

Researching the mindsets of monolinguals: a ‘linguistic
self’ of twenty-first century monolingual art students in
Australia

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Table of contents

Table of contents	i
Abstract	v
Declaration	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
1 Introduction and review of the literature	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research questions	2
1.3 Structure of the thesis	2
1.4 The literature review	2
1.4.1 Monolingualism and the individual.....	3
1.4.2 Monolingualism in the global twenty-first century	4
1.4.3 The ‘monolingual mindset’ in Australia.....	6
1.4.4 Researching monolingualism and monolinguals in the twenty-first century	8
2 Adapting a theoretical and methodological framework in which to research mindsets of monolinguals in twenty-first century Australia	12
2.1 Theoretical framework	12
2.1.1 Attitudes, L2 motivational theory and psychological theories of self.....	13
2.1.2 Extending Dörnyei’s theory of L2 motivation: imagining possible future L2 selves	14
2.1.2.1 Monolingual selves	15
2.1.2.2 Personality traits and self-efficacy in motivational research	16
2.2 Methodology	17

2.2.1	Introduction.....	17
2.2.2	Indirect approaches to research knowledge considered ‘taken-for-granted’ ...	19
2.2.3	Reflexive and active, collaborative practices	21
2.2.4	Accepting researcher subjectivity.....	21
2.2.4.1	Impartiality and accountability.....	22
2.2.4.2	The researcher’s sense of self.....	23
2.2.4.3	The researcher as competent model	24
2.2.5	Searching for significance in narratives of experience.....	24
2.2.6	Implications for this study	26
2.2.6.1	A visual interpretive approach	26
2.3	Procedure.....	27
2.3.1	Verbal practices - creating dialogues.....	30
2.3.2	Development of a thematic analytical approach.....	31
2.3.3	Creating themes: developing an understanding of a linguistic self	32
3	Data analysis: discovering the taken for granted and presenting a ‘linguistic self’	35
3.1	Introduction	35
3.2	Theme 1: Resistance to language learning.....	36
3.2.1	Imagining the ideal L2 user as an able or academic ideal	36
3.2.1.1	Jody: an apologizing monolingual	36
3.2.1.2	Donna: a non-academic monolingual.....	40
3.2.2	Sam: an oppositional monolingual restoring his monolingual self	41
3.2.3	George: a linguistically self confident monolingual.....	45

3.3	Theme 2: Non resistance to language learning.....	47
3.3.1	Olivia: an admiring monolingual.....	47
3.3.2	Joe: an inquiring monolingual...or ideal twenty-first century monolingual? .	50
3.4	Theme 3: Eager but not committed.....	53
3.4.1	Peta: presenting an expected L2 learner self.....	53
3.4.2	Mona: presenting an expected L2 learner self.....	55
3.5	Summary of the chapter	55
4	Discussion and conclusion: researching the mindsets of monolinguals.....	57
4.1	Introduction.....	57
4.2	Learning within a collaborative methodological framework.....	57
4.3	Deflecting questions: Donna, Olivia and Jody.....	61
4.3.1	Reviewing ‘marked’ responses.....	62
4.3.2	Socio-cultural expectations ‘to know’ about language.....	65
4.4	Presenting a monolingual sense of language.....	66
4.4.1	A socially-integrative understanding.....	67
4.4.2	A standardized-authoritative understanding.....	69
4.4.3	A sense of linguistic authority.....	71
4.4.4	Loss of minority languages.....	73
4.5	Attitudes to language and language learning	76
4.6	Conclusion: portraying the mindsets of monolinguals	76
	Appendix A: Interview 1.....	78
	Appendix B: Interview 2	79

Appendix C: Transcripts	81
Donna: Interview 1, 15/05/2014.....	82
Donna: Interview 2, 23/07/2014.....	93
George: Interview 1, 19/05/2014.....	105
George: Interview 2, 08/07/2014.....	121
Jody: Interview 1, 20/05/2014.....	136
Jody: Interview 2, 21/07/2014.....	147
Joe: Interview 1, 21/05/2014	158
Joe: Interview 2, 25/07/2014	168
Mona: Interview 1, 29/05/2014	180
Mona: Interview 2, 31/07/2014	193
Olivia: interview 1, 03/06/2014	204
Olivia: Interview 2, 29/07/2014.....	210
Peta: Interview 1, 06/06/2014	219
Peta: Interview 2, 07/08/2014.....	235
Sam: Interview 1, 25/06/2014.....	250
Sam: Interview 2, 01/08/2014.....	262
Bibliography.....	273

Abstract

This thesis empirically investigates attitudes towards language and language learning of a small group of monolingual art students in Adelaide, Australia. It explores the term “monolingual mindset” (Clyne 2005, 2007, 2008), questioning the dual representation of both an individual’s monolingual attitude towards language as well as the socio-political concept of monolingualism (Jostes 2010) inherent in this phrase, arguing the benefits of rigorous empirical research into actual individual mindsets of monolinguals.

To understand the language attitudes of individual monolinguals, the concept of ‘language’ is discussed as a taken-for-granted concept and frameworks within sociology, psychology, motivation theory and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are utilized to develop methods in which to both interview and analyze authentic attitudes of self-identifying monolinguals towards language.

Chapter 1 introduces the research, reviewing the way monolingualism is commonly portrayed in the literature. I argue that monolingual research within the context of multilingualism or as a socio-cultural problem avoids understanding monolingualism as a field in its own right and additionally is unintentionally misrepresenting monolingual individuals.

In chapter 2, I adapt a theoretical framework using Second Language (L2) motivational research and psychological concepts of ‘self’ to analyze attitudes towards language, reflecting on the inevitability of personality traits and individual differences in the way attitudes may be expressed and conceived. I review indirect, collaborative, qualitative research methodologies, where innovative, active and visual approaches are used to collect and analyze data when identifying taken-for-granted knowledge. I explain the procedure, the use of semi-structured interviews and the thematic analytic approach I use to develop a linguistic self of the monolingual participants.

In chapter 3, I analyze the eight mindsets presented in this research. I look at the attitudes of resistance, non-resistance, and a non-committal eagerness to learn an L2. I question personality types and past experiences of language and education,

whilst interpreting the reactions and responses drawn from the research participants during the interview.

Chapter 4 describes the benefits of this research. It discusses the way deflective responses ‘mark’ the interviews of three of the participants, suggesting possible socio-cultural expectations that produce feelings that one *should* know about language. A monolingual sense of language is reviewed, discussing both a ‘socially-integrative’ understanding, as well as a ‘standardized-authoritative’ response to language, whilst noting that the participants’ replies relate to their experiences or ‘what they know’ about language.

The findings suggest that the monolingual participants in this research perceive language as a relatively simple, taken for granted concept without linking it to a sense of identity, cultural affiliation or belonging. Additionally, although the participants feel they would benefit by learning an L2, attitudes accepting diversity appear not to be dependent upon knowledge of a second language. In fact the participants in this research appear socially aware and supportive of multilingual speakers and multilingualism.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and, where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Sign

Date ...03/09/2017...

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