Speaking of Identity

Students’ Experiences of Language Use and Identity Issues in the Educational System of Postcolonial Seychelles

MAGNUS RUDSTRÖM

Bachelor Thesis in Political Science
Department of Political Science
Spring term 2017
Acknowledgement

This bachelor thesis would have been impossible for me to do without the help and support of many amazing people. First I would like to give a huge thanks to Mats Deutschmann who with his exceptional knowledge about the Creole languages, creole culture and the Seychelles islands have mentored me throughout the research process. Also thanks to his PhD students Justin and Ronia who have helped me find appropriate material and develop the interview guide. I would like to give a special thanks to my official contact person at the University of Seychelles, Penda Choppy, who was an enormous help in both finding appropriate interviewees as well as educating me in the history and culture of the Seychelles islands. Further, I also want to give thanks to Annie Laurette who helped me with various practicalities like finding an apartment and helping me with the visa application. In Umeå, I want to thank my supervisor Rasmus Karlsson who guided me in the right direction regarding how the study should be done, and also helped me a lot in the final stages of writing this bachelor thesis. Finally, and with my sincerest regards, I also want to show my appreciation to the interviewees that gave me the opportunity and privilege to listen to their stories and experience. Without them this research would have been a blank piece of paper. Thank you!
Abstract

Colonialism has left its marks in the ordinary lives of people in postcolonial countries. One example of this can be found in the relationship people in postcolonial countries have with the local vernaculars compared to the colonial languages. Often the native languages are restricted to the private and social sphere, while for example English is viewed as the go-to way of ensuring socioeconomic development in countries of this kind (Fleischmann 2008; Hilaire 2009; Rajah-Carrim 2007; Sauzier-Uchida 2009). By reviewing the case of the Seychelles islands, this thesis aims to explore the possible effects of colonialism in how parts of the youth in the country think and feel regarding their language use and their own construction of identity as Seychellois. For historical reasons, Seychelles has three official national languages: Kreol, English and French. The first one did not get its official status as a national language until after the independence 1976, even if being the mother tongue of the vast majority (Bollée 1993, 96). Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted during an eight-week long field study in Seychelles. The respondents were students between 16 and 20 years old who were in their final phase of school, or had recently completed their schooling and started working. The results show that some colonial ideas and norms still can be found in how these young Seychellois thinks about their mother tongue Kreol Seselwa in relation to the colonial language English. Another aspect of the interviews was the respondents’ ambivalence regarding their construction of identity in relation to the national languages. This could be viewed as examples of hybrid, mixed-culture, identities that can appears in postcolonial contexts.
Table of Contents

I. **INTRODUCTION** 5
   A. Background - The Seychelles Islands 6
      1. Creole - A stigmatized language 7
      2. The Seychelles language situation 8
      3. The Trilingual Language-in-Education policy 9
   B. Problem statement 10
   C. Aim of the study 11
      1. Research questions 11
II. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** 11
   A. Postcolonial theory 12
   B. Language and education in postcolonial countries 14
   C. Postcolonial identity and cultural hybridity 16
III. **METHOD** 17
    A. Research design 18
    B. Structure and procedure 18
       1. Selection process 19
       2. Material 19
       3. Interview analysis 20
    C. Limitations 20
    D. Ethical guidelines 21
IV. **INTERVIEW RESULTS** 22
    A. Language use and attitudes towards the three national languages 22
    B. Students’ experiences of language use in secondary school 23
    C. Identity issues in a postcolonial context 27
V. **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION** 30
   A. Language use and attitudes towards the three national languages 31
   B. Students’ experiences of language use in secondary school 32
   C. Identity issues in a postcolonial context 33
VI. **CONCLUSION** 35
VII. **REFERENCES** 38

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE 40
I. Introduction

Many postcolonial countries are caught in a dilemma regarding which language that is preferred in various situations, the native language or the language of the former colonial power (Bollée 1993; Kamwangamalu 2008; Migge & Léglise 2007). This dilemma is especially difficult when it comes to choosing the medium of instruction in the educational system. Emi Sauzier-Uchida (2009, 99) explains that the “use of the native language as a medium of instruction appears to pave the way for the decolonization of education, which consequently liberates young generations from the hegemony of colonial languages.” In several African countries, this can become a problem since they have so many native languages. In these cases, the colonial language, for example English, French or Portuguese, may work as a unifying force in a divided region with a history of conflicts, and in some cases as a mean for socioeconomic development (Laversuch 2008, 382). The case of the Seychelles Islands is a bit different. The Islands were uninhabited until the 18th century when the French colonized the islands. The British took over in the 19th century, and in 1976 the islands became an independent nation. Both the colonial languages (French and English) were adopted as official national languages together with the mother tongue of the vast majority of the population, Seychellois Creole or Kreol Seselwa (hereafter referred to as Kreol). Six years after the independence Seychelles implemented Kreol as the medium of instruction in the first four years of primary school, becoming the first Creole-speaking country to do so (Deutschmann & Zelime 2015, 38). Kreol was further strengthened in 1993, when the constitution was re-written to ensure equally status of the three national languages, the so-called Trilingual Language Policy. But how has this policy translated into language-in-education policies in the school system? Are the three languages treated equal, and if not, how is this shown in students’ experiences of language use in school, as well as their attitudes towards the three national languages?

In this bachelor thesis in political science, I will explore how the language situation in the school system is experienced by students who are in their final phase of school or who have recently completed their schooling. Another issue that is brought up is how the language situation affects the students’ sense of cultural identity. The methodology is largely qualitative, and based on semi-structured interviews with several students in secondary schools, post-secondary schools, and some who have finished or left school and started working. The aim is to explore their views/experiences concerning the aforementioned issues, with the ambition to take a deeper look at how young people experience the language situation and identity issues.
that could arise in a postcolonial country, and thereby enable more subjectively based explorations of thoughts and feelings in this field of research. The empirical material was gathered during an eight-week long Minor Field Study in Seychelles, granted by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) and the Department of Political Science at Umeå University.

The structure of this bachelor thesis is as follows: First, I will present a brief background of the Seychelles Islands and argue why Seychelles is an appropriate case for the study of language, cultural identity and postcolonialism. Then follows a background on Creole languages and why they have become such a stigmatized language group. The Background chapter continues with a description of the language situation on the islands and the problems associated with the different educational approaches as well as the trilingual language policy in education. My introduction will end with a discussion on how the language situation in the school system presents a potential problem in Seychelles, and why this research is relevant. The aim is to explore and present students’ attitudes and experiences regarding language use in the school system. This is elaborated and summed up into six research questions. Then the theoretical framework postcolonial theory is presented, along with a literature review of different cases and studies concerning language dilemmas in postcolonial countries with specific reference to issues related to the countries’ educational systems. In the Methods chapter, I will describe the chosen methodology and motivate the choice of it, as well as discussing ethical dilemmas and limitations. The interview results are then elaborated and presented in three different themes found in the research material. Finally, in the Discussion and Analysis the findings of this study are discussed and analysed in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research. The thesis ends with suggestions for future research and general conclusions.

A. Background - The Seychelles Islands

Seychelles is a small island nation in the Indian Ocean, situated east of Africa and north east of Madagascar. The archipelago consists of approximately 115 islands but most of them are uninhabited (Laversuch 2008, 376). The capital is Victoria and the population of the country is around 92 000, which makes it the smallest population of any independent African state. During the colonial era, Seychelles was colonized first by France in 1770, and in 1810 the British took over the rule of the Seychelles islands as a part of the island nation of Mauritius (Bollée 1993, 85). After almost one century of administrative rule by the British, the Seychelles islands became a crown colony in 1903, separated from Mauritius (ibid, 85). In 1976, Seychelles finally
began as an independent nation. One year later a coup d’état was carried out by the Seychelles People’s United Party (SPUP). They later on, after a one-party system was established, became the Seychelles People’s Progressive Front (SPPF), who still have the political power in Seychelles. The country’s parliament remained a one-arty system up until 1993, when a multi-party system was recognised.

