De	The
Wrkx	work/works
Cuz	Cousin
Heppi	Happy
4u	For you
4ur	For your
Ma	My
4rnd	Friend
U	You
Thanx	Thank you

Some of the strategies used include the use of phonological approximates (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008:125) as well as letter/number homophones (Bieswanger 2006:5). It is important to note, that digital writing does not always shorten words. Thus, while ‘cuz’ use three characters instead of the six letters in ‘cousin’, other forms (heppi, wrkx and ma) do not change the character length.

Comment (2) is mostly in isiXhosa except for a borrowed English word, ‘Baptist’. Intertextual reference is evident in comment (5) which cites a Bible verse. Similar to findings by Deumert and Masinyana (2008), the isiXhosa messages use the standard variety of this African language without any abbreviations. In contrast to these findings, more recently, Dyers and Davids (2015:25) found that multilingual students (at UWC) have started to use medium specific abbreviations in isiXhosa digital texts. These included, for example, *ngk* and *adna moya* which were used as short for *ngoku* (now) and *andinamoya* (I don’t have airtime).

Mr. Mopedi’s final comment below is a lengthy note of thanks to his friends for their comments, using both English and isiXhosa.

Thank U for the complements @9, 10 and 12.<sup>13</sup> I'm trying my best to raise them to be God-fearing and respectable adults one day. @ 11, *ngamagorha inene*. @6 and @8, thanks my dearests. @ 5, *xa befuna ukuya kuYesu, mabavunyelwe, kungabikho mntu ozakubanqanda, enkosi darly. Kudadebawo wabo*, @ 2, *inene ngenye imini asezakushumayela la madodana mancinci kwindawo ezinkulu*. Very courageous boys indeed.

(‘Thank you for the compliments @9, 10 and 12. I’m trying my best to raise them to be God-fearing and respectable adults one day. @11 they are mighty men/heroes indeed. @ 6 and @ 8, thanxs my dearests. @5, if they want to go to Jesus, we must let them, there should be no one that hinders them, thanks darling. To their paternal aunt, @ 2, surely one day these young men will be preaching in great places. Very courageous boys indeed.’)

It is important to note here that Mr. Mopedi responded to comments individually, frequently using the same language that was used in the original comment. This reflects the principle of linguistic accommodation (Giles, *et al.* 1991) as Mr. Mopedi alternates between isiXhosa and English to address individual authors in accordance with their own language choices. He used ‘@’ before the person’s name to indicate that he was responding to their specific comment. He mainly employed Standard English except with ‘U’ (You), and ‘thanx’ (thanks). He also used isiXhosa with a localized English term of endearment, ‘darly’ (darling), which is commonly used in local African languages.

Katleho proudly reported that he read most of the posts to his younger brother. Again, this reflects his role as a literacy mediator *vis a vis* his brother (see Chapter 6). However, Katleho’s skills were limited: he admitted that he was not familiar with all the non-standard and informal textual constructions and his father sometimes had to read or explain messages to him. We thus see a double nested pattern of mediation: the father mediates for the older son, who in turn mediates for his younger brother. The encouraging remarks in this online event are similar to the congregation’s affirmations at church.

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<sup>13</sup> The numbers are used after the @ sign to indicate the comments that Mr. Mopedi is replying to.

### 7.3. Mpeo: Writing Text Messages: Form

Mpeo used her internet-enabled Samsung Chat 222 cell-phone to send texts. This device had belonged to her aunt who used it for a year before passing it down to her eldest son. He used it for two years before gifting it to Mpeo in December 2014, when his parents bought him a new smart-phone on credit. Mpeo's relationships with her mother and friends in De Doorns were primarily maintained with calls and/or SMS texts using this phone. Most of her incoming calls were from her mother and aunt, as she did not use texts to communicate with them. She also used the phone's offline dictionary and calculator for homework (see Chapter 5). The phone's FM radio feature did not work.

Mpeo said that she buys approximately R5 airtime weekly. She saves this up from the pocket money she received from her aunt. Most of her airtime was used to send SMSes at 50 cents and MMSes at 90 cents. She reported to occasionally take advantage of free promotions. For example, when she bought R7 airtime, she also received five free SMSes and free minutes to call MTN numbers and free 5MB. However, she did not use the free 5MB as it was not sufficient to download the applications she wanted. Since she got the device, she has never used the Facebook and WhatsApp services on it. These online communicative applications need to be updated frequently and require constant internet connection which Mpeo did not have. She also indicated that most of her contacts did not have these applications on their devices. She did not play any games on her phone because she also needed prepaid data to download them. She reflected on the interplay of cost and use in one of our conversations as follows:

*'Ha ke sena airtime ya ho founela motho, ke romella message 'cause ke batla ho ba jwetsa something... ke na le digames, WhatsApp le Facebook empa ha ke di bapale 'cause ha kena tjhelete ya ho reka data ya digames.'*

(*'When I don't have airtime to phone a person, I send them a [text] message because I want to tell them something... I have games, WhatsApp and Facebook but I don't play [use] them because I don't have money to buy lots of airtime and data for games.'*)

According to Mpeo, limited finances are the main reason for her lack of access to social media and instant messaging services such as WhatsApp and Facebook as they require airtime/data

usage. She links these services to games– and thus ‘playing’ and entertainment – rather than ‘communicating’ (i.e. exchanging information). The latter is the function she assigned to her text messages.

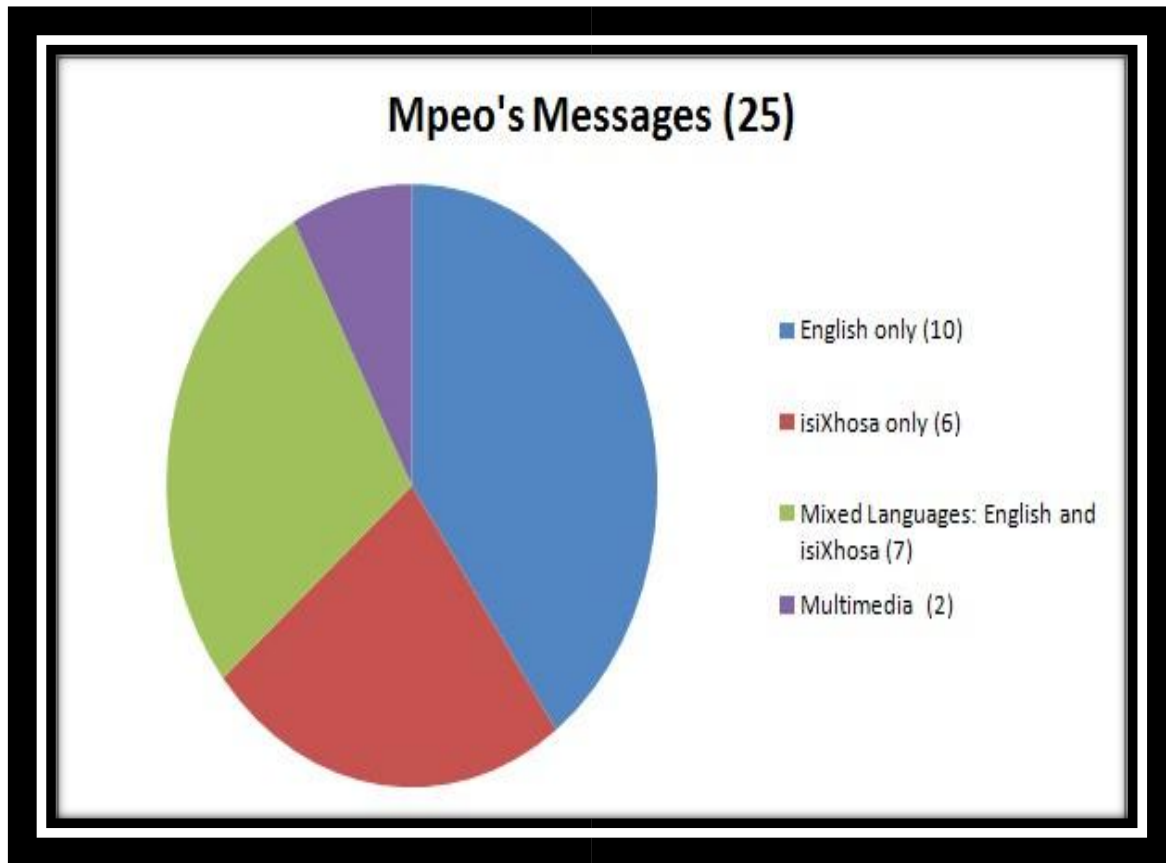
I transferred airtime to Mpeo’s phone so that she could forward messages she had sent between December 2014 and Easter 2015. She confirmed that she sometimes deletes her messages, but she did not specify how many she deleted, or the reasons why she would do so. This means that Mpeo probably sent more messages than the 25 messages which she forwarded to me.

