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“Rap for abokhokho namadlozi nelokishi nabantu bonke...”

Language choice in hip hop music from KwaZulu-Natal:

A sociolinguistic approach.

Treatise for the degree of Master of Arts (Course Work).

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Declaration of Originality

I, Anna Jennifer Groß [Gross], hereby declare that the content of this treatise is entirely my own work, and all sources have been acknowledged.

Durban, _____

Abstract

The main focus of hip hop music is on the beats and the lyrics. Hip hop lyrics performed as 'rap' (fast poetic rhymes) address topics such as self-portrayal, roots, life, location, time and space. From its beginnings, hip hop music in KwaZulu-Natal has been bilingual with artists performing in isiZulu and English. In addition, expressions from isiTsotsi or other forms of youth language are used in performances as well as on records and mixtapes.

Therefore, hip hop music from KwaZulu-Natal offers excellent material for the analysis of the relation between language choice and construction of identity amongst urban youth. This treatise investigates this matter, taking the question of ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa into account.

Five artists who rap and perform predominantly in isiZulu provide their lyrics for the sociolinguistic analysis which takes a close look at the content and translatability of each text. Certain topics addressed in hip hop lyrics in isiZulu are language-specific and seem to be (almost) untranslatable. These topics may be related to cultural concepts and 'common knowledge' which are based in Zulu traditions. Moreover, the analysis of the lyrics shows that isiZulu-speaking hip hop artists from KwaZulu-Natal who rap in their mother tongue merge common hip hop themes with traditional concepts of Zulu culture.

Abstract (IsiZulu): Okucashuniwe

Umculo we hip-hop ugxile kakhulu esigqini somsindo namagama omculo asetshenziswayo. Amagama asetshenziswa emculweni we hip-hop athulwa ngobuciko obusankondlo okubizwa ngoku repa. Lolu hlobo lomculo luyaye lugxile ezihlokwini ezifana nalezo ezingobuwena, imvelaphi, impilo, lapho ukhona, isikhathi noma indawo. Kusukela ekuqaleni kwawo umculo we hip-hop endaweni yaKwaZulu-Natali abaculi bawo bawuthula ngesiZulu nangesiNgisi. Ngaphezu kwalokho, uma kuculwa noma kuqoshwa lomculo kusetshenziswa namagama asuselwa kwisi Tsotsi nakwezinye izilimi ezisetshenziswa ikakhulu yintsha.

Ngaleso sizathu, umculo we hip-hop waKwaZulu-Natali unikeza ulwazi oluhle kakhulu lokucubungula ubudlelwane obuphakathi kolimi olusuke lukhethiwe kanye nokuveza ubunjalo bentsha yasemadolobheni. Lomqulu ucwaninga lobudlelwano ngokuthi ugxile esimweni sobuhlanga esenzeka esikhathini esilandela ukuphela kobandlululo eMzansi Afrika.

Lokhu kwenziwa ngokuthi kubukwe abaculi abahlanu abacula irephu efaka kakhulu isiZulu. Amagama asetshenziswa emaculweni wabo anika ucwaningo lolimo lomphakathi ngokubuka kanzulu lamagama nokuguquleka kombhalo ngamunye. Ezinye zezihloko okukhulunywa ngaphansi kwazo emagameni asetshenzisiwe kwi hip-hop angesiZulu atholakala kusona kuphela. Lokhu kwenza ingabi khona indlela yokuguqula umbhalo uwuse kolunye ulimi. Imbangela yalokhu ukuthi izihloko okuculwa ngaphansi kwazo zisuselwa emasikweni athize noma olwazini olususelwa kwizinto zakudala ezisuselwa emasikweni esiZulu. Ngaphezu kwalokho, uhlaziyo lwamagama asetshenziswa ngabaculi baKwaZulu-Natali aba repa ngolimi lwesiZulu lutshengisa ukuthi bavame ukuhlanganisa ingqikimba ye hip-hop kanye namagama asuselwa emasikweni esiZulu.