Because of the country’s remote location, it does not have any indigenous people, but during the colonial times both the French and the British brought west African slave workers, as well as workers from Madagascar, Mauritius and Reunion, with them to the Islands (Bollée 1993, 85). Later the population was further expanded with people from both east Africa and Asia, especially India and China, who came to the island nation to work. This made the Seychelles islands a multi-ethnic society with a mixed culture, a creole culture. As well as a great mix of different cultures and ethnicities, Seychelles also became a melting pot for various languages. This was how the native language of the island nation was born and how Kreol became the mother tongue for the vast majority in Seychelles. The following segment will discuss some of the issues regarding Creole language as well as a brief history of the genesis of Creole languages.

1. **Creole - A stigmatized language**

Creole languages usually evolve from what is called Pidgin languages, which can be described as “contact languages that mainly develop where groups have a hierarchical relationship” (Fleischmann 2008, 11). The colonial period was therefore a period where many different Pidgin languages arose, primarily as a communication tool between the colonizers and slaves, but later it became the way in which the enslaved talked to each other. These languages were developed primarily through the vocabulary of the colonizers’ languages, with influences from various indigenous languages. When a Pidgin language evolves and acquires native speakers, i.e. when children start using it as their mother tongue, it is called a Creole language. Unlike a Pidgin, a Creole has a fully functioning grammar, but a grammar that is often quite different from the language it draws it vocabulary from. Most of the world’s 60-70 Creole languages were formed during the colonial period, and even though most of these countries have gained their independence from their formal colonial rulers, the native language of the majority in these countries, Creole, is still not officially recognized. As Christina Tamaa Fleischmann (ibid, 13) puts it in her doctoral thesis about attitudes towards Kreol: “In many cases, this lack of recognition goes as far as a complete rejection of Creole as a language”.

Magnus Rudström, 2017
Even though Kreol gained status and recognition in Seychelles after the independence, Creole languages in general are still stigmatized around the world. According to David Frank (2007, 1), Creoles are still not viewed as real languages in some contexts. They are rather considered to be broken languages or inferior versions of either French or English. Some even claim that Creole languages impede progress in school and also the ability for social mobility (ibid, 1). Out of the 50 countries where Creole languages are spoken, only four have the language as the medium of instruction in primary school (Fleischmann 2008, 13). These countries are: Seychelles, Haiti, The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. So, at the same time as Kreol is privileged in comparison with other Creole languages, it cannot be said that the stigma towards the Seychellois mother tongue is history just yet. In the following, an outline of the language situation in the Seychelles and the issues involved will be drawn.

2. The Seychelles language situation

In 1979, three years after the Seychelles was declared independent from the United Kingdom, Kreol was acknowledged as one of the three national languages, together with the language of the former colonial rulers. With this Kreol became the first French based Creole that got an official recognition (Bollée 1993, 86). In 1981, it was decided that Kreol should be the first national language of the Seychelles islands, English the second and French the third. At the same time decisions were made making Kreol the official medium of instruction in the first four years of primary school (ibid, 87). In 1982, Seychelles thus became the first Creole-speaking nation to introduce the native language as the medium of instruction in the educational system. Up until then Seychelles suffered a problem of high illiteracy amongst pupils in primary schools and the introduction of Kreol came as a response to the “inadequacy of the existing system” (ibid, 88). Two other reasons were that the Socialist government wanted to create equal opportunities for children that came from varied social and linguistic backgrounds, as well as promote and support the local culture. The results of this decision seemed to be extraordinary. The first class taught in Kreol resulted in higher scores in both English and French, as well as in mathematics, science and social sciences (Bickerton 1990, 47f). So, in a few years Kreol rose from a stigmatized language without any official recognition, to one of three (constitutionally) equal national languages as well as the teaching language for children up to 11 years old.

This was a fast development for Kreol as a language. But it was later followed by a minor backlash. Even though the Kreol language is the most used language by the majority in Seychelles, many of the parents were at first sceptical regarding the introduction of Kreol in the school system. They “saw no reason whatsoever to teach the children Creole, a language ‘which
they already know’ (or even a language they did not even consider to be a language)” (Bollée 1993, 89). English was viewed as the way to go to ensure socioeconomic development in the country, and still is today by policy makers, while Kreol is viewed more as a symbol for “pride and unity” (Laversuch 2008, 382). This kind of thinking from the public and the policy makers, pressured the ministry of education in 1996 to change the use of Kreol as the medium of instruction, from up until the fourth grade to up until the second grade (Fleischmann 2008, 15). This is still the case today. Kreol stops being the medium of instruction in the second year of primary and Kreol as a subject is not taught at all after the sixth year. I’m going to elaborate on this and how the school system in Seychelles is structured in the next part.

3. The Trilingual Language Policy in Education
Since 1947, Seychelles educational system is based on the English system of education. This replaced a previous, French-based system controlled by the Catholic Church (Fleischmann 2008, 74). The latest change regarding the medium of instruction was implemented in 1996 as mentioned above, making Kreol the medium of instruction for only the first two years of primary school, as well as the two years in ‘crèche’ (Seychelles preschool). This is also called “Key Stage 1” (See figure 1). From “Key stage 2” and onward, English is the main language of instruction as well as the language used in the exams, apart from the language subjects Kreol and French (Ministry of Education 2013, 16).

![Figure 1. Key Stages in the Seychelles educational system (Ministry of Education, 2013). P1 to P6 represents primary school and S1 to S5 is secondary and post-secondary school.](image-url)
Kreol as a subject is not taught after primary school, so from the beginning of secondary school, Kreol has no place in the schools according to the National Curriculum Framework. Even though Kreol seems to be disregarded after primary school, the National Curriculum Framework clearly states that:

Extensive research in the use of a child’s first language in the early stages of learning has shown beyond reasonable doubt that learning in one’s first language is more effective and enhances the acquisition of other languages. Proficiency in the first language along with the other two national languages is therefore critical for all further learning – hence the strong emphasis on literacy in Kreol, English and French in our national curriculum (Ministry of Education 2013, 17).

If this is the case, what can be the argument for switching the medium of instruction from Kreol to English at such an early stage? According to Laversuch (2008, 380) the answer can be found in the socioeconomic interests within the country. Amongst policy makers English is commonly considered to have a “higher market value” than both French and Kreol, and can also be viewed as the key to social and educational mobility (ibid.). Another reason is the lack of educational material and literature in Kreol compared to the variety of educational textbooks in English. Furthermore, there seems to exist yet another possible explanation of the choice to change the medium of instruction, from Kreol to English, already in P2. That is the still existing postcolonial views and ideas of English as the superior academic language, the language of knowledge. Now I will elaborate on the issues regarding the language situation in the Seychelles and present a problem statement and the aim of my thesis.

B. Problem statement

All the events described in the previous section, have shaped a language situation that seems to be an adequate case for exploring postcolonial tendencies in a modern independent African nation. The gap of knowledge is according to me the lack of qualitative research aimed at exploring students’ views and opinions on the issue of language use and identity construction in this context. Fleischmann (2008), who primarily investigates attitudes towards Kreol from a sociolinguistic perspective, opens up room for further research from a political science perspective. Investigating the case of the Seychelles qualitatively from a perspective of power relations and postcolonial structures is important in order to get a deeper understanding of the
different aspects of postcolonial identities, and how language-in-education policies affects the identity construction of postcolonial youth.

C. Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to paint a more complete picture of students’ views of the aforementioned language situation, and in particular regarding the educational system. In this way, the people who are directly affected by the system and its assumed flaws get to express their thoughts and feelings regarding the issues that concern language and culture in the country. The aim is to explore a few young Seychellois’ experiences of language use in the educational system, their own personal attitudes towards the three national languages, as well as their thoughts on their cultural identity in relation to language. Additionally, the interviewees’ experiences and opinions will be discussed and analysed in relation to the overall postcolonial context that Seychelles is situated in, investigating if there is still some stigma towards the Kreol language. To reach this aim I have chosen to use six research questions that are meant to cover the issues discussed above.

1. Research questions

• What are the respondents’ attitudes towards the national languages?
• How do the respondents use the national languages in everyday life?
• What are the students’ experience of language use in school and what issues can be found in the current system?
• What are the students’ views on the promotion of Kreol in the educational system?
• How do the respondents view their cultural identity as a Seychellois?
• What are the students’ thoughts and feelings about identity and culture in connection to the national languages?

II. Theoretical framework and previous research

The theoretical framework chosen for the analysis of this case study is postcolonial theory. It is primarily postcolonial theories regarding language, education, identity and hybridity will be
used. First a deeper background on what postcolonial theory is will be presented, followed by previous research regarding language and education in postcolonial countries.

