

Linguistic Identities of Post-Democratic South African Youth

Authors : J. Lück, S. Rudman

Abstract : Language has long been a site of struggle in South Africa with an educational language policy that favoured English and Afrikaans as high status languages and positioned other language users in deficit ways. Furthermore, a segregationist past led to individuals viewing each other as racial beings and racial categorisations still prevail in private and public life. It has been argued that it is important to explore how South African youth identities are being constructed, if past discourses still shape their identities or if they are negotiating new ways of being. The paper probes the role of language, discourse and embedded ideologies in the persistence or not of youth linguistic identities and discourses, the implications for their lived realities and for their construction of other language users and the possibilities of shifts occurring with an awareness of such discourses. It finds that past discourses continue to shape youth identities and are surging in the light of what is happening in the country today.

Keywords : discourse, ideologies, language, linguistic identities

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