When I asked whether she composed the messages by herself, Mpeo said that only her cousin Rethabile sometimes contributed. The digital literacy collaboration with her cousin differs from the Mopedi brothers’ mediated Facebook access. As discussed in Chapter 6, Katleho said that he can read in isiXhosa but cannot write in it. Thus, while he is able to mediate texts (Bible and Facebook) in isiXhosa for his brother via reading, when it comes to writing it is only English and Sesotho. Therefore, unlike the other participants, Mpeo’s literacy history, which includes formal learning in isiXhosa for six years in De Doorns (see Chapter 3), made it possible for her to compose English as well as isiXhosa texts. Sesotho is notably absent from Mpeo’s texts. When asked about this apparent absence of the language from her messages, Mpeo’s response was:

*Ke rata ho bua Sesotho ho feta, feela ke tlwaetse ho ngola dimessage tsa ka ka seXhosa haholo ‘cause my friends, ha ba tsebe ho bala Sesotho. (‘I love to speak Sesotho the most but I am used to writing [typing] my messages in isiXhosa ‘cause my friends do not know how to read in Sesotho.)*

In response to her explanation, I pointed out that she also used isiXhosa when texting her Sesotho-speaking cousins in Cape Town who have adequate Sesotho reading and writing skills. She indicated that she knew that her older cousin Thato could also read and understand isiXhosa well. Her responses suggest that her language choices take her recipients’ linguistic repertoires into account. She might also be more used to writing informal texts in isiXhosa; whereas Sesotho featured mainly in her formal schoolwork. Her messages are categorized according to languages used in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: A chart summarizing Mpeo's text messages according to language choice (N= 25)



Mpeo's English-only messages are reproduced in Table 7.3; her isiXhosa-only messages in 7.4. The multilingual messages can be found in Table 7.5. There are ten English-only texts, six in isiXhosa-only and seven messages are written in a mix of isiXhosa and English. There are two MMS messages; one with English only text and another without any text.

Table 7.3: Mpeo’s English text messages (N=10)

No	Recipient	English	Standard-English
1	Friend-Cape Town	What are you doing	
2	Friend-Cape Town	What are you doing	
3	Best Friend-De Doorns	Happy valentines day	
4	Best Friend-De Doorns	I miss you to	I miss you too
5	Best Friend-De Doorns	Me to	Me too
6	Best Friend-De Doorns	Good night love	
7	Friend-Cape Town	I come	I am coming
8	Friend-Cape Town	Ok we are coming	
9	Friend-Cape Town	Why are you sleeping so early	
10	Friend-Cape Town	I sèe you dont anderstend what I am saying just promiss me you will come tomorrow	I see you don’t understand what I am saying just promise me you will come tomorrow

While capital letters appeared at the beginning of most messages, Mpeo did not use full stops or question marks at the end of them. The use of these capitals is likely to be the result of the autocorrect function from her phone’s settings. This function capitalizes initial words. In contrast to the Facebook texts, discussed above, Mpeo did not make use of the medium-specific abbreviations associated with globally recognized SMS English (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008). Non-standard spellings were identified with ‘too’ which is spelt as ‘to’ in 4 and 5. In SMS 10 ‘anderstend’ and ‘promiss’ can be seen as reflecting the local vernacular pronunciation of these words. Such non-standard orientations are typical of grassroots literacies (Blommaert, 2008). According to Blommaert (2010:85-86), grassroots literacies deploy various literacy skills, resources and tools “in ways that do not respond to institutional ortho-graphic norms”. Typically embedded in a local literacy cultures, these texts are written by “people who are not fully inserted into elite economies of information, language and literacy” (Blommaert, 2008:7). Nonetheless, besides two misspellings mentioned and the fact that her SMS writing generally also excludes punctuations, her English texts seem oriented towards the standard variety taught at school. Table 7.4 summarises Mpeo’s isiXhosa text messages.

Table 7.4: Mpeo’s isiXhosa text messages with translations (N=6)

No.	Recipient	isiXhosa SMS	English Translation
11	Friend-CPT	<i>Ewe ndiyifumene upasile</i>	Yes I received the parcel
12	Friend-CPT	<i>Sizo kwenza ntoni</i>	What are we going to do
13	Friend-CPT	<i>Uyeza</i>	Are you coming
14	Friend-DD	<i>*** bendingazi ukubanguwe ubusithini</i>	*** I didn’t know it was you, what were you saying
15	Friend-DD	<i>Uya ndigezela wena</i>	You are messing with me
16	Friend-DD	<i>Umthumela njani iatime umntu ***</i>	How do you send airtime to a person***

The isiXhosa texts include four questions and two statements; again, punctuations symbols are not used. The borrowed English word for ‘parcel’ in (11) is integrated into the isiXhosa structure. However, *upasile* uses the incorrect noun class prefix (*u-*, class 1a, which is mostly used for names and humans) instead of the class 9 prefix *i-* which is used for borrowed words (*iphasele*). The spelling *iatime* in (16) is somewhat unusual, more common is *airtime*. Note also that in (20), below, she uses the variant spelling *a.time*

Most notable, however, is the influence from Sesotho orthography. Sesotho employs a disjunctive orthography, while isiXhosa uses a conjunctive orthography. Thus, in (12) isiXhosa *sizokwenza* is spelled disjunctively as *sizo kwenza* and so is *uya ndigezela* in (15) which is normally written as one word in isiXhosa. In Sesotho, the equivalent phrase for the latter would be *wa nhlanyetsa* (with the space). These practices further illustrate the non-standard orientation mentioned above in relation to locally functioning grassroots literacies. However, they do not affect the meaning of her messages.

Messages that use both English and isiXhosa are given in Table 7.5. These messages show translanguaging as discussed in Chapter 2; that is, the skillful use of multilingual linguistic resources.

Table 7.5: Mpeo’s multilingual (English and isiXhosa) text messages with translations (N=7)

No	Recipient	Mixed languages	English Translation
17	Friend-De Doorns	Ok *** bye <u>undi bulisele ku ***ukuba ukhe wa mbona iproblem Xa ndi mfowunela andi mfumani</u>	Ok *** bye, send my regards to *** if you see her I [have] a problem when I phone her I do not get her.
18	Cousin-Cape Town	<u>Ndi phethwe lizinyo li galeukundiphatha ngo Mvulo.ngo Lwesibini izolo laba buhlunguka khulu andazi ngomso lizakubanjani. Kodwa namhlanje lingcono kakhulu kodwa ndidumbile. ENJOY ChRISTMASS with *** happy!!!!!!</u>	I have a toothache, it started on Monday. On Tuesday yesterday it was very painful I don't know how it will be like tomorrow. But today it is much better but I am swollen. ENJOY Christmas with ***happy!!!!!!
19	Friend-Cape Town	<u>Khawu ndi sendele iartim ewenze lento No Name *141*6328*07*512*40*5# Phaku five nokuba ubhale u three andina artime</u>	When you send me airtime, you do the no name thing *141*6328*07*512*40*5# at five you can write three I don't have airtime
20	Friend-Cape Town	<u>Andina a.time</u>	I don't have airtime
21	Friend-De Doorns	<u>Ndiku fonele nge mistake good night ndizakufonela ngomso</u>	I phoned you by mistake good night I will call you tomorrow
22	Friend-De Doorns	<u>Nguwe lo ondifounela ngepraivet number</u>	Is it you [who] phoned me with a private number
23	Friend-De Doorns	<u>Ibiyi mistake la message ebendiyi bhale ekuqaleni ndiyi sendendinga yigqibanga ukuyibhala SoRrY</u>	The message that I wrote at the beginning was send by mistake I sent it without completing composing it SoRrY

Again, the multilingual texts do not have much punctuation and Mpeo arranges some words akin to written verbal art (see 18 and 23). These types of informal writing are considered to be resourceful and creative (Kress, 2000, Blommaert, 2008:73, Thurlow, 2012 and Deumert, 2014:4-5). They are highlighted by typographical variations where some letters and words are shaped and arranged unconventionally to create visually artistic or ornamental spelling forms. 'SoRrY' in (23) illustrates this decorative writing style with the unconventional use of capitals. However, it is limited to two occasions in Mpeo's texts. She generally uses ordinary fonts and sizes.

Let us take a closer look at (21) which uses both conjunctive and disjunctive writing. *Standard isiXhosa* is provided underneath followed by the English Translation:

(21) Ndiku fonele ngemistake good night ndizakufonela ngomso

'Ndikufonele ngemistake good night ndizakufonela ngomso'

'I phoned you by mistake good night I will phone you tomorrow'

She sent the message to her friend informing her that she had phoned her by mistake. The message was in isiXhosa with the English words 'mistake' and 'good night' inserted. The words used for the act of phoning are integrated borrowings: *ndiku fonele*, 'I phoned', written disjunctively and *ndizakufonela*, 'I will phone you', written in conjunctive spelling.

Mpeo's disjunctive writing practices can be interpreted as a type of orthographic interference from Sesotho. They also reflect her literacy history (which first involved learning English and isiXhosa, then English and Sesotho). Her digital writing practices highlight the fact that so long as one is able to "participate productively and/or receptively" (Androutsopoulos, 2012:29) with others, diverse ways of writing can be used to communicate.

#### 7.4. Mpeo: Writing Texts: Function

Steinberg's (2007) description of interpersonal communication as interactions that occur in face-to-face situations is challenged by digital interactions and relationships that are maintained through texts and phone calls. However, since Mpeo said she receives less than ten texts a week, it is likely that she does most of her 'relationship work' through face-to-face and voice-to-voice interactions, and not through literacy.

Examples of strongly socially oriented messages are examples 3, 4 and 6. However, their brevity does not support Thurlow's (2003) hypothesis that message length implies an effort to connect socially (i.e. the longer the message, the more one cares). The only text that exceeds the 140-character limit was (18). This message is informative and maintains, at the same time, an intimate family relationship. Texts 21 and 23 also have both a social and an informational function. Jakobson (1960:353) argued that it is highly unlikely to "find verbal messages [i.e. speech or text] that would fulfill only one function".

Examples 3, 4, and 6, which explicitly express sentiments of affection (in English), were sent to her best friend. Similarly, the texting practices of multilingual participants in South Africa and Senegal, discussed in Deumert and Lexander (2013:522), also indicated that English was “frequently used in intimate interactions, especially for expressions of love, affection and attraction” (see also Deumert and Masinyana, 2008:129).