A. Postcolonial theory

Colonialism could be defined as a way to conquer and take control of other peoples’ land and assets (Loomba 2005, 24). Despite the control over land and assets, the modern colonizers put their subjects in a position of dependence by structuring an economy that was deeply dependent on the colonial rulers and the global economy (Loomba 2005, 25). This is one of many examples of how colonialism cut deep wounds in the countries that were colonized. Wounds that have not fully healed even after the former colonial countries declared themselves independent from their colonial rulers. This could be viewed as one of the key concepts of postcolonial theory, the idea that the end of colonial rule was not the end of unequal power relations between the former colonial powers and the now independent postcolonial nations. In Kate Manzos chapter in the book Global politics: A new introduction she explains this further:

The end of formal colonial rule has not ended historic patterns of economic control and exploitation any more than the abolition of slavery has eradicated enslavement. Slavery - like colonialism itself - persists despite its official demise. While both have changed in form they are sustained in a variety of ways by economic and political interests (Manzos 2014, 334).

So even though the postcolonial countries officially have gained their independence, they are still in some ways in dependence of their former colonial rulers. The goal of postcolonial theory is therefore to unmask these injustices and inequalities that still exist in the world today and “to force its alternative knowledge into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west.” (Young 2003, 7).

Postcolonial theory does not have a single founder, like for example Marxism or psychoanalysis. It is more of a collective work created by a variety of postcolonial scholars and writers. Even though this is the case, there are some particular researchers that have been of huge importance for the development of postcolonial theory. Among these you can find Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and philosopher from Martinique, who wrote the book The wretched of the Earth (1961), describing the psychologic effects on the colonized nation and its people. This book “became the bible of decolonization, inspiring many different kinds of struggle against domination and oppression across the world” (Young 2003, 123). Another important
theorist in the field of postcolonial studies is Edward Saïd. Saïd with his book *Orientalism* (1978) tried to explain how the West created an image of a foreign exotic orient, which led to the western (rational and civilized) non-western (irrational and uncivilized) dichotomy, to legitimize colonialism and western domination (Hong & Halvorsens 2015, 256).

The goal of these and many other postcolonial theorists, as well as the field, is to challenge the existing system of knowledge and thus generate an alternative way of looking at the world and what we know about it (Young 2003, 18). The existing system of knowledge has been produced, sanctioned and cemented by the Western countries academies, or “the institutional knowledge corporation” as Young (ibid) calls them. By questioning, criticizing and presenting alternatives to this way of viewing knowledge, postcolonialism tries to look at what we know from below. Young elaborates on this:

Postcolonialism, or tricontinentalism, is a general name for these insurgent knowledges that come from the subaltern, the dispossessed, and seek to change the terms and values under which we all live. You can learn it anywhere if you want to. The only qualification you need to start is to make sure that you are looking at the world not from above, but from below (ibid, 20).

This describes a theoretical field that tries to expand the meaning of knowledge to include the point of view of the people that long have been neglected by the “institutional knowledge corporation”.

This from-below-perspective is important when reviewing those arenas where the colonial powers still might have some influence over their former subjects. The educational system is one example of such an arena. In Won-Pyo Hong and Anne-Lise Halvorsens (2015, 256) study regarding how American history takes up a huge space in the curriculum in South Korean school, they describe the longer lasting effects of colonialism. One example is the internalization and acceptance of colonial/western ideas by people in the postcolonial countries. Though this internalization some colonial structures or norms are still able to exist long after the countries’ independence since they get reproduced by its own population. Since the school system in many postcolonial countries is built on a western system of education during the colonial era, questions arise regarding what more legacy from colonialism is left behind, deeply rooted in these systems. Language could be seen as a legacy from the colonial era that reproduces its value though the school systems in postcolonial countries. In this next segment,
previous studies covering the topic of language in the educational system in postcolonial countries are presented.

B. Language and education in postcolonial countries

Local vernaculars like Creole languages have been stigmatized throughout history as a direct effect of the colonial era (Hilarie 2009, 33). This can be seen, from a postcolonial perspective, as old colonial ideas that have been adopted even by the people who speak the native language. One example where this occurs is the Seychelles islands, where there have been many attempts to raise the status of Kreol through an official recognition as well as the introduction of the language into the educational system and into parliament (Bollée 1993, 86f). Even though this is the case, ideas of English as the superior academic language and the only way forward concerning social and economic progress still exist within the country (Deutschmann & Zelime 2015, 44). This can be viewed as common knowledge in a globalized world, or that old colonial habits and ideas still influence and affect the political spheres of postcolonial countries.

There are several other countries apart from the Seychelles where similar issues can be observed (Hilaire 2009; Rajah-Carrim 2007; Sauzier-Uchida 2009). One of these cases regards the small island nation of St. Lucia. Aonghas St. Hilaire (2009, 32) has explored how the postcolonial politics and the policy design affects the use of Kwéyòl (St. Lucias own Creole language) in the educational system. As with the Seychelles, Kwéyòl have not yet become the main language of instruction in the school system. It is more part of the private sphere on the islands rather than something you would use in public, or academic spheres. There was a pro-creole movement after the independence 1979, of which the main goal was to raise the status of Kwéyòl as a language by developing a written system for it, as well as promoting it to be used as the medium of instruction in school. But in comparison to Seychelles these ideas were not developed further because of “deeply held notions that English was the only safe and sure way to advance the socioeconomic development of the island-nation and its people” (ibid, 42). Another argument was that it is less expensive to use English literature and learning materials, since it already exists, than develop the material in Kwéyòl. All this makes it problematic for the pro-creole movement to raise the status of the language and implement it as the medium of instruction in the school system.

Another similar case is on the Seychelles neighbouring island nation Mauritius. Even though Mauritius has more spoken languages and a much larger population, similarities can be found between both postcolonial island nations. Apart from the languages of colonial rule (English and French) and the island’s own Creole language, Indian languages and Chinese is
also frequently used in Mauritius. All of these languages have their place in the educational system, except Creole (Rajah-Carrim 2007, 51). There can be found clear support of an introduction of Creole in the classrooms on Mauritius, and since 2013 Mauritius Creole is taught as an optional subject in schools. One reason could be the large number of people that have the language as their mother tongue and the notion of the importance native language has for ones identity (ibid, 69). There is still an issue of standardizing the language of Mauritian Creole, as well as similar socioeconomic factors to those found both on St. Lucia and the Seychelles. According to Rajah-Carrim (ibid, 70), the use of Creole in school could still be viewed as a way for groups traditionally seen as inferior to regain legitimacy and recognition in a country with a clear colonial heritage.

It is clear that there seems to be some large issues concerning what language that is best fitted to use in the educational system. With this in mind, it could be relevant to explore how the ones who the system should cater to view this issue. Mats Deutschmann and Justin Zelime (2015, 43f) have conducted a study that examines students’ (in primary school) attitudes towards Kreol and English. The study shows that the kids in primary school are positive towards Kreol and its usage in school, which also were clear in their exam results. According to Deutschmann and Zelime (ibid.), it is becoming more apparent that teaching Kreol in secondary school could be a good way of balancing the curriculum, which is now focused on preparing the students for the final IGCSE exam (The International General Certificate of Secondary Education). Deutschmann and Zelime (ibid., 44) pose a question regarding why Kreol is not a higher priority in the school system: “Is it really a case of limited resources resulting in the prioritization of opening up to ‘world of opportunities’? Or may it be that old habits/structures die hard, structures where being more ‘highly educated’ still is associated with proficiency in ‘non-local’ languages?”

Only one study can be found that qualitatively investigates the language attitudes towards Kreol in the Seychelles (Fleischmann 2008). In her doctoral thesis, Fleischmann (ibid., 85) explored the tension between the national languages as well as how the country’s colonial heritage “affects the attitudes of teachers and policy makers towards the use of Creole as a medium of instruction.” To answer the latter conundrum, she conducted 8 unstructured and semi-structured interviews. They showed an ambivalence in the attitudes towards Kreol. The respondents were positive towards Kreol as the informal and social language, whilst it was “rejected as a formal or written language” (ibid.). The conclusion she draws from this is similar to what previous studies regarding attitudes towards Creole languages have shown, which is that English (and French in this case) is a stronger symbol for prestige, social status and
socioeconomic development. This could be viewed as old colonial ideas still lingering in the minds of the Seychellois people. How then could this ambivalence affect their sense of self and identity? To explore this question, I will dive into the postcolonial concepts of postcolonial identities and cultural hybridity, based on the assumption that “language usage influences the formation of ethnic identity, but ethnic identity also influences language attitudes and language usage” (Gudykunst 1987, 1). These concepts started out as a critique of how postcolonial research was conducted for a long time.