(translated by Sandiso Ngcobo)

Abstract (German): Kurze Darlegung der Thematik

Die Schwerpunkte von HipHop-Musik liegen auf Rhythmus und Text. Die HipHop Texte, die als ‚rap‘ (schnelle poetische Reime) vorgetragen werden, behandeln Themen wie z.B. Selbstportraits der KünstlerInnen, ihre Lebenswirklichkeit(en), ihre Lebensräume sowie ihre Wahrnehmungen von Zeit und Welt (life, location, time and space). Seit seinen Anfängen ist der Musikstil HipHop in KwaZulu-Natal zweisprachig, die MusikerInnen ‚rappen‘ auf Englisch und isiZulu. Darüber hinaus gehören zu seinen Sprachformen allerdings auch Ausdrücke aus dem ‚isiTsotsi‘ und anderen Formen der Jugendsprache, sowohl bei Live-Auftritten als auch auf Aufnahmen. Deshalb bietet HipHop-Musik aus KwaZulu-Natal ausgezeichnetes Material für eine Analyse der Beziehung zwischen Sprachwahl und Identitätskonstruktionen urbaner Jugend.

Die vorliegende Abhandlung untersucht die obengenannten Themen unter Berücksichtigung der ethnischen Zugehörigkeit im Südafrika nach der Zeit der Apartheid.

Fünf Künstler, die vorwiegend auf isiZulu rappen, haben ihre Texte für eine soziolinguistische Analyse zur Verfügung gestellt, die die Inhalte sowie die Übersetzbarkeit der Texte untersucht. Die Analyse der Texte zeigt unter anderem, dass die HipHopper aus KwaZulu-Natal, die in ihrer Muttersprache rappen, allgemein übliche HipHop-Themen mit traditionellen Elementen und Sichtweisen der Zulukultur verbinden. Offensichtlich sind einige der Themen, die traditionell in der Zulu-Kultur verankerte Konzepte behandeln, so sprach-spezifisch, dass sie (fast) nicht übersetzt werden können.

Für meine Eltern

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Unfortunately, and shocking to me as an outsider from Europe, many hip hop shows in Durban still remain segregated, and the hip hop scene is clearly divided into black and white groups who only meet on special occasions such as 'Life Check' or the 'Battle of the Year'. But Durban has a very lively scene with many, many great talents on both sides. Fortunately, I got to spend time in both groups, but sadly enough I was often the only 'umlungu' [white person] at shows in townships and local neighbourhoods, and even in town because no-one else made any effort to see the performances there. I hope this research helps to create further interest on both sides.

Glossary

Battle	[noun] One-to-one competition which can be fought via <i>rap</i> (who has got the better lyrics), <i>b-boying/ breakdance</i> (who has got the more creative moves), <i>graffiti/ spraycan art</i> (who can spray the nicer picture) and <i>Djing</i> (who can scratch and mix the better beats)
Breakdance	[noun] Dance in hip hop
Cypher	[noun] Spontaneous or planned get-togethers where rappers rap <i>freestyle</i> and compete with each other
Freestyle rap	[noun] spontaneous lyrics, not written, developed in the moment of the performance
Graffiti	[noun] Spraycan art
isiZulu	[noun] The Zulu language
isiTsotsi	[noun] An urban ‘mixed-code’ of isiZulu (see section 3.2)
KwaZulu	[noun] The land where the Zulus live
MC	[acronym] Emcee: Master of Ceremony, namely the person who holds the microphone and encourages the audience to celebrate; the rapper
Mixtapes	[noun] CD-Compilations by different hip hop artists, often recorded and produced in private homes without any official labels or companies involved; they used to be on tapes before CDs became popular
Pimp	[noun] A person who pretends to be great but does not have anything to offer (original meaning also ‘procurer’)
Punch-line	[noun] A line in hip hop lyrics that says it all, that convinces all listeners, that rhymes the best
Rap	[verb, noun] see chapter 2
Rapper	[noun] A hip hop artist who performs his/her lyrics as ‘rap’
Rapping	[verb] Performing hip hop lyrics, the act of ‘rap’

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1 Introduction

Hip-hop and rap [...] has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world. Even as a universally recognized popular music idiom, rap continues to provoke attention to local specificities (Mitchell 2001: 1f).

Hip hop started as American youth culture in the late 1970s and includes the four elements 'rap' (poetry), 'beat' (music), 'b-boying'/'b-girling' (in the mainstream known as 'breakdance') and 'graffiti'. While hip hop originated in cities in the United States of America, especially in the Bronx, New York City, it has become a global phenomenon and can be found throughout the world today. The four elements of hip hop are implemented in almost every hip hop community but each cultural area also has its local specificities.

South African hip hop began in the early 1980s in cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg. The hip hop scene in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) started around that time as well but it was only in 1998 when the first 'strictly hip hop' events were hosted in the city of Durban¹. From its early beginnings in KwaZulu-Natal, hip hop music has always been bilingual with artists rapping in isiZulu and English². Since the main focus of hip hop music is on its beats and lyrics, it offers excellent material for an analysis of language choice.

