

# **Language and Identity: Attitudes towards Heritage Languages in the Construction of Mixed Heritage Individuals' Identities**

**Briya Patel**

## **Abstract:**

This study investigated the attitudes that mixed heritage individuals had towards their heritage languages. In addition to this, the way in which identities were formed in mixed heritage individuals were explored also. The research adopted a mixed method approach to answer the research questions. This involved a survey which included Likert scale statements; fifty surveys were collected. The second part included conducting semi structured interviews with four participants who were selected from the survey respondents. The data was analysed using descriptive and percentage statistics as well as thematic analysis. The overall findings demonstrate that the participants attitudes are a mixture of positive and negative and that they were more so negative as a child and grew to be positive in adulthood. Motivation was a key factor which contributed to attitudes and therefore learning acquisition of heritage languages, other themes were equally important, these included; identity and belonging, language anxiety and ideal self. Although, these were the main themes which contributed to attitudes towards heritage language, there were underlying causes which were unique to the interview participants themselves. This was dependent on their mixed heritage background, heritage languages and culture, parental influence, assumptions and judgement from others and most importantly their very own personalities which created certain identities. The perceived

stereotypes of mixed heritage individuals and the terms used to describe them by family and the public also cause demotivation and a lost sense of identity amongst those from a mixed heritage background.