C. Postcolonial identity and cultural hybridity

The concepts of postcolonial identity and cultural hybridity have been discussed by many postcolonial scholars. Two of the most prominent of these scholars include Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who both used “the two internal critiques of the west, psychoanalysis and Marxism” in their postcolonial cultural critique (Young 2001, 68f). Spivak who in her essay Can the subaltern speak (1988) criticized that most postcolonial research has an outside perspective and does not consider the subjective knowledge of the actors that are affected by the postcolonial structures, the subaltern as she calls them. The concern is that the way research is done could lead to the reproduction of stereotypical postcolonial identities. She concludes with the statement “the subaltern cannot speak”, aiming to deconstruct and challenge the existing system of knowledge and promoting research to give voice to the subjects that are studied (Spivak 1988, 104).

The discussion regarding the subaltern, whose identity gets reproduced and stereotyped by people with considerably more power, was continued by Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha criticizes Saïd, saying that his binary oppositions (us/them, self/other) could be seen “as being too narrow and oversimplified, failing to recognize processes of negotiation and resistance by those who are marginalized” (Amoamo & Thompson 2010, 38f). In the collection of essays called The Location of Culture (1994), Bhabha instead develops the theoretical concept of hybridity, which could be defined as a body of work that “captures the struggle of translation and difference in contexts where cultural and linguistic practices, histories, and epistemologies collide” (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda 1999, 288). In simpler terms this can be explained as a cultural perspective that criticizes cultural essentialism and celebrates the mixing of cultures (Amoamo & Thompson 2010, 38).

Hybridity should however not be viewed as a single process but a complex concept that tries to understand “the dynamic dimensions of cultural formation” that surrounds topics like
postcolonial identity, multiculturalism and racism (Young 2003, 78). This leads to the inclusion of hegemonic power relations into the concept of hybridity (Amoamo & Thompson 2010, 38). Young (ibid, 79) explains further:

Hybridity works in different ways at the same time, according to the cultural, economic, and political demands of specific situations. It involves processes of interaction that create new social spaces to which new meanings are given. These relations enable the articulation of experiences of change in societies splintered by modernity, and they facilitate consequent demands for social transformation.

By examining this quote, it is easy to see the relevance of the concept of hybridity when investigating the experienced language situation by students in Seychelles. Especially when you consider the fact that the Seychelles is a creole nation with a huge multi-ethnic mix and without an indigenous population. In what way can this hybridity be found in how young Seychellois view their cultural identity?

Both of these concepts, subaltern and hybridity, tries to broaden the field of postcolonial studies and answer to the critique that postcolonial theory could develop into a “master narrative itself” (Lunga 2008, 193). This by acknowledging the diversity and complexity when studying postcolonial identities. Furthermore by anchoring the research more in the subalterns’ experiences and enabling a more subjective perspective of the issues, postcolonial theory could remain relevant and fulfil its goal to challenge the existing system of knowledge from below. How this thesis tackle these questions in practical terms will be discussed below in the Method chapter.

III. Method

In this chapter, an overview of this bachelor thesis research methodology is presented and argued for. The chosen methodology is based on the study’s aim and research questions. Since the aim of the study is to examine young Seychellois experiences, feelings and thoughts, a qualitative approach is an appropriate choice. The empirical data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Since this research has a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach, generalizations will not be done based on the interviews. Phenomenology is the study of meaning, where focus is on the actors experience and perspective of the world (Kvale &
Brinkmann 2009, 26). The goal is to primarily understand a social phenomenon “with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be” (ibid). An objective conclusion is therefore not interesting or even possible with this type of approach. However, with this hermeneutic and phenomenological approach a deeper and more complex understanding of the subjective reality of the actors involved can appear (Badersten & Gustavsson 2015, 46). The research design will be argued for in this next part.

A. Research design

This study will be structured as a case study, where the case is the language situation in the Seychelles school system. The reason why the Seychelles is an interesting case is because their culture and national identity is divided after being colonized first by the French and then by the British, to after that becoming an independent nation only 40 years ago. Another reason is that the population is diverse, with its ancestors spread all over three different continents. This is the case for many African nations, especially other creole nations, but the thing that makes the Seychelles a particularly good choice for a case study regarding postcolonial identity is primarily its size. Because the island nation is so small, it is easy to get access to relevant material, contacts and a variety of interviewees. Another reason is the fact that the Kreol Seselwa have gained a high level of acceptance compared to other Creole nations, but have not yet gained the same level of acceptance when it comes to the educational system. All this considered makes for a relevant case to explore experiences of language use and identity construction in a postcolonial context. In the following, the structure and procedure of the research method will be described.

B. Structure and procedure

Semi-structured interviews were the methodological choice to investigate the experiences of young Seychellois’ language use and identity issues in the school system. The reason why this particular method is appropriate for this bachelor thesis is that the interviewees are given a lot of space to elaborate and develop their responses, as well as the interview can be contained to the chosen themes and topics. In this sense, the interview can proceed dynamically whilst also be controlled to a certain degree. The interviews were conducted, personally by the researcher, in the Seychelles during an eight-week period in 2016, from the beginning of November to the end of December. All interviews were held in English besides interview 4, where the interviewee preferred to answer in Kreol (my official contact person served as translator in this
The interviews were about 30 minutes on an average. Information about the purpose of the study were given at the beginning of the interviews, followed by the respondents giving their consent to use the material for this research. The location of the interviews was chosen by the respondents. The goal was to create a relaxed environment for the respondents so that they could feel comfortable in expressing their own opinions and feelings. Interview 1-3 were held at a youth centre in the capital Victoria. Interview 4 and 5 were held by a football pitch in connection to the respondents’ football practice. The interviews 6 to 8 were conducted at the respondents’ post-secondary school in an empty classroom. Interview 9 was held at a beach where the interviewee worked. Interview 10 was conducted by the same beach, in the restaurant where the respondent worked. More details about the interviewees and the selection process are presented in the next segment, followed by a description of the research tools as well as the interview analysis.

1. Selection process
The participants in this study were ten young Seychellois at an age between sixteen and twenty years old. Three were in secondary school, three were in post-secondary school and the last four were working. These ten participants’ stories and experiences is the main empirical material. The gender quota is five girls and five boys. The three interviewees that were under 18 years old had their parents written consent to participate in the study. The selection of interviewees was done by myself with assistance from my official contact person at the University of Seychelles, Penda Choppy. The interviewees were chosen from the two largest islands, Mahé (eight participants) and Praslin (two participants), which also have approximately 92 % of the country’s inhabitants. Some of the interviewees were in school, some were just out of school and some had dropped school and had started working. This was important because it voiced different teenagers from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

2. Research tools
Before the journey to the Seychelles to gather the empirical material, an interview guide was constructed. This interview guide contains eleven main questions divided into three themes/topics: Respondents relationship with the national languages, Respondents experience of language use in secondary school and Respondents thoughts on identity and culture in relation to language (Appendix 1). Since it is a semi-structured interview, follow up questions were common during the interviews in order for the respondents to elaborate more on their answers. When developing the interview guide, 4 pilot interview were conducted. The first was
done in Umeå and the other three were done at University of Seychelles with three different students. This was done to raise the study’s overall validity and reliability, as well as gaining an indication of the length of the interview and that the recording device worked without any major flaws. Some minor changes in how the questions were formulated were also done after the piloting. The interviews were recorded with a voice recording application on my smartphone, with permission granted by the respondents. Notes were taken besides the recordings to mark down complements to the recording, like body language and tone of voice.

3. Interview analysis
After all the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and analysed based on the common patterns or themes that appeared in the interviews, with the research questions in mind. First, the recorded interviews were transcribed word-by-word, minimizing the risk of losing important information in the translation “from an oral conversation to written text” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 183). After that the pauses and verbal sounds (‘mh’s & ‘uhm’s) were removed, follow by a thematic analysis of the content based on the research questions. The latter was done by coding the material into common themes that appeared in the interviewees narratives. The analysis was focused on meaning rather than linguistic patterns. A hermeneutic interpretation of meaning was used to interpret the content and meaning in the material. It involves a more “general questioning of the meaning of being” rather than include a specific technique to analyse the text (ibid, 211). After the thematic analysis of the interview, an analysis and discussion were done with postcolonialism as the theoretical framework.