Mpeo’s texts can be interpreted as doing substantial ‘relationship work’. For example, even a message such as *Andina a.time* (‘I don’t have airtime’, (20)) could mean a number of things such as ‘I am not ignoring you, I am fine, do not worry about me or feel offended when I do not answer you.’ Therefore, while the informational function has a “leading task” (Jakobson, 1960:354) in this particular example, the social function is also important.

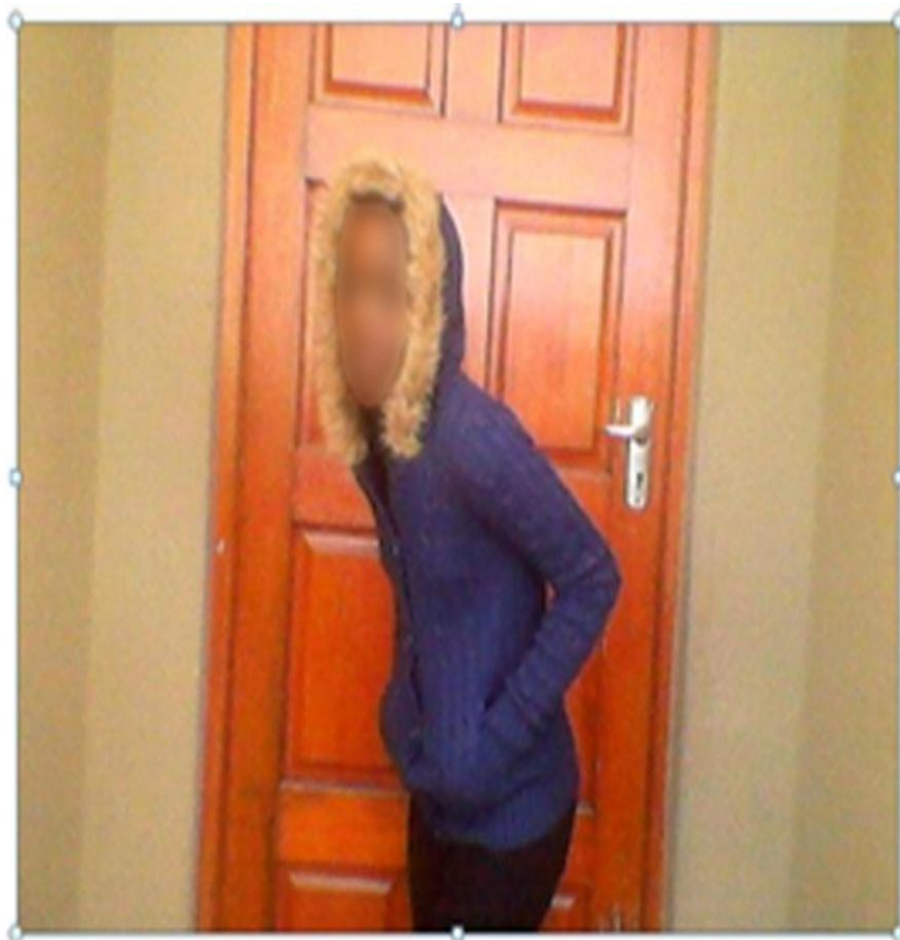
Mpeo also sent two multimedia messages (Figure 7.3 and 7.4). Both were photographs of Mpeo in front of the main house – and not the shack where she lives – facing the camera.

Figure 7.3: Photograph of Mpeo sent via MMS



In 7.3 she poses with a school textbook in her hands. The image was accompanied by: “I miss you to” (Text 4). As noted above, some of Mpeo’s messages had multiple functions. This is to be expected as language and communication in generally is inherently multifunctional. This message, which was sent to her best friend in De Doorns, communicates two meanings: (a) a longing for her friend, and (b) a visual representation of Mpeo as a learner who lives in a house (and not a shack) in Cape Town. Thus, while one of the functions of the message is social bonding, there is also a sense of showing off, of communicating an aspirational social identity. In the second MMS, she is standing in front of the house with the door closed, wearing a fashionable winter jacket.

Figure 7.4: Photograph-(2) of Mpeo sent via MMS



In our conversations she indicated that her friends in De Doorns are envious of her for moving to the city, a place they associate with a ‘better’ life. I argue that Mpeo, through these images,

establishes the social persona of someone who has moved up socioeconomically from the informal farm settlements in De Doorns. Cameron (2001:170) states that a social identity is “something people are continually constructing and reconstructing in their encounters with each other and the world.” Therefore, the different dwellings are indicative of particular economic positions (i.e. shack dwellers are generally less economically affluent than brick house dwellers). The MMSes are thus associated with two social functions: identity construction and friendship work. Lemphane and Prinsloo’s (2013:10) observation that a “mix of image and writing as identity markers indicates that children engaged with both visual and linguistic modalities in relation to themselves and others” is reflected in these two examples.

### 7.5. Morena: Computer Literacies

The Motlounge household’s expenses in relation to digital resources were higher when compared with the other three homes. This family had the most extensive digital media access, including a flat screen television with a DSTV decoder and a DVD player. Both parents have cell-phones and Morena’s older brother, Dimpho, has a laptop and a smart-phone. Dimpho’s digital devices were bought on contract in 2013 as a reward from his parents for good academic performance. At home, Dimpho uses the laptop mainly to watch or play previously downloaded games, music and movies. He said that since the original contract expired, he cannot always afford to pay for the necessary prepaid services, and mainly uses the devices offline. While they had access to most of the devices within the home, Morena and his older sister, Mpho did not own any digital devices themselves.

Morena said that the laptop was his favourite device, and he frequently used it to watch movies and play offline games. He also used the Picmix application to edit photographs taken with Dimpho’s smart-phone. Morena knew about the free Wi-Fi services at the Gugulethu mall and taxi rank but had never used them because he was not allowed to use the devices outside of the house.<sup>14</sup> He reported that he does not use the devices’ textual manuals for reference. He added that, initially, he would watch his brother while he used the laptop and smart-phone, and then afterwards he would try to practice what he saw and only consult him if he struggled. However,

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<sup>14</sup> In 2015, the Western Cape Province in partnership with Neotel targeted the township busiest spots with free internet services (Alfreds, 2015).

Morena also emphasized that he does not always consult with Dimpho and sometimes when they play, he noted proudly, that he even beats his older brother's scores. Thus, for Morena, the learning of digital skills occurred not through mediation or any form of 'teaching', but mostly through observation, imitation and trying out. His reflections in our conversations suggest that many of the activities that he performs are self-taught, through trial and error. Such "playful experimentation with technology ... can often lead to technical and media expertise" (Ito, *et al.* 2009:58), which might benefit his overall learning and formal education experience.

Morena did not really read or type anything besides the required English commands when playing games on the computer. He favoured highly visual games such as like *PES 13 football* and *Hitman*. While he might not use these devices for traditional literacy (i.e. purposeful reading and writing), his photo editing skills and gaming activities suggest a high level of 'computer literacy' which incorporates multimodality. Thus, literacy is not simply about reading/writing, it is much more complex.

## 7.6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed out-of-school digital access in greater detail. The social practice aspect of literacy is highlighted: literacy allows people to communicate information, maintain relationships, construct identities, and entertain themselves. Even though the core participants belong to the same socio-economically marginalized group, and attend the same school and grade, each of them has unique digital access. Sesotho is noticeably absent from these leisure literacies: they employ English and isiXhosa. These multilingual informal literacies can be distinguished from the typically monolingual academic and religious literacy practices (Chapter 5 and 6). Unlike academic texts, locally produced informal texts are non-normative and non-standard.

The Facebook data incorporates local languages (isiXhosa) and also draws on the "global SMS English standard" (see table 7.1) with "abbreviations, paralinguistic restitutions, non-standard spellings" (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008:117). While the internationally recognized informal texting practices are associated with the youth, these adult-composed Facebook texts suggest that such orthographic practices are not age-specific. However, it is notable that abbreviations

are largely absent from Mpeo's texts. Since most studies on texting focus on older teens and Mpeo is in her early teens, lack of exposure to these global texting practices might explain her lack of use. As she grows up and becomes more exposed to online practices, she might expand her informal English repertoire. Her literacy practices reflect her unique isiXhosa literacy learning history. While her messages were "not shortened in any way to suit the maxims of textese" (Dyers and Davids, 2015:27), the use of disjunctive writing associated with Sesotho in isiXhosa texts reveals an intricate blending of these languages. I would like to suggest that it can be described as a case of orthographic translanguaging. This is in addition to her borrowing from English in her isiXhosa writing (lexical translanguaging).

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

### 8.1. Introduction

This study explored the communicative resources that the learners have at their disposal in out-of-school contexts, with a particular focus on the role of Sesotho. The core participants were observed in their respective homes and public contexts including the church and local library. The ethnographic descriptions of the events that happened in these contexts help us to understand literacy as a social practice. To complement these observations, data on participants' semiotic repertoires, histories and practices was obtained through semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, language portraits and social network diagrams. In accordance with the NLS framework, key analysis units included literacy events, practices and artefacts. The artefacts that the learners engage with in private and public contexts shape their literacy practices and can be regarded as beneficial for their overall literacy development.

The data demonstrates that diverse literacy practices permeate everyday life even in lower-income contexts, which have often been considered to be literacy-poor. In other words, the literacy engagements described in this study show the complexity of everyday literacy practices in these homes. It also shows that even though participants occupy similar marginalized linguistic and socioeconomic positions, their literacy practices are far from uniform. The research findings are summarized in this chapter.