Speech in hip hop music creates a situation where language choices are made very consciously and intentionally. The black hip hop community of KwaZulu-Natal is, in this paper, considered to be a speech community of its own, and is therefore analyzed with regard to its language practices and choices. As Winford says, "speech communities can be defined at different levels of generalization, from communities of practice to the local neighborhood to the nation state" (2003: 26). A speech community is shaped by its members who form the community in terms of certain linguistic practices, repertoires and "rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech" (Winford 2003: 26). Although, unlike conversations, musical practices usually represent one-sided speech performances, one can observe certain linguistic practices. Unlike the hip hop culture in Cape Town, Johannesburg or Pretoria, where rap includes mainly American slang expressions and is expressed in South

¹ This information is based on several informal conversations, as well as several formal interviews, I held with local hip hop artists and promoters of hip hop shows in KwaZulu-Natal.

² This is a different phenomenon compared to hip hop from Cape Town and Johannesburg where the language in rap music was originally mostly based on English in the style of American rap.

African English, Afrikaans, and more recently in many different 'vernacular' languages, the bilingual situation in the province of KwaZulu-Natal forms the basis for a mainly bilingual approach to hip hop lyrics. Most artists in the black hip hop community of KZN (as well as most inhabitants in the province) speak isiZulu as their first language (L1) and English as their second language (L2). Therefore, this hip hop community in KZN can be considered a bilingual speech community, using English and isiZulu to communicate, express themselves and rhyme.

Language is [...] an important aspect in the globalization of rap and hip-hop, with regional dialects and indigenous languages other than English coming to the fore as important markers for the vernacular expression and construction of identity (Mitchell 2001: 32).

This treatise deals with the connection between language and identity, an issue closely aligned with ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa as revealed by language choices among hip hop artists. The content of hip hop lyrics is analyzed with regard to the language that is used, i.e. isiZulu as opposed to English. Hence, the following questions are addressed: Is a particular choice of language an expression of the artist's identity? Can we find a connection between the artist's self-expressed ethnicity and the particular language that was chosen?

The evaluation of the hip hop lyrics is complemented with interviews in which the artists voice their reasons for certain language choices and their reflection on their own translations.

This first chapter is an introduction to the topic of language choice in hip hop music from KwaZulu-Natal. The genesis of this research is described, and its basic aims are explained. Furthermore, the research questions are introduced.

The second chapter gives a brief introduction to the history of hip hop music in general with a special focus on the history of hip hop in KwaZulu-Natal. In the third chapter, I present an overview of the general situation of languages in South Africa, and in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in particular. Although this paper focuses mainly on language choice between English and isiZulu in KZN's rap lyrics, isiTsotsi, an "urban mixed-code" (Rudwick 2005: 305), has to be taken into consideration since most performers as well as audiences use isiTsotsi on a regular basis and switch constantly in their language use. The fourth chapter deals with the notions of language, culture and ethnicity. The fifth chapter gives a brief insight into the function of *izimbongi* in the Zulu tradition. After that, the methodology of the

research is introduced in chapter six. Chapter seven deals with the problem of translatability, and presents different views of the topic of translation and translatability. The lyric analysis is presented in chapter eight. The last chapter of this treatise provides suggestions for further research in the field of hip hop lyrics.

The hip hop lyrics in the analysis at hand and their translations are attached as appendices at the end of the document. The texts were given to me in handwritten format (on paper). I typed them up and reconfirmed the spelling, grammar and structure of the typed text with the artists on the day of the interview. Any incorrect spellings, ambiguous expressions, uncommon uses of determiners, or other mistakes of any kind in these texts (in isiZulu as well as in English) are based on the authorship of the artists. Furthermore, quotations from the interviews are transcribed authentically, and portray the artists' speech.

1.1 Reasons for choosing the topic

My main reason for choosing this research topic is, first of all, my observation of intriguing language dynamics as a participant-observer at hip hop performances in KwaZulu-Natal. The isiZulu-speaking audience shows a particular reaction to the artists' performance whenever the artists switch from English to isiZulu. Their interest and enthusiasm increase as soon as the artists perform their lyrics in their mother tongue isiZulu. A strong connection between the audience's own identity with the artists' chosen language is apparent. Because of these observations, I became interested in the reasons for the language choices made by the artists³.