C. Limitations
Since this study has a phenomenological and hermeneutical approach, I as a researcher am going to have a significant role in the interpretation of the interview results and analysis. My position and my experiences will influence the interpretation and analysis of the empirical material that have been gathered. With this in mind, I will strive to exceed beyond my own opinions, experiences and feelings towards the field of study to get an accurate description of the respondents’ thoughts and feelings on the matter. Since this thesis has a hermeneutical and constructivist view of knowledge, it is important to clarify that an accurate description of the respondents’ thoughts and feelings does not mean that the analysis of the interviews will produce an existing knowledge regarding the matter. It rather means that I as a researcher and the respondents will together construct knowledge about and interpret their experiences, thought and feelings (Kvale 2007, 19f).
A few things should be said regarding the reliability and validity of the study. The reliability was taken into consideration when choosing English as the interview language. Even though all the interviewees were fluent in English, they might have answered differently in Kreol. With this in mind, every respondent got to choose which language they wanted to answer in, and they still (except one) chose English as the interview language. Issues of reliability could also arise in the transcription and analysis process, “pertaining to whether different transcribers and analysers will come up with similar transcriptions and analyses” (Kvale 2007, 122). Since all the transcriptions and analysis were done by only one researcher, this issue could be seen as considerably small in this case. The validity was reassured partially by the four pilot interviews, and also by the thorough development of the interview guide.

D. Ethical guidelines

There are some obvious ethical dilemmas in this study. One of them is the qualitative interview setting that is less anonymous than the more structured interviews. To solve this the participants have been informed regarding the thesis aim, that they are going to be anonymous throughout the writing process and that they can cancel and exit the interview whenever they feel like it. Another issue was that three interviewees were under 18, which is an ethical dilemma especially when it comes to in-depth interviews. This was taken into consideration before the interviews in question by acquiring the consent of the respondents’ parents. Finally, the greatest challenge regarding the ethical considerations of this study, which were the issue of yet another European traveling to a postcolonial country and doing research. One reason for this is that the word research is strongly linked to colonial oppression and the colonization of indigenous and native people in postcolonial countries (Smith 1999, 1). It is through western science that many of the assumptions and stereotypical images of indigenous and native people have come to life and been reproduced throughout the years. Non-indigenous researchers like myself have to recognize the still existing relation of power and hierarchies between a western researcher and the actors that are aimed to be studied. Yet another important consideration is to criticize and challenge one’s own pre-existing assumptions and prejudice, to be able to paint a more nuanced picture of postcolonial countries and its people (Spivak 1988). To tackle this issue, this study has tried to voice the issues of the language situation in the Seychelles from ten young Seychellois perspective. Their own opinions, experiences, thoughts and feelings will hopefully give light to a deeper and more complex understanding of the issue. In the following chapter the interview results will be presented.
IV. Interview results

The Interviews are summarized and presented based on three general themes: Language use and attitudes towards the three national languages, Students’ experiences of language use in secondary school and Identity issues in a postcolonial context. These themes were more or less represented throughout the ten interview that were conducted. Under each theme two research questions are answered.

A. Language use and attitudes towards the three national languages

In this section, the first two research questions will be discussed in relation to the interviewees thoughts and feelings on the topic.

• What are the respondents’ attitudes towards the national languages?
• How do the respondents use the national languages in everyday life?

All but one interviewee said that their mother tongue or native language is Kreol and all of them could use all the three national languages. One tendency amongst the respondents, which was consistent throughout the interviews, was the attitudes towards speaking French. Most of them said, when answering the question what language they do speak: Kreol, English and a little bit of French. It seems that the attitude towards the French language is not to prominent amongst these young Seychellois. This is one example of this attitude from interview 6:

I was raised speaking Kreol and English so you’re not so fluent in French I guess.
But we can speak French, and understand it, but it doesn’t come that easily you see.
So, I guess Kreol is the first choice, then English and French very rarely.

Kreol and English seems to be the dominant languages in how these young Seychellois use their languages. The respondents’ attitudes towards Kreol is mainly that it is the informal and social language, while English is the more formal and intellectual language. This was clearly shown by how the interviewees talked about their relationships with the languages.

Regarding the use in everyday life most of the respondents, except two that preferred English, used and felt most comfortable with the Kreol language at home. But for many of them it was combined with English at times. With friends, it was a different case. Many of them used
Kreol but almost everyone said that they used both Kreol and English. The separation of when and where the languages were used was quite distinct. As interviewee 1 discussed when speaking about how she uses the languages with friends:

Kreol, especially when we joke about funny stuff. I think when we talk about more serious stuff it will be English, like we automatically find our self switching to that, but it depends on the type of people you are friends with, some people really like talking in English or others are okay with Kreol.

In this quote, it is easy to see what language seems to be the private/social language and what seems to be the public/formal language for this particular respondent.

This split between using Kreol and English seems to disappear when you look at reading and writing habits, except for text messages. Almost every respondent both read and write in English. Only one prefers to both read and write in Kreol, but he complains that almost every book is in English. For most the interviewees, English is the language that is most prominent when it comes to literature. Interviewee 2, for example, says that “English books are very much lively”, and when asked how it felt to only read in English she responded in phrases like “It’s interesting” and “It’s good for yourself.” Some other interviewees followed this example, but a few of these also emphasized the problematic issue that there is no literature in Kreol. Interviewee 1 said for example that since Kreol as a subject is removed after P6, she found it “harder to feel comfortable with the Kreol language in secondary, when reading.” This will be elaborated in the next segment regarding the students experiences and opinions about the educational system in the Seychelles.

B. Students’ experiences of language use in secondary school

This theme contains the discussions on both the 3rd and the 4th research questions.

• What are the students’ experience of language use in school and what issues can be found in the current system?

• What are the students’ views on the promotion of Kreol in the educational system?

Since the respondents had different backgrounds, their experience of language use in secondary school were quite divided. The discussions were mostly held around three topics, their thoughts and feelings towards English as the medium of instruction, difficulties understanding expatriate
teachers and if the fact that every examination were in English were a problem or not. In interview 1 after being asked how she feel about English as the medium of instruction interviewee 1 responded:

On one side, I think it is good cause not everyone in our class is Seychellois and can understand English, there’s a boy, he is Indian and he can only understand English. So not everyone can understand Kreol. But on the other side no, because again your losing the culture, and you’re making people more adapted to talking in English. And I thinks that’s a really big reason why I use a lot of English.

Besides interview 4 and 9 most of the respondents were quite positive to English as the medium of instruction. In interview 10 the respondent said concerning the subjects being taught in English that: “I actually like it. I like that fact, having English, because it’s international.” This was an important fact for many of the respondents. English seemed to represent the international and global community, while Kreol was the local and familiar language. Interviewee 10 continued to elaborate on this when she explained why Kreol as the medium of instruction in secondary school is not a good option according to her. While holding up her hands and showing a short distance between them she said: “because Kreol is just from here to here, you only going to be in Seychelles with Kreol, you’re not going to go to China or Sweden, I don’t know, anywhere with Kreol.”

But even though English is the main teaching language, some of the respondents explained that Kreol is used in explanations of a topic in the case that not everyone understood it in English. In interview 8 the respondent explains it like this:

They’ll teach you in English and if you didn’t quite understand the topic in question than the teacher would go out of the way explaining to you in order for you to understand. If they need to explain it in Kreol, they do. In that way, everybody else can understand it better. Most of the teachers are foreigners. So most subjects were, are taught in English, and if a student doesn’t understand, then that teacher have to find another alternative to help that student understand the topic.

This leads us onto the next issue that were discussed in the interviews, the fact that the foreign or expatriate teachers created a problem for some of the students that had a hard time understanding the subjects in English. The respondent in interview 4 is an example of this. He
had a difficult time because of, as he puts it, “the deficiency” that he feels “comes in the forms of too much use of English.” He explains further regarding this problem that:

Teachers were mainly Sri Lankans and they only speak English, a few Seychellois teachers were able to assist them by using Kreol as a support language but with the Sri Lankan teachers it was very difficult because they only used English, and English with an accent.