### 8.2. Summary of Semiotic Resources and Language Choices

The discussion in this thesis reflects the “multiplicity and complexity of individual and group repertoires” (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000:5), which has been attested in NLS studies more broadly. In fact, multimodality and multilingual repertoires (involving Sesotho, isiXhosa and English) were central throughout the analysis. During the observed literacy events, the participants employed a variety of linguistic resources as well as non-verbal signs (e.g. illustrations, photographs, gestures, etc). Their literacy practices included different levels of engagements with particular literacy artefacts.

Sesotho mainly featured as a spoken language within the homes. Depending on the particular household, it was used alongside isiXhosa and/or Sephuthi. There was a clear dominance of isiXhosa in public contexts. While LPS generally supports multilingualism with the two LoLT's as parallel monolingual standard varieties, everyday informal speech practices regularly employ language mixing and borrowing (discussed under the heading 'translanguaging' in chapter 2).

LPS provides an invaluable space for the learners' overall literacy development in Sesotho. However, apart from the photocopies from school (Chapter 5) and the two grandmothers' Sesotho Bibles (Chapter 4), the participants had very limited access to Sesotho texts. This lack of Sesotho texts is a consequence of the school's limited resources and the Western Cape official language policy, which prioritizes English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Consequently, literacy resources in Sesotho were generally absent from local libraries. Given that formal learning typically employs written language and "extensive reading is crucial for academic development" (Cummins, 2000:98), these limited Sesotho literacy resources (in and out-of-school contexts) are problematic.

Although the learners are not taught to read or write in isiXhosa at LPS, texts in isiXhosa nevertheless featured strongly in various literacy events, including library books (Chapter 4), religious texts (Chapter 6) and informal electronic texts (Chapter 7). This provided the learners with unique opportunities to acquire and improve their literacy in this language. These findings also highlight a hierarchy of two local African languages in Cape Town, where Sesotho comes second to isiXhosa.

English persists at the expense of literacy in African languages, including Sesotho because of its association with socio-economic power, which, in turn, is a consequence of the country's colonial and political history. Many studies have highlighted that, especially in South Africa's urban areas, "literacy in English is often perceived as a passport to socioeconomic status and mobility" (Banda, 2003: 113). Even though formal English texts were at the core some of the academic literacy events in this study, the talk surrounding them was generally multilingual with Sesotho, isiXhosa and some borrowed English words.

### 8.3. Digital Literacy Access

The learners' socioeconomic realities did not allow for many luxuries and the digital resources they own, share and have at their disposal in private and public out-of-school contexts reflect their household's social and financial standings. However as indicated, access alone does not ensure use. Besides Morena, the other learners had marginal access to digital resources. This included cell-phones (Mpeo, Katleho) and strictly monitored public access (Moeketsi). Mpeo's cell-phone ownership and use illustrates that mobile-phones can help individuals "develop, sustain and enhance their [overall] literacy skills" (West and Chew 2014:18). This also applies to computer literacies. Moeketsi used his library access for his school homework, while Morena's laptop access at home was for leisure (gaming) and the development of digital skills (picture editing).

### 8.4. Literacy Collaboration and Mediation

The majority of literacy events involved interactional dynamics and are associated social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). While there were some solo (monologic) literacy events, this data shows that literacy was typically collective rather than individual because people generally seek help from others within their social networks. The distributive aspect of literacy (Kell, 2008) reflects its social situatedness. The collective effort between Mpeo and Rethabile in the construction of the figurative sentences and drawings for her English homework (see Chapter 5) involved literacy collaboration because of their equal relationship and the give-and-take roles. Thus, in equal relationships interactions are typically collaborative; in unequal relationships, where there are, for example, substantial age (and knowledge) differences, interaction facilitates literacy mediation.

The literacy mediation categories discussed ranged from reading and writing for the benefit of others to providing other kinds of support with literacy tasks. Other mediation processes were dependent on the resources employed. Digital literacy mediation for example, occurred in events where digital resources were primarily employed and religious texts were mediated by the father and Sunday school teacher. In addition to the parent-child mediations; the Mopedi brothers' example also demonstrated the older sibling's role as a literacy mediator. While distinctions

were made between mediation and collaboration, in some instances the boundaries between them were fluid. Thus, Katleho acts as a mediator for his younger brother when they rehearse their church performances, and also collaborates with him at church during the actual performance. This exemplifies the overlap between the two social processes.

### 8.5. Scarce Sesotho Literacy Resources: Implications and Recommendations

The strong presence of isiXhosa highlights the scarcity of Sesotho texts in out-of-school contexts: Sesotho does not only need to assert its place *vis a vis* English, but also *vis a vis* isiXhosa. To effectively address this lack of Sesotho literacy, various initiatives and partnerships are required with the school, educators, authors and publishers, policy makers, and other “experts who can carry out the technical work involved in the development of effective bilingual education” (Alidou, 2004:213). The provincial and national Departments of Education and other governmental, private and local institutions can offer some assistance by sourcing Sesotho literacy artefacts from other provinces such as the Free State.

The rich and strong oral characteristics of African languages have triumphed against external forces throughout history (Alexander, 2005 and Prah, 2010). However, within most local literacy contexts, especially in education and formal communication contexts, these languages have been relegated to secondary positions after English. Besides schools that offer formal literacy resources and learning in various African languages, public libraries also should play roles in their development (Alidou, 2004:210). Seeing that literacy in isiXhosa is more readily available in the province, perhaps it would be advantageous for the learners if LPS incorporated isiXhosa as an extra language subject. Implementing these recommendations will hopefully elevate African languages from their so called “Cinderella status” (Mbatha and Plüddemann, 2004:5), and return them to their rightful role within the communicative ecology of South Africa.

### 8.6. Closing Remarks and Future Research Opportunities

The literacy practices described in this study are “a necessary basis for later literacy and consequently later school success” (Tabors, 2008:4). Yet, as Juffermans’ (2009) reminds us literacy is an unequally distributed resource in society. Similarly, Deumert (2005: 63) notes that

“language can act as an obstacle to civic participation and can lead to various social exclusions” (also Prinsloo and Baynham, 2013: xxiv). The same applies to digital access and other literacy tools which are also to a considerable degree determined by the specific household’s finances.

Although it is restricted, the learners’ access to Sesotho literacy is important and could be maintained at the local high school. If they enroll at Fezeka Secondary, they can develop their written competence in Sesotho until Grade 12 because it is offered as a first-additional language. Nevertheless, comprehensive ethnographic observations are required to examine multilingual literacy development in the longer run. The described isiXhosa-Sesotho language contact situations and translanguaging practices would be worthy future research topics. Within the ethnographic NLS framework, such studies could also look at the complex hierarchies that exist between African languages (in this case isiXhosa, Sesotho and Sephuthi) within individual and communal repertoires.

Longitudinal research could also further examine cases of older siblings’ mediation and assess different mediation categories, or peer collaborative interactions and their outcomes for overall literacy and linguistic development. Lastly, local research on digital literacy practices of lower-income Black African adolescent users in their early teens is imperative. This is a research area where only very limited work exists to date.

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# **List of Appendices**

## **Appendix 1. Parental consent letter and form**

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Tlalane Lekhanya and I am a Masters student in the Linguistics Section at the University of Cape Town. My thesis research is on digital communications and language practices of Sesotho first language speakers in Cape Town with a focus on school-going children who are taught in Sesotho. Lehlohonolo Primary School has been identified as one of the only two Sesotho medium primary schools in the Western Cape. The pupils at the school would therefore be the most suitable participants for my study and I hereby request permission from you as the parents/guardians for your child to participate in the research.

I will need to spend time with and gather information from your child regarding their language choices and use at school, home and other environments as well as finding out more about their digital access (cell-phone, PC, laptop, etc.). I would also like to request time for short informal discussions/interviews with you on the topic.

Your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated and if you require any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If permission is granted for your child to participant in the research, please sign and return the parental consent form below to school. Please also mark with X to indicate your future availability for informal discussion/interview to be arranged for a time most convenient to you.

Kind regards.

Tlalane Lekhanya

0729186197 / lkhtla001@myuct.ac.za

### **Confirmed Consent Return Slip**

I give my permission for my child (child's name) \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this research.

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian will be available for a short informal discussion/interview at home: YES NO

Parent/Guardian Cell number and/or email: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 2. Semi-structured interview schedules**

### **2A.Schedule for semi-structured interviews: The questions for the main participants and their older siblings**

*Please tell me about:*

- 1) The languages that you love, and dislike, the most.
- 2) The languages that you use the most.
- 3) The languages that you find to be difficult.
- 4) The languages that you would like to learn or know.
- 5) The languages you use with your friends.

*Let's talk about:*

- 1) Your language and literacy history.
- 2) The reasons you like to go a school at LPS where you are taught in your home language.
- 3) Another school you would have liked to attend and the reason.
- 4) The high school/s and university/ies you would like to attend and your career goals.

*Please describe:*

- 1) Your use of Sesotho with relatives, friends, school mates and indicate whether the interactions are spoken and face-to-face or on the phone or written.
- 2) The different ways you communicate with your social network contacts and the digital devices used, if any.
- 3) Cell-phone that you own or have access to including the owners (e.g. older sibling, parent or friend and public) and the access you have to these devices.

*Let's talk about:*

- 1) Your cell-phone activities like taking pictures, playing games, calling, sending messages, etc.
- 2) Your airtime and data costs and usage.

- 3) Your access to digital media and devices including computers, digital television, internet, and other electronic devices such as PS and X-box.
- 4) Your use of use email, Mxit, What's app, SMS, features on these devices.

## **2B. Schedule for semi-structured interviews with the teachers and the principal**

Please tell me about the school's history and language practices and subjects.