One question addressed in this treatise is whether hip hop performers from KwaZulu-Natal who rap in isiZulu as their mother tongue not only identify themselves as hip hop performers but also express their identity as Zulus. This is pertinent since language and identity are closely related and expressed in the hip hop culture (Fenn & Perullo 2000).

My research design was further informed by Fenn and Perullo's article "Language choice and hip hop in Tanzania and Malawi" (2000). My approach to the bilingual hip hop community in KZN is similar to their approach to the hip hop culture in these two African countries. Their analysis shows how language choice between

³ It is beyond the scope of this short treatise to investigate both, audience's and artists' choices of language. Therefore, this paper focuses on the artists' language choice.

English and the native language (Chichewa in Malawi and Swahili in Tanzania) differs in the two countries and, at the same time, represents an expression of the artists' association with the particular languages. As an example, rappers in Tanzania tend to use English in the style of American hip hop music when they talk about peers, friends, parties and fun while Swahili is more often used to address local issues like HIV, drug use, government corruption, lack of jobs etc. (Fenn & Perullo 2000). While Fenn and Perullo also address issues of media reception and representation of hip hop music in Tanzania and Malawi, I mainly focus, due to the scope of this treatise, on rap lyrics, their content, and the artists' reasons for choosing one language over another under particular circumstances in certain contexts.

Fishman (2000: 92) describes "the implication of topical regulation of language choice" when in particular multilingual contexts "certain topics are somehow handled better in one language than in another". In light of this, several questions arise regarding the language choice of isiZulu-speaking hip hop artists:

For instance, what are their reasons for the choice of isiZulu? Do the artists' attitudes suggest that it is easier to express certain topics in isiZulu than in English? Are particular topics language-specific, and can they only adequately be expressed in isiZulu? Is the language choice based on the deeper 'expressibility' of certain topics in isiZulu? Is it based on a particular affinity for isiZulu? Are the artists in KwaZulu-Natal making language choices because certain terms are lacking in English? Do the artists feel capable of translating traditional Zulu ideologies into English and capturing their essence in the other language? Do the artists choose isiZulu because they want to use the poetic character of the language for their lyrics? Is their reasoning for the language choice based on political views? Do they want to preserve their mother tongue because they are afraid of the hegemony of the English language? The central aim of this treatise is to find answers to the above-mentioned questions.

2 Hip hop

"You can't really define hip hop because hip hop defines you"
(Tsubasa 10.11.2006).

The difficult and demoralizing circumstances of African and Latino Americans in the Bronx in New York City in the 1970s formed the ground for the emergence of a new subculture that created a medium of expression, a new style of music and a counter to violence, crime and social misery. Inhabitants of the Bronx experienced poverty, juvenile delinquency and violence in their daily life. The emergence of hip hop formed a counter movement to these issues. In the founding elements of hip hop culture, creativity replaces violence. Hip hop represents a mixture of sound, rhythm, dress, attitude and poetics. 'Battles' are fought on the ground of ability and knowledge instead of violent physicality⁴.

The structure of hip hop music is influenced by many different styles of music but mainly African American styles like funk, jazz, and disco, as well as reggae and others. "[It] draws not only upon African-American traditions, but upon its dense interconnections with black diasporic music, from dance hall to Afro-pop, from soca to UK funk" (Potter 1995: 26).

Watkins describes the style of hip hop saying that "for melodic effects rappers depend heavily on the use of the sampler. In rap music, [...] the emphasis is on creating powerful rhythms for the purpose of mobilising its audience" (2000: 38). Therefore, the main focus in the music is not on the melody but on the beats (breakbeat) and the lyrics. As mentioned above, influences for the beats and structure of the songs come from many different sources, e.g. recent South African hip hop music often includes samples of traditional African drums, traditional choirs and songs as well as sounds that remind the listeners of nature such as the singing of birds.

The lyrics in hip hop music are presented as 'rap': fast poetic rhymes that are often developed spontaneously. They are meant to express daily life stories, small anecdotes or critical views of peers, politics or social grievances by means of using a rhythmic and rhyming language. It is a musical form of articulated criticism against

⁴ <http://culture-on-the-road.de/hiphop.html>

racism and segregation in urban life and often attacks social misery, corruption, oppression and poverty.

Insbesondere die musikalische Praxis des Rap stellt eine poetische Form der Artikulation von Kritik gegen Rassismus und Segregation in urbanen Kontexten dar (Weller 2006: 109).

In particular the musical practice of rap represents a poetic form of articulating criticism of racism and segregation in urban contexts (transl. Gross 2006).