This problem was brought up by many of the respondents. As interviewee 1 puts it when she talks about issues in the classroom: “sometimes it’s hard to catch on because children make a lot of noise. And again, the difficulties with the teachers of different nationalities.” The favoured opinion amongst these ten young Seychellois seem to be that English is the preferred language to teach in, but with the condition that the teachers could further explain the teachings in Kreol if anyone have difficulties understanding the topic in question.

The last topic that was discussed by the respondents was their feelings towards the exams and that they, similar to the lessons, were held in English. For most of them this was logical considering every subject is taught in English. But when asked if this could be a problem for some students, a few responded that it could be a problem for the students that are weak in English. Interviewee 1 said that “there are some people who tend to use Kreol language more because they are more comfortable with it, so maybe they don’t have the advantage and maybe they should carry out exams in Kreol.” The respondent in interview 9 who himself confessed having problem with the exams when they were in English, explained that it would be much easier to write the exams in Kreol. When asked why he responded that “because it’s my language. Every day I speak my language. Every time at home. Everywhere I speak Kreol. When I meet with a friend I speak Kreol.” Even interviewee 10 who is a strong English speaker admitted that it could be a problem for some that every exam is in English. To the question if it is okay for everyone that the exams are in English she replied:

Probably not because I don’t think they speak English or understand English as much as probably I do. But for them probably Kreol would have been much better and they would have had more words to explain. Because it’s normal for them compared to what I went through.

But for respondent 6, who was currently studying at an advanced level post-secondary school and who previously went to a private school, it was not clear that the exams being in English
could be a problem for some people. She said, when asked the question if English as the language of examination could be a problem in some way: “A problem, I don’t think so. But like in primary school in the public schools, they learn in Kreol and you know the exams are in Kreol, so it’s not a problem.” Here the matter of perspective and background seems like the main factors that could determine whether the issue of English as the language of examination is viewed as a problem or not. It could also have been a misunderstanding of the question from the respondent.

The respondents’ views on the promotion of Kreol as the medium of instruction were quite the same. Almost everyone agreed that English were the preferred language when it comes to teaching the different subjects. The reason for this was mixed, but mostly it regarded either the case that English was more different and exiting to learn in and that it is according to most the respondents the language that ’take you places’, or the feeling that Kreol doesn't have that many words and are in that way kind of restricted. Interviewee 7 exemplifies the second statement that Kreol lacks the vocabulary when asked what he thinks about Kreol as the medium of instruction:

Honestly, I wouldn't be able to use it, like for example when your starting to do mathematics you’re using square root, and you don’t have this words, squared, index, natural law, logarithms, we do not have these words.

Two of the interviewees would have preferred Kreol as the medium of instruction simply because “everybody speaks Kreol” according to interviewee 4 and “because it’s my language” replied the respondent in interview 9.

The respondents were divided regarding if Kreol should be introduced as a subject in secondary school, like it is in primary school. On one side there is the respondents that were positive to this idea, primarily on the grounds that “some students have a poor grasp of English and they are not doing well because of that” as interviewee 4 puts it, or that you by introducing Kreol in secondary school are “encouraging children to use Kreol more often, thus increasing their knowledge of their culture and their mother language” as interviewee 1 replies. The respondent in interview 6 elaborates on this when she answers what she thinks of having Kreol as a subject in secondary school:

Well that would be good. Like considering like it’s one of our national languages I think it should have its place there. And yeah, maybe if we have literature in Kreol,
that would be something, you know, interesting for those kids that are keen in the subject.

Interviewee 7 goes further and tries to explain why Kreol is not a subject in secondary school. His theory is that, speaking of Kreol from the policy makers perspective, they “do not have any prospects of it, apart from our daily communication and things like that.” His solution to this problem is as follows:

They should introduce a course like some people have a master in the languages of English, French and like they do literature, and like we can do that in Kreol. And this people may help, they may help to like introduce the new vocabulary that is missing. And maybe one day we can start doing some subjects in Kreol. It will help us as a nation and as a country to become globally recognized also. And maybe our money will have some more value someday.

On the other side, we have the respondents that were sceptical towards an introduction of Kreol in secondary school. Their arguments is for example that “six years of Kreol is enough to make you good at it” and that “we use it most of the time”, this according to respondents 3 and 5. Even respondent 9, that wanted to have Kreol as the medium of instruction, said that it is not necessary because “since you were a baby your mama have taught you something so it’s much easier.” These respondents felt like they were somewhat fully learned in Kreol and that there was no necessity in the continuing the study of Kreol as a subject. There is clearly no consensus amongst the respondents whether Kreol should or should not be promoted more in the educational system than it is today, which is no surprise since they are individuals with different backgrounds and knowledge. Some of them expresses clearly why it could help to raise the status of Kreol as a language as well as helping the students that experience difficulties learning in English, while the other respondents did not feel that it was necessary or did not have a strong opinion about the matter. In the next segment the respondents’ thoughts and feelings about identity and culture will be presented.

C. Identity issues in a postcolonial context

This last part is regarding the two last research questions surrounding identity and culture.

- How do the respondents view their cultural identity as a Seychellois?
• What are the students’ thoughts and feelings about identity and culture in connection to the national languages?

The respondents’ thoughts about identity and culture were few. Most of them had not really thought about it, which comes as no surprise since they are still quite young. When asked which continent the respondents feel more connected to, with the fact in mind that the Seychellois people comes from three different continents ethnically (Africa, Asia & Europe), they answered mostly Africa, some answered Europe and some were pending between both continents. Again, this comes as no surprise since the Asian side of Seychellois culture is small compared to the other continents cultural influence. For those who felt more connected to Africa it was mostly for reasons such as traditional culture, food, dance, and appearances. One example is in interview 2 where the respondent explains that she feels more connected to Africa because of her “skin colour” and that “their culture is almost like ours. Most of our culture, traditions are from Africa.” For interviewee 4 Africa feels “much closer” and to him “Europe and Asia are a bit foreign.”

The few that only answered that they felt most connected to Europe mainly talked about lifestyle, popular culture and behaviour. They also had in common that they all were either born in another country (by Seychellois parents) or like one interviewee who had one European parent. Interviewee 8 explains her thoughts like this:

I would feel more close to Europe, not because I was born In Europe, it’s just that the way of living, is similar to the way I’m living. It just feel like, like I feel closer to Europe. It’s really hard to explain.

This is a clear example of how lifestyle determents the respondents’ closeness to either of the continents. In interview 3 the respondent had a hard time explaining why he felt more connected to Europe. He had not really thought about it that much, but after a while he replied that the reason might be because of his interest (rock music and basketball) mostly originates in the European of American continent. Respondent 10, who is “half European”, elaborates on why she does not feel close to Africa: “Because I see most people that have African behaviours and I think, find myself completely different. Not like that sort of people.” On the question what “African behaviour” she answers: “I don’t know. There’s certain things they do or saying that I don’t find myself saying.”
This variety of positions regarding cultural identity continues when the respondents discussed which language they feel constitutes their identity the most. But even though some of the respondents answer that they feel mostly connected to the English language, they admit the importance of the language Kreol Seslewà to the Seychellois culture. Interviewee 10 is one example. She considered English to be a bigger part of who she is, but when she started discussing Seychellois culture she said this:

Seychelles have lost a lot of culture to be honest. I’m finding it losing a lot of culture, you don’t see people playing Seychelles music. You don’t go inside a restaurant and hear people that plays actual creole music. You will mostly hear Jamaican or these other types of music, European music. It’s hard for you to hear people play the traditional music that was here maybe thirty years back.

When later on asked how she felt about this she replied that: “I think we should try to go back to it. That would make us more, like we return a bit of the culture, cause I feel that we’re losing it a lot.” This split between wanting to be a part of Europe and European lifestyle at the same time as wishing to go back and explore the creole culture was the thread that connected the respondents’ answers concerning the issue of cultural identity.

On the other side, the respondents who said that Kreol is a big part of their identity, also discussed how the English language influence them more when it comes to for example popular culture. In interview 1 this spilt was easy to perceive. The respondent was clear on her position when it came to the promotion of the Kreol language and the creole culture, for example she replied to the question how she felt about using more English in school than Kreol like this: “I feel like I’m letting my culture go, but I’m trying to hold on to it by writing Kreol stories.”