*Please tell me your thoughts on:*

- 1) Sesotho language maintenance through mother tongue education.
- 2) The learners' language practices at school in the classroom and outside during breaks.
- 3) The pass rates; the school(s) the learners are likely to attend for high school.
- 4) The support from the state for the school, i.e. grants, subsidies, etc.
- 5) The school's overall literacy resources and learners' access to them in out-of-school contexts.
- 6) The socioeconomic statuses of the learners' families.
- 7) The learners' digital access at school.

**2C. Schedule for semi-structured interviews: Parents' about their family's background and histories and their children's linguistics and literacy practices**

- 1) Their roots and where they originally come from, their migration history.
- 2) Their educational background and language and literacy histories.
- 3) Their employment and monthly income details (if willing to disclose).
- 4) The high schools they wish to enroll their children into after primary school.
- 5) Their children's languages patterns and whether they mirror theirs or not.

**Appendix 3. Data summary**

Literacy events	Context	Data Types
Homework sessions (3-4 per child =12 sessions in total)	Home and public library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Transcriptions and translations of recordings,</li> <li>(b) Observation notes,</li> <li>(c) Photographs of participants and their completed homework</li> </ul>
Church and Sunday School (Katleho and Kamohelo)	Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Video, recordings, transcriptions and translations from a performance during the church service,</li> <li>(b) Observation notes,</li> <li>(c) Photographs of literacy artefacts, spaces and participants</li> </ul>
Engagements with digital devices	Home and public library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Moeketsi’s session on the library computer</li> <li>(b) Collection of Mpeo’s SMS</li> <li>(c) Mr. Mopedi’s Facebook timeline</li> <li>(d) Observations of Morena playing laptop games and editing photos</li> </ul>
Self-reporting: language portraits, social network sketches	Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Language portraits(4)</li> <li>(b) Social network sketches(4)</li> <li>(c) Narratives, notes and translations</li> <li>(d) Photographs</li> </ul>

<p>Observations with participants who take the train to school</p>	<p>Train</p>	<p>(a) Observation notes (b) Photographs of literacy artefacts.  [not included in the discussion due to space constraints]</p>
<p>Semi-structured interviews with (4) main participants, (2) older siblings, (4) parents/guardians, (2) teachers and the school principal  Informal discussions with the participants and their younger siblings</p>	<p>Home and school</p>	<p>(a) Semi-structured interview notes. (b) Background and observation notes</p>
<p>Literacy presence survey in the living areas of the 4 homes</p>	<p>Home</p>	<p>(a) Photographs of the literacy artefacts (b) Notes from the conversations and reading performances during the survey</p>

## **Appendix 4: Visible/invisible literacy artefacts in the living areas**

### **4A. Afrikaans soccer poster text with English translation**

<b>Afrikaans on the poster</b>	<b>Mpeo's English translation of the poster</b>
Bafana se Steven Pienaar in aksie in die FIFA konfederasiebekerwedstryd tussen Spanje en Suid Afrika in Bloemfontein in Junie.	Bafana Bafana's Steven Pienaar in action in the FIFA confederation cup between Spain and South Africa in Bloemfontein in June.

**4B. Summary of visible/invisible literacy artefacts in the four living areas**

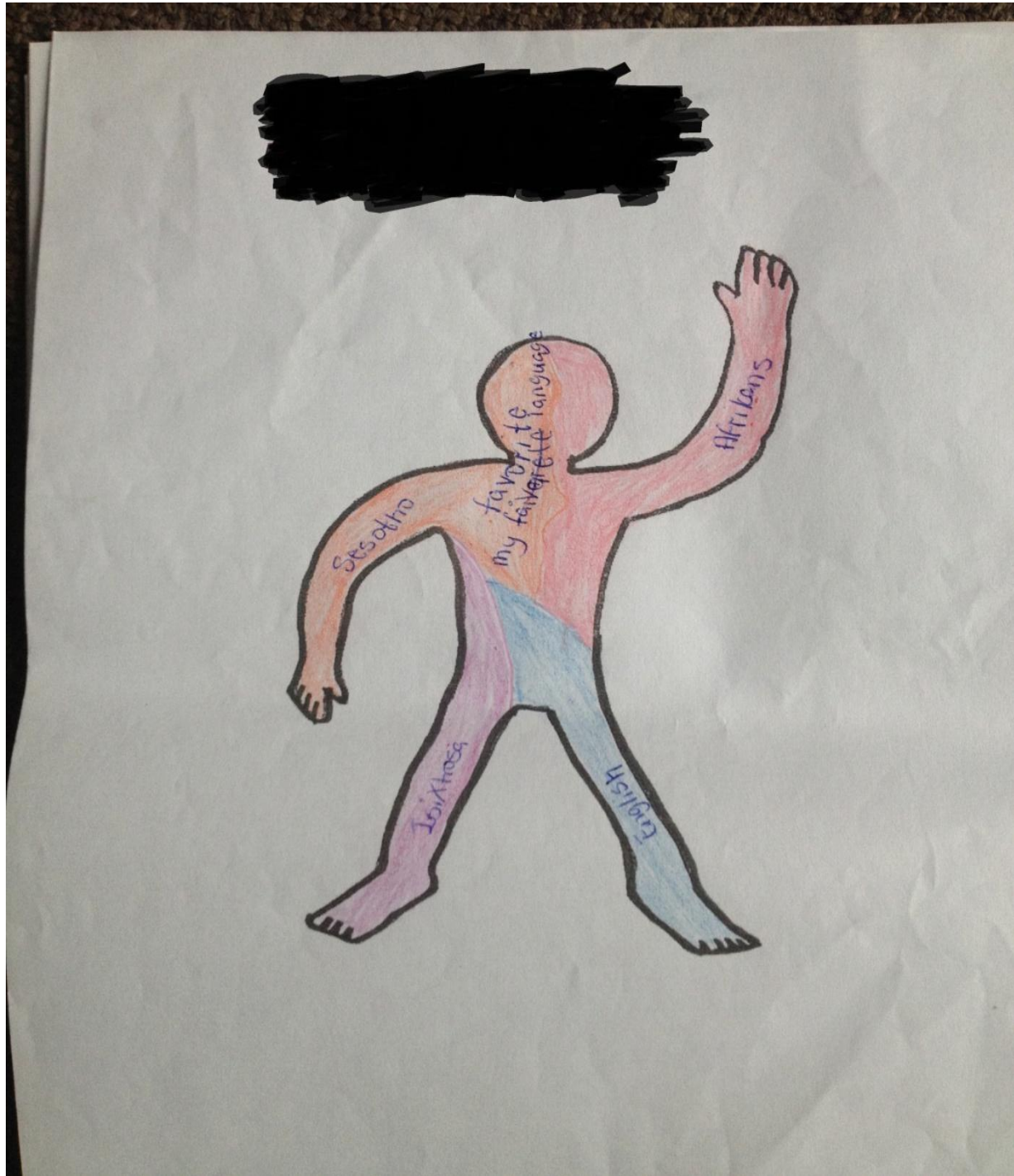
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Mpeo</b>	<b>Morena</b>	<b>Moeketsi</b>	<b>Katleho</b>
<b>Dwelling Type</b>	Shack	Shack	Brick house	Brick house
<b>School books: English and Sesotho</b>	Visible (only when in use)	Visible (only when in use)	Visible	Visible
<b>Literacy artefacts on the fridge and walls</b>	Afrikaans and English	English	English	English
<b>Bible/Hymn book</b>	Sesotho(not visible, limited access)	None	Sesotho- (mediated access only)	isiXhosa(full and mediated access)
<b>Magazines</b>	English(not visible, limited access)	None	None	English(full access)
<b>Newspapers</b>	None	None	None	English
<b>Library children's books</b>	None	None	isiXhosa (short term loans from the library)	None
<b>Books for adults</b>	None	None	None	English