She later on in the interview said that both Kreol and English were a big part of her identity. When asked how she felt about that split she said:

I don’t know. I want to be more connected to our culture. Even your appearance. Even you can want to change your appearance, and you see the girls in the movies and they have straight hair and you like “yeah, I want that too”, yeah and then a lot of girls in my school just have to make it straight, even I do, but I’m stopping it now, I’m going to cut it and like, no more.

This battle between how one should be or not should be as a Seychellois continued in interview 2 where the respondent explained how Kreol is important to her as a person:

Magnus Rudström, 2017
It identifies who I am. Kreol is a very rare language and not used so much around the world, and it makes me proud to know this language, and when people will ask “what language are you talking?”, I’m like Kreol, and they be like wanting to know about that language. Giving you the confidence and power to talk about it and explain, and giving people wide eyes, wanting to know more about that language. Yeah so, it’s like a big thing for me. I love that I speak Kreol.

She also said that “creole culture defiantly” was a big part of her identity, to later explain her feelings towards the lack of Kreol shows on television with this statement: “It’s okay for me, English is much more interesting. Kreol is interesting to but it’s losing that, English is taking over. Makes you want to move on to the English side.” The interview ended with the respondent admitting that she is “not really about all the creole traditions culture things, cause children nowadays are evolving along with the world which is coming into the English age.” This drastic change of opinion could be that she first answered what she thought were expected and then she ended up speaking honestly about how she feels about the topic. Even if this is the case, the split between if the Kreol language and the traditional creole culture should be guarded, or if the global and international English should influence the Seychellois culture more is still apparent.

Even though there is no obvious consensus, amongst these respondents, regarding Kreol’s role in the educational system or how the respondents view their identity in connection to the languages, one line could be draw throughout all 10 interviews. That line is the split and the ambivalent view many of the respondents have towards the languages, how and when to use them, and the identity, who they are as a Seychellois. This split and other aspects of the interviews will be analysed from a postcolonial perspective in the next part of this thesis.

V. Analysis & Discussion

The existential question ’who am I?’ has been a victim of several jokes throughout the ages. Often regarding to the anxiousness of Western youth and their search for meaning in a modern, secularized and rational environment. Yet it is still relevant for many people that feel in between or in a mix of different cultures. For example, people that grow up in a country that has a history of colonial oppression and a struggle for freedom, this issue could follow them their whole
lives. In the Seychelles and other creole nations this can become particularly apparent since the islands did not have a population before the colonizers came with African slave workers and started to build a settlement. This was a situation where many different ethnicities, languages and social and cultural backgrounds collided, thus creating a multi-ethnic, mixed culture society. A creole society. Where in this mix, or in this hybrid if you will, can an individual ‘find itself’ as a cultural subject in this postcolonial country? In this analysis, I will examine the respondents’ thoughts, feelings and experiences regarding this issue with language use in the school system as the main focal point. The analysis is divided into the same themes as the Result chapter. First I will discuss the respondents’ answers regarding their everyday language use and attitudes towards the national languages, with postcolonialism as the theoretical framework for the analysis.

A. Language use and attitudes towards the three national languages

According to several studies, the usage of Creole languages has primarily been restricted to the informal and social spaces, like family and friends, in the countries that have a Creole language as their native language (Fleischmann 2008; Hilaire 2009; Rajah-Carrim 2007; Sauzier-Uchida 2009). The respondents in this interview had basically the same attitude towards their mother tongue. This does not mean that a general conclusion can be drawn saying that most young Seychellois feel this way. The thing that can be said is that these personal subjective testimonies fit into the image of how people in Creole speaking nations have viewed their own native language, as the informal language that does not have a place in the formal, professional and academic arenas. This compared to English which is viewed more as the intellectual and official language (Laversuch 2008, 382). Interviewee 1 demonstrates this attitude when she answers which language she mostly uses with her friends: “Kreol, especially when we joke about funny stuff. I think when we talk about more serious stuff it will be English…” This compartmentalization of the languages seems to be in line with the colonial idea that English is the superior academic language. It can also just be an effect of how the school system is structured. If you only study in English, you probably want to discuss more “serious stuff”, as respondent 1 puts it, in English. Another reason for this was explained by the same respondent: “I think it’s an effect that social media have on people.”

A conclusion amongst the respondents to why they prefer to use English whilst writing, was that the Kreol language does not have that many words to describe things. Then one can ask the question, why this is? Why does Kreol seem to lack the vocabulary for different areas, and why is it so hard to find literature in Kreol? One answer could be that the Kreol language
is a rather young language that have still not developed as rich vocabulary as other languages. This might be because the language is not taught after the six grade, which makes it hard to develop the proper linguistic skills that it takes to write literature. Yet another reason could be that the constant stigma that have been thrown towards the Creole languages is still deeply rooted in the minds of some young Seychellois. These interpretations show how complex this issue is. Some respondents were more negative to the use of Kreol literature and to use the language while writing, while other wanted to write and read more in Kreol, but felt prevented because of the lack of literature and vocabulary in Kreol. This seems to be the reality for these young Seychellois. How their experiences and opinions of language use in the school system can be seen from a postcolonial perspective is elaborated in the next part.

B. Students’ experiences of language use in secondary school

The students’ experiences of language use in secondary school and their opinions on the promotion of Kreol as the medium of instruction, as well as a subject, were divided. From their perspective, the Seychelles school system is functional for some and dysfunctional for others. Some respondents thought that the strong English speakers have no problem while the weak English speakers struggle, while the others did not recognize it as a problem because it was nothing they had experienced. The ones who did not recognize it as a problem and were positive towards the strong position the English language has in the educational system, emphasized the importance of learning English so they could ‘go places’. In their opinion English is the promise of an escape to somewhere else, a ticket to the international and global arena. This view is consistent with the image of the English language that where produced during the colonial era and reproduced again and again in postcolonial countries academies, or “institutional knowledge corporations” (Young 2003, 18).

Regarding the promotion of Kreol in the school system, the respondents showed little faith in the usage of their mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Apart from one individual, Kreol was considered to be limited to a restricted vocabulary according to the respondents, which made the language unfit to use as the medium of instruction. This statement is similar to one that Bollée made about Kreol in 1993, which was that “Creole is not yet fully adapted for elaborate articles or features, and its vocabulary is not sufficiently developed for dealing with all subjects of modern life (e.g. medicine, technology, science, politics, economics)” (92). But now more than two decades after this quote this seems to have changed according to Fleischmann (2008, 174). She argues that Kreol has developed a lot during this time and that the language “could easily be used for every domain of public life”, and concludes
saying that “the argument that Creole is a degenerate language which is unsuitable for higher education simply does not hold true” (ibid). With this in mind, it is quite easy to see how the respondents’ views on the promotion of Kreol as the medium of instruction is affected by an overall postcolonial idea that the language is not proficient enough to be used to a larger extent in the educational system.

The respondents’ thoughts concerning the continuation of Kreol as a subject in secondary school were either that there is no use since they are fully learned, or that it would be a good thing because it could strengthen the culture and help the pupils that struggles with English. Some interviewees however discuss this further in terms of what benefits that could come out of the introduction of Kreol as a subject in secondary school, like a possible increase in literature in Kreol as well as to introduce new vocabulary that is felt missing in the language. The opinion that there is no point in studying more Kreol after primary was voiced by more than a couple of the respondents. This is a common point of view for people in Creole speaking nations. This was actually one of the arguments made in 1996 when the ministry of education reduced the number of years during which Kreol was used as a medium of instruction. By then many Seychellois “saw no reason whatsoever to teach the children Creole, a language ’which they already know’ (or even a language they did not even consider to be a language)” (Bollée 1993, 89). This may be one of the long-lasting effects of colonialism that Hong and Halvorsens (2015, 256) talks about in their study. That colonial/western ideas and norms gets internalized by the colonial subjects, to later on be reproduced over and over again by the postcolonial nations own population. In this case, it is the stigma towards the Creole languages that still remains in the Seychelles, as well as in other Creole speaking postcolonial nations. How these issues reflect on the respondents’ thoughts about identity and culture in discussed below.