**Appendix 5: Morena's Sesotho homework with translations of questions and answers**

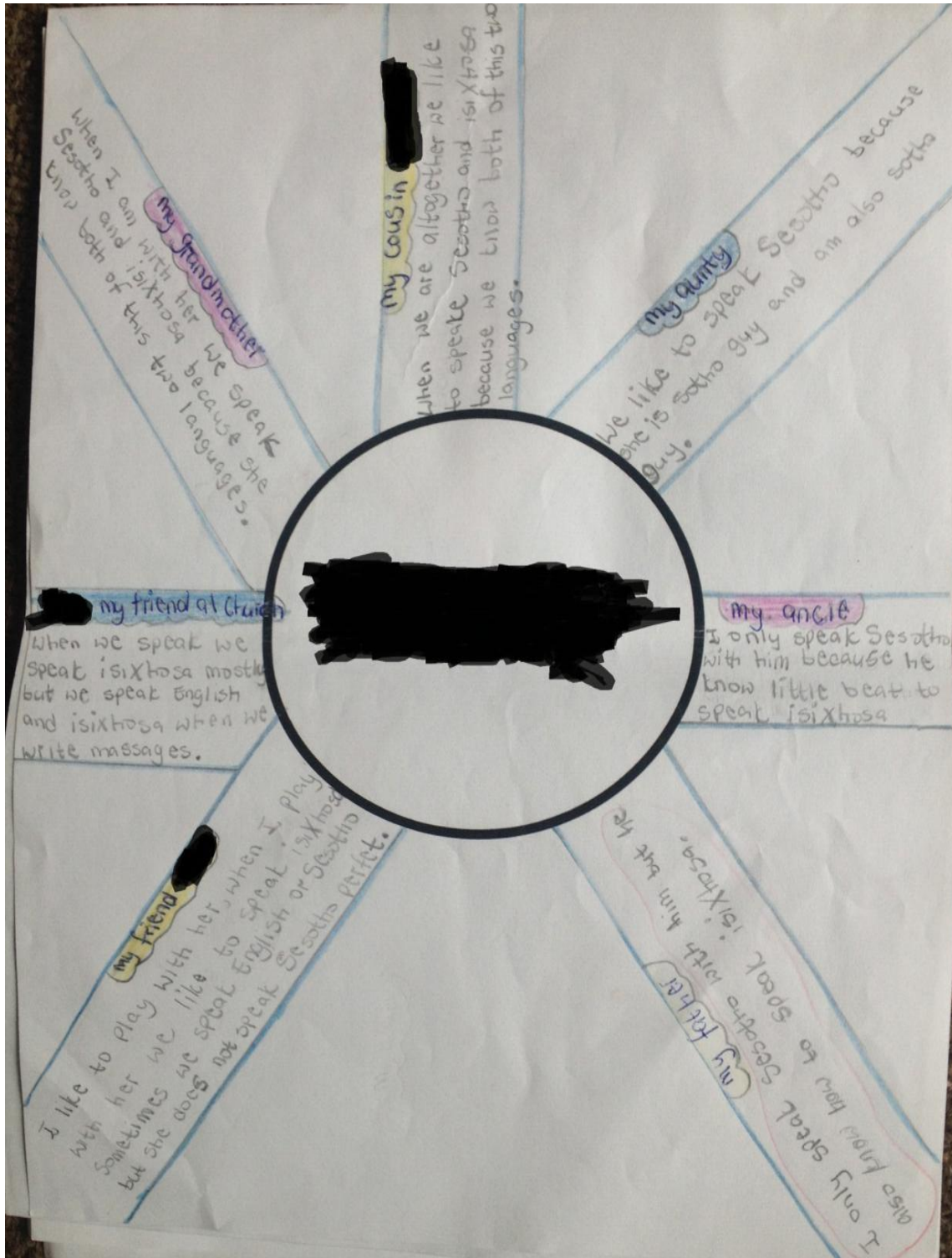
Question	Eng Translation	Answers	Eng translation
a) <i>Batswadi ba Mathata ba kae?</i>	Where are Mathata's parents?	<i>Batswadi ba Mathata ba ne bahlukahale ba lebabedi ka nako ele nngwe kotsing ya kolo.</i>	Mathata's parents both died at the same time in a car accident.
b) <i>Mathata o na le bana babo ba bakae?</i>	How many siblings did Mathata have?	<i>Mathata e ne e le ngwana a le mong habo.</i>	Mathata was the only child.
c) <i>Na ebe Mathata o entse hantle ka ho ya kerekeng?</i>	Did Mathata make the right choice by deciding to go to the church?	<i>Ee.</i>	Yes.
d) <i>Fana ka mabaka a bontshang hore Mathata o entse hantle/ha etsa hantle ka ho balehela kerekeng.</i>	Indicate why Mathata made the right choice by going to the church.	<i>Ke hantle ho bane ntate moruti o ile a ba kopantsa mathata le malomae.</i>	He was right to go to the pastor because he arranged a meeting between him and his uncle.
e) <i>Fana ka matshwao a neng a bontsha hore maloma Mathata o na sa bone hohang hore Mathata o a sotlwa.</i>	What were the signs that indicated that Mathata's uncle was not aware that his nephew was treated badly at his house?	<i>Malomae enwa wa monna a geta ka hore mathata o ikgethetse ho ya dula ditseleng ka hoo a keke a ya mmatla.</i> (Morena's incorrect answer)  Correction: <i>Mathata o ne a jella kamoreng</i>	Mathata's uncle thought that Mathata just chose to live on the streets and therefore he was not going to search for him. (Morena's incorrect answer)  Correction: Mathata ate his food in the bedroom.
f) <i>Basotho ba re "bitso lebe ke seromo" se, se bolelang?</i>	What is the meaning of the Sesotho proverb: "Bitso lebe ke seromo"?	<i>Ha o reha motho lebits[o] motho o tla etsa diketso tsa lebitso leno.</i>	A person is most likely to act and behave in a way that corresponds to their name.

Appendix 6: Self-report exercises

6A. Mpeo's language portrait



6B. Mpeo's social network sketch



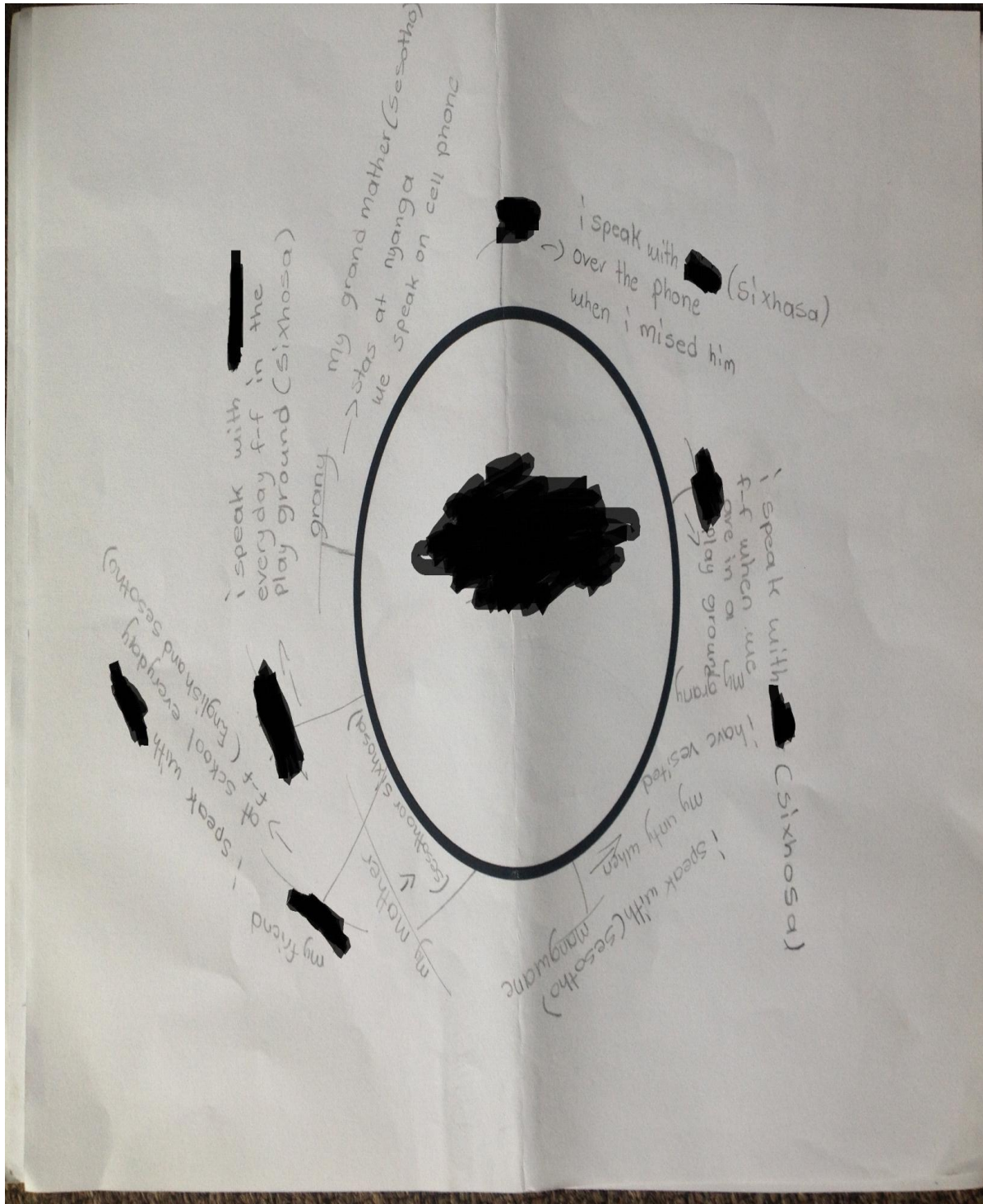
6

**6C. Reproduction of the text from Mpeo's social network sketch**

- 1) My aunty: we like to speak Sesotho because she is Sotho guy and am also Sotho guy.
- 2) My Cousin \*\*\*: When we are altogether we like to speak Sesotho and isiXhosa because we know both of this two languages.
- 3) My Grandmother: When I am with her, we speak Sesotho and isiXhosa because she know both of this two languages.
- 4) \*\*\* [Female] my Friend at church \*\*\*: When we speak we speak isiXhosa mostly but we speak English and isiXhosa when we write messages.
- 5) My Friend \*\*\*: I like to play with her, when I play with her we like to speak isiXhosa sometimes we Speak English or Sesotho but she does not speak Sesotho perfec [perfect]
- 6) My father: I only speak Sesotho with him but he also know how to speak isiXhosa.
- 7) My ancle [uncle]: I only speak Sesotho with him because he know little beat to speak isiXhosa.



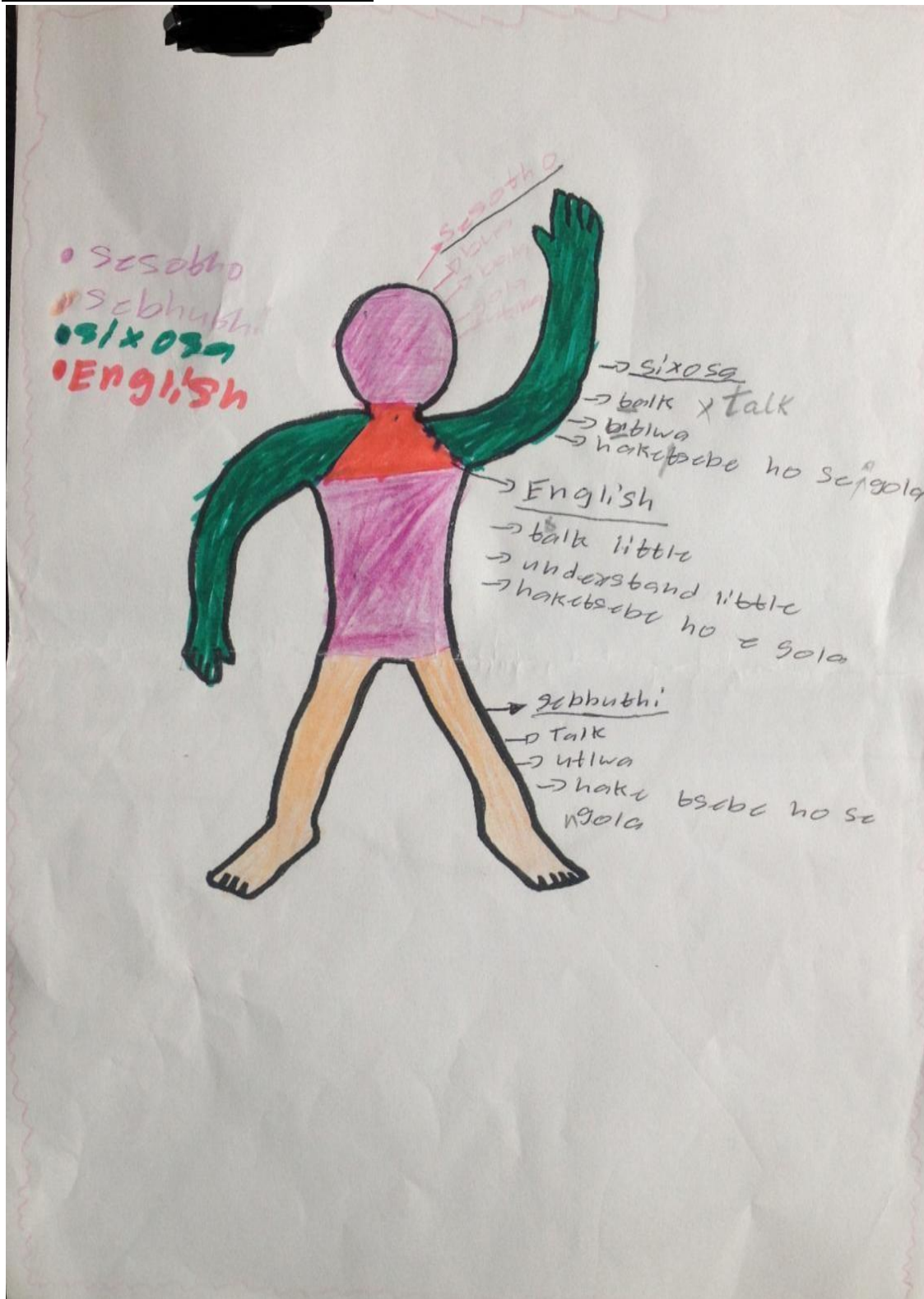
**6E. Morena's social network sketch**



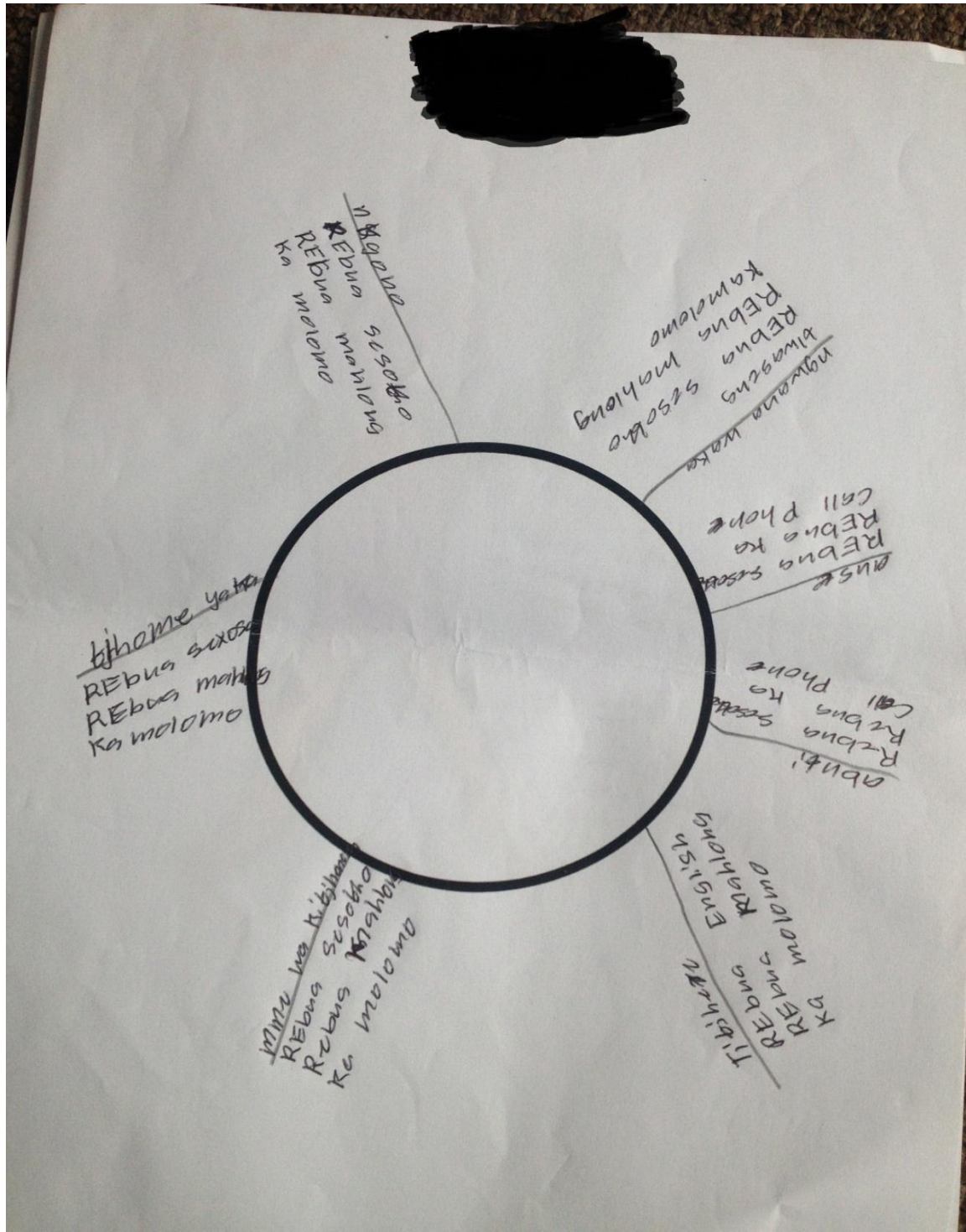
**6F. Reproduction of the text from Morena's social network sketch**

- 1) \*\*\* [Male Friend]: I speak with \*\*\*\*\* (sixhosa) –over the phone when I missed him
- 2) \*\*\* [Male Friend]: I speak with \*\*\*\*\* (sixhosa) –f-f when we are in a play ground
- 3) My granny: my grandmother stas [stays] at Nyanga [neighboring township], we speak on cell-phone
- 4) \*\*\* [ Female Friend]: I speak with \*\*\* (sixhosa) –f-f when we are in a play ground
- 5) *Mmangwane* ('marternal aunt'): I speak (Sesotho) with my unty [aunt] when I have visited [Nyanga]
- 6) My Mother: (Sesotho or Sixhosa)
- 7) My [male] friend \*\*\*: I speak with \*\*\* at school everyday f-f (English and Sesotho)