C. Identity issues in a postcolonial context

In a county with three different national languages, where the people originate from three different continents which have bought different aspects of their different cultures to the shores of this island nation, it is no wonder that confusion regarding identity can arise. In these ten interviews the respondents have shown a clear ambivalence concerning how and when to use the three national languages. This ambivalence is also apparent in the way they view their own identity in relation to the county’s different cultures and languages. They struggled to explain which continent and culture they felt the most connected to, simultaneously as many of them pended between which language they felt was a bigger part of their identity than the other languages. This struggle seems to be a good example of the hybridity in the identities of people

Magnus Rudström, 2017
in postcolonial contexts. It should be said that Seychelles is known as a ‘melting pot of culture’, the question of separate origin is one which is bound to generate confusion. At the same time as many of the respondents wanted to go back and explore the creole culture, they were in everyday life more adapted to a European lifestyle and a Western popular culture. Other respondents, that were in favour of English as a language and the Western ideals, also expressed their concerns about the loosing value of the creole culture as well as the weak position of the language in relation to English. This could be viewed as the “struggle of translation and difference in contexts where cultural and linguistic practices, histories, and epistemologies collide”, which were Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda (1999, 288) words to describe the concept of hybridity.

These hybrid identities that appears in the interviews demonstrate the importance of social transformation in postcolonial societies. Meaning that the creole culture is going to have a hard time staying relevant if it does not become a part of the creation of “new social spaces to which new meanings are given” (Young 2003, 79). One example of this is how interviewee 7 talks about the emergence of Kreol rap music in the Seychelles:

But nowadays we have these groups of new people, these artists singing, they are trying to make our language look cool. Some of them are raping in Kreol. It’s not some good rap, they course a lot. But it’s putting a trail with our Kreol vibe. Meaning that we can also do some cool stuff, cool songs, like some really nice track nation and things like that, with our own language. We don’t have to rely only English. So, we can also do cool stuff with our culture, our language.

This represents how hybridity takes shape in the interaction between different cultures and linguistic practices. Yet it is also important to acknowledge the hegemonic sides of Western modernity and the political and socioeconomic power that former colonial rulers have in these postcolonial nations. The still existing power relations and hierarchies affects the postcolonial societies in different ways and on different levels, which should be kept in mind during the ongoing process of decolonization. But all things considered, “hybridity may be empowering by acknowledging that identity is constructed through a negotiation of difference” (Amoamo & Thompson 2010, 39).
VI. Conclusion

Imagine that you are 9 years old and that you are about to start the third grade. Imagine that up until then basically everything in school and pre-school have been taught in your mother tongue, except for when you learned a second language. At home, you mostly speak your mother tongue. Imagine then how you would feel when you start school in the third grade and everything is in the second language, all except the subject of your mother tongue. How would you feel then? This bachelor thesis in political science have been telling a story of a few young Seychellois’ experiences, thoughts and feelings towards their use of language in the school system, and how this may reflect on their construction of identity. The aim of this study was therefore to acquire a deeper understanding of how the language situation in this postcolonial country can be perceived by the ones most affected by it. This thesis has strived to give a subjective perspective of this issue by interviewing ten young Seychellois, that are in their final phase of school or who have recently completed their schooling, regarding their experience of language use and identity issues in the school system.

This study has showed that some colonial/western ideas and norms still can be found in how these young Seychellois think about their mother tongue Kreol in relation to the colonial language English. Another thing that was quite distinctive in the interviews were the respondents scattered sense of identity. This ambivalent attitude towards how one should or should not be as a Seychellois followed like a thread throughout the conversations with the respondents. But maybe this should be viewed as a process rather than a problem. A process of hybridity within these young Seychellois that struggles with issues of how one should or should not be in one’s own society. This struggle can be seen from many different perspectives. One point of view is the question if one should go back to one’s origins, in an attempt to decolonize one’s own mind and discarding the existing power relations of the global world. Another perspective is if one should be more concerned with the traditional culture, or if one rather should adapt to the new modern ways to relate to an international society. The second perspective is recognizable even for Western youth in their quest to find their place in society. I am not saying that the identity issues of Western youth are the same as the issues these young Seychellois face, but one may see some similarities in the youth’s struggle to relate to every complex aspect of society that surrounds them in everyday life. The difference in the struggle to construct one’s identity is of course grounded in the counties different histories. For the youth in postcolonial countries this refers to a history of colonial oppression, unequal power relations
and the struggle to independently get to decide its own fate. As long as you cannot travel back in time and erase the colonial era, its heritage will continue to affect the countries the people that were subjected to these injustices. But by challenging the existing system of knowledge and power relations, the effects of the colonial era could be reduced, and these hybrid identities could flourish in new global, historically aware, societies.

As in every study, there has been some issues that must be considered. With Spivak’s question (can the subaltern speak?) in mind, I must ask myself if I have let the subaltern speak, and if I have listened, or if I have tried to speak for the subaltern. Even though my aim was to challenge the existing system of knowledge, there are still risks when doing postcolonial research. One of these risks is that I as a researcher continues to reproduce the stereotypical images and categories of postcolonial identities and people in postcolonial countries. Another thing that should be clarified is that it is impossible for me to try to represent or speak for these young Seychellois. Instead I have focused on their experiences, thoughts and feelings in relation to the overall postcolonial context that they are situated in. I have also strived to understand the issues that appeared, regarding language use and the construction of identity, based on the theoretical concepts regarding the subaltern and hybridity. Other practical limitations of the study include the difficulty of creating an interview guide that captured all the aspects that wanted to be studied. It should also be said that some interviewees might have preferred to be interviewed in Kreol but did not consider the option (even though I asked) because of the inconvenience that it might have cost. My position as the interviewer should as well be taken into consideration regarding how the interviewees answered some questions. In some cases, it felt like they gave the answers they thought I wanted to hear. But for many of those cases the interviewees honest opinion on the matter eventually shined through.

This thesis has tried to broaden the research in the political science field by applying a qualitatively based study of thoughts and feelings, with the aim to explore how the former colonial powers still influence the social and political spheres in a postcolonial country. I believe the importance of multidisciplinary studies to investigate different aspects regarding topics in political science such as policy making, power structures and democracy, and what effect this may have on the construction of identity. With a critical postcolonial approach, the assumptions and stereotypes of postcolonial identities can be challenged and a deeper understanding of identity construction in postcolonial countries can be acquired. I propose that future research should try to examine how the promotion of the native languages in the educational systems in postcolonial nations, may or may not affect the students’ construction of their own identity. It would also be interesting to do a longitudinal study to explore the
benefits of Kreol as a medium of instruction for those students that are weaker in English. Moreover, I think that the effects of globalization should be studied more through the experience and perspectives of people in postcolonial nations, to critically challenge the “global consumerist culture anchored in the West and to interrupt the totalizing effects of a neo-imperial globalization” (Lunga 2008, 198).
VII. References


Appendix 1: Interview guide

Introduction

- Personal introduction.
- Present the aim of the study and the purpose of this interview.
- Explain procedural information:
  - Approximate interview length (20-30 min).
  - Interviewee anonymous and information will be handled confidential.
  - Permission to record the interview.

Background

- What’s your name?
- How old are you?
- Describe your family?
- How did you grow up?
- What do you do for a living/What are you studying?
- What do you like to do on your spare time?
- What is your favourite subject in secondary school?
- What languages do you speak?
- What would you say is your mother tongue or you first language?

Theme 1: The respondents’ relationship with the national languages

1. When you are at home, what language do you use and why?
2. What language do you use with your friends (in the community/school) and why?
3. What language do you use when you read?
4. What language do you use when you write?

Theme 2: Respondents experience use of language in secondary school

5. How would describe your experience in secondary school?
   1. The subjects?
   2. The teaching/approaches?
   3. The exams (English based)?
   4. IGCSE (International general certificate in secondary education (Cambridge))?
   5. Career guidance (good/not good). What criteria were used?
6. What do you want to do, in terms of work or study, in the future?
   1. How do you feel that school has prepared you for that?
7. What language would you have preferred to learn in when you were in secondary school and why?
8. What would you think of having Creole as a subject in secondary school?

**Theme 3: Respondents identities in relation to language**

9. The Seychellois comes from three different continents. Which continent do you feel most connected to?
   1. How do you feel about that in relation to yourself as a Seychellois?
10. How does your use of Seychellois Creole/English/French contribute to make you who you are as a Seychellois(e)?
11. As a Seychellois(e) which culture (music/films/sports) do you think is more representative of your identity and why?