**6G. Moeketsi's language portrait**



6H. Moeketsi's social network sketch



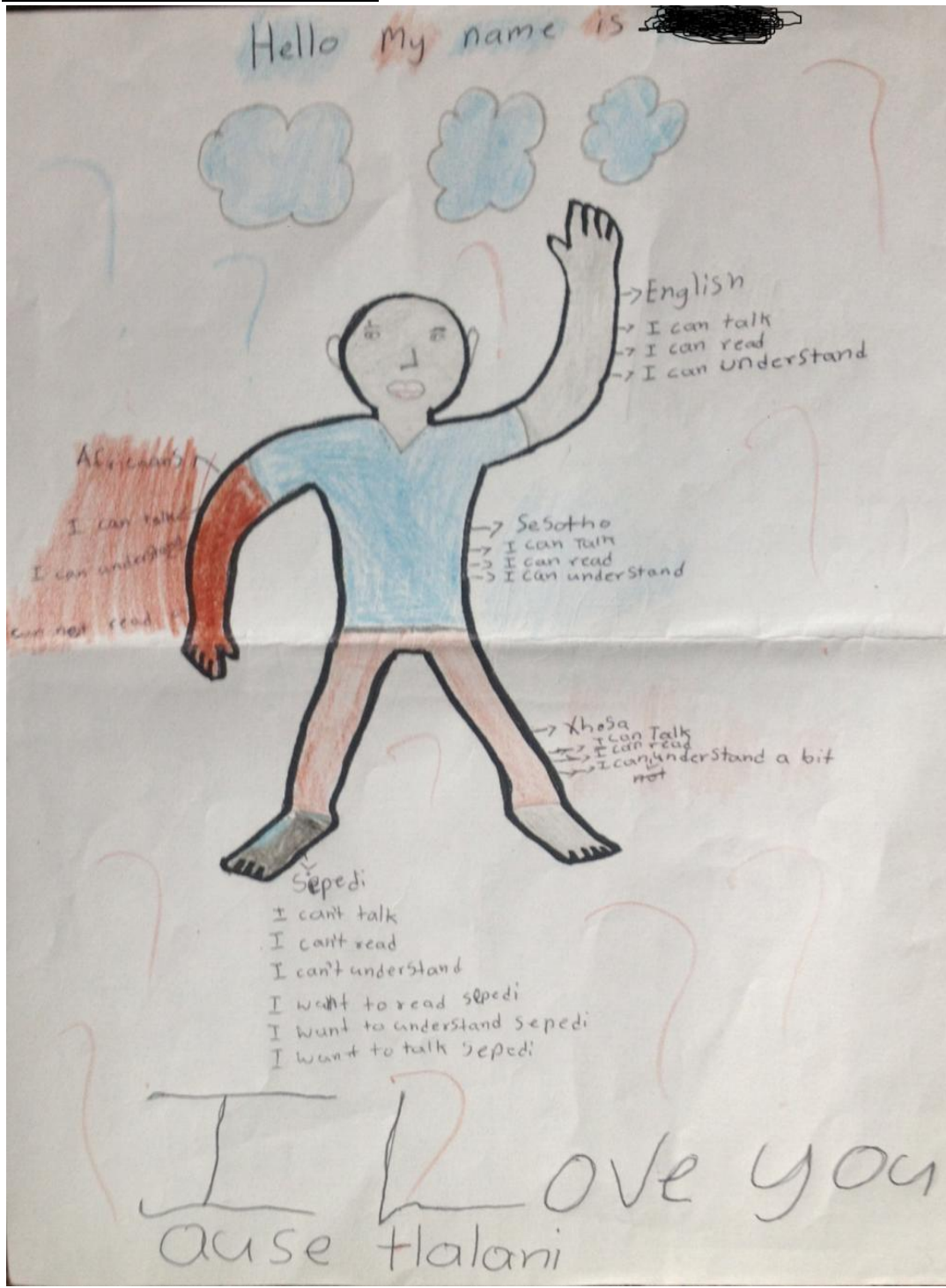
## **6I. Reproduction of the text from Moeketsi's social network sketch with translations**

- 1) *Nkgono: Re bua Sesotho –Re bua Mahlong ka molomo*
- 2) *Ngwana wa ka: tlaseng- Re bua Sesotho – Re bua mahlong ka molomo*
- 3) *Ause [Ausi]: Re bua Sesotho-Re bua ka cell-phone*
- 4) *Abuti: Re bua Sesotho-Re bua ka cell-phone*
- 5) *Titjhere: Re bua English – Re bua mahlong ka molomo*
- 6) *Mme wa \*\*\* [cousin's name]: Re bua Sesotho – Re bua mahlong ka molomo*
- 7) *Tjhome ya ka: Re bua Sexosa [isiXhosa]– Re bua mahlong ka molomo*

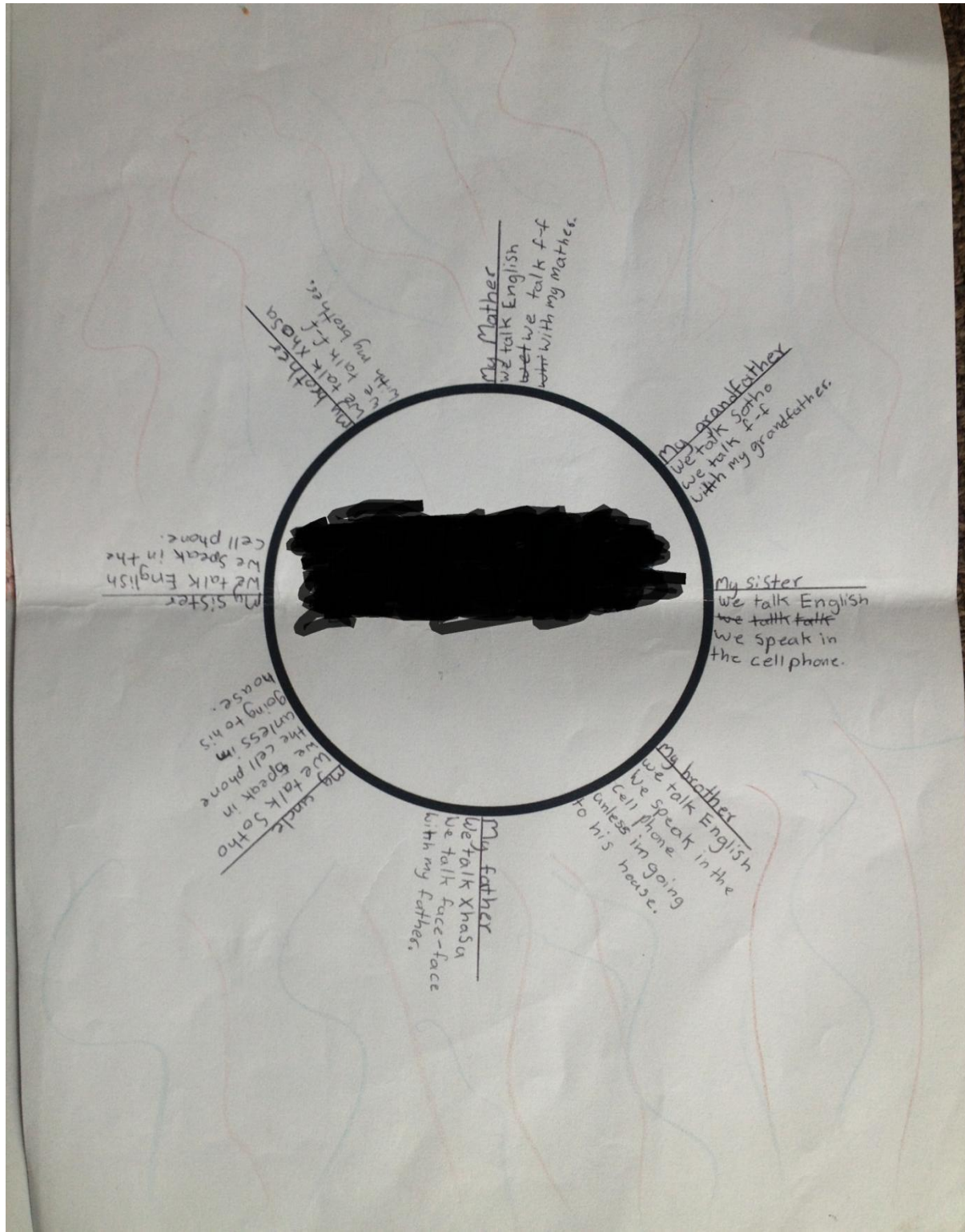
## **Translation of the text from Moeketsi's social network sketch**

- 1) Granny: We speak Sesotho –We talk face-to-face
- 2) My baby [girlfriend]: in class- We speak Sesotho – We talk face-to-face
- 3) Sister: Re bua Sesotho- We speak Sesotho on the cell-phone
- 4) Brother: We speak Sesotho on the cell-phone
- 5) Teacher: We speak English – We talk face-to-face
- 6) \*\*\*'s [cousin's name] mother: We speak Sesotho – We talk face-to-face
- 7) My friend: We speak Sexosa [isiXhosa]– We talk face-to-face

**6J. Katleho's language portrait**



**6K. Katleho's social network sketch**



**6L. Reproduction of the text from Katleho's social network sketch**

- 1) My father: We talk Xhosa- we talk face-face with my father
- 2) My uncle: We talk Sotho- we speak in the cell-phone unless I'm going to his house
- 3) My sister: We talk English-we speak in the cell-phone (repeated by mistake)
- 4) My [younger] brother: We talk Xhosa- we talk f-f with my brother
- 5) My [older] brother: We talk Xhosa- we talk f-f with my brother
- 6) My mother: We talk English- we talk f-f with my mother
- 7) My grandfather: we talk Sotho- we talk Sotho with my grandfather

**6M. Self-reports summary (with spellings as used by the participants)**

<b>Languages</b>	<b>Mpeo</b>	<b>Moeketsi</b>	<b>Morena</b>	<b>Katleho</b>
<b>Sesotho</b>	<i>Sesotho</i>	<i>Sesotho</i>	<i>Sesotho</i>	<i>Sesotho</i>
<b>isiXhosa</b>	<i>isiXhosa</i>	<i>Sixosa</i>	<i>Sixhosa</i>	<i>Xhosa</i>
<b>English</b>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>English</i>
<b>Afrikaans</b>	<i>Afrikans</i>		<i>Africanss</i>	<i>Africaans</i>
<b>isiZulu</b>			<i>Sizulu</i>	
<b>Sesotho sa Leboa</b>				<i>Sepedi</i>
<b>Sephuthi</b>		<i>Sebhuthi</i>		
<b>Spanish</b>			<i>Spanesh</i>	

## **Appendix 7: Bafokeng Clan Recitation**

The following recitation of the Bafokeng, by Moipone Mofokeng, from Mzimhlophe, in Soweto, serves as an example:

Ke Lehowana la boTlalane,  
Ke motho wa Mahase wa Mpeo le Mpewana,  
Ke hasa dikgomo,  
Ke hasa le batho,  
Ke hasa le dipudungwana naheng,  
Ke ngwana tau ya Matsebela, Nong  
ha e ntje, mmane e mpone,  
E tshaba ha e tla tshwehla molomo!

I am a descendant of Howana, of the family of Tlalane,  
Descendant of Mahase, son of Mpeo and Mpewana,  
I scatter the cattle,  
I scatter the people too,  
I scatter even the small black wildebeests in the veld,  
I am a young lion of Tsebela descendants. A vulture  
does not eat me, lightning having struck me,  
Fearing it would ooze from the mouth!