While hip hop lyrics often express criticism, they are also used to describe the artist's identity and friendships with peers as well as to draw strong differentiations to the 'Other', especially in battles where the boundaries between the competing person and the performer's own characteristics are strongly highlighted to weaken the 'Other' side. "Hip hop celebrates *Me* and *We*, as opposed to *You*" (Perry 2004: 89). The representation of the *Self* (in opposition) is significant. Furthermore, the topics of space, position and location are important in hip hop. They are key factors which "influence identity formation as they relate to localized practices of the self" (Forman 2004: 155). 'Space' describes the capture, conquest and occupancy of public places and spots such as the spreading of graffiti in a town or the occupation of space with cyphers and breakdance sessions, especially in city centres. 'Position' refers to the idea of presenting 'where you are at' and 'where you are from', including what has been achieved and describing who oneself is as an artist (ibid.). 'Location' refers to the surroundings of the artists. The description of one's home and surroundings as well as urban spaces as 'home waters' is a typical theme in rap (ibid.).

The rhythm of the lyrics as rap form a central part of the rhythmic structure of the whole hip hop track and can occur 'a cappella' by creating rhythm simply through the lyrics' rhyming structure, though they are often supported by beat-boxing (creating drumming sounds with the mouth). Narrative rap, and allegoric tales, two of the many kinds of hip hop lyrics, are a direct transfer from the tradition of storytelling. Other styles include debates, autobiographies, and fictions (Perry 2004). There are descriptive and proclamative rap styles in which the artists point out their own greatness that serve more as storytelling than exhortation. "Rap artists explore grammatical creativity, verbal wizardry, and linguistic innovation in refining the art of oral communication" (Dyson 2004: 66).

Typical features of speech in hip hop music as analyzed by Smithermann (1994) are a) circumlocution, b) metaphorical-imagistic language, c) humorous, ironic speech,

d) rhythmic fluency and rhythmic sound, e) teachy but not preachy style, f) speech, directed at a person or persons who usually are present in the situational context, g) punning, play on words, and h) the introduction of the semantically or logically unexpected (Smithermann 1994, as cited by Perry 2004: 62). Although Smithermann's analysis is based on African-American English, referred to as "AAE" (the African-American Language), distinct elements of rap techniques can be found in almost every hip hop song, independent of the language that is used. Furthermore, the isiZulu lyrics in this paper show clear similarities in their features to songs in Smithermann's analyses, and therefore represent typical hip hop practices. An extract is displayed below, taken from the song *Lo ongasenbla* by Bhiz Isangoma Samagama⁵:

Abakhohlwa ukubhla ebhayibhelini imina umHedeni
ohwisana neyigelosi ngesahluko sepeni
ngigobhule amaphiko ukuze zibale unomphele lapha emblabeni
inkukhu nomthunzi sindiza sonke emoyeni

(The elements in bold show the rhyming, and rhythmic structure of these four lines.)

Dat what they forgot 2 write in da bible dat I'm da heathen
who fights Angels with a pen and clips off their wings
so dat they'll be stuck on this earth
Us and chicken we fly high together

(transl. by the artist himself, uncommon spelling is based on his authorship)

Bhiz uses biblical references and metaphorical expressions to describe himself as an extraordinary rapper in contrast to other rappers when addressing his audience. A deeper analysis of his lyrics can be found in chapter eight of this paper.

"All over the world hip-hop speaks to the concerns of marginalised youths", as Watkins describes it (2000: 8). Hip hop has become a global youth culture which is spiced with local references, incorporated by youngsters worldwide. Although often referring to its American origin by using similar styles and language patterns, "in each cultural area, hip hop artists filter American and other foreign hip hop styles through their own local musical, social, and linguistic practices, creating unique musical forms" (Fenn & Perullo 2000: 74).

Hip-Hop lebt vom Versuch, im Wettstreit mit Gleichgesinnten einen individuellen Style [sic.] zu entwickeln, sich Distinktion innerhalb der gemeinsamen Kultur zu verschaffen [...] Nimmt man das Wechselverhältnis des Globalen und Lokalen in der Entwicklung der Popkultur – und ihrer Sprache – ernst, sind also globale

⁵ Bhiz Isangoma Samagama is his full artist name, short form 'Bhiz'.

Gemeinsamkeiten durch lokale Besonderheiten zu ergänzen (Androutsopoulos 2003: 111).

Hip hop evolves from the competition between like-minded people striving to develop distinct individual styles. If one takes the interactions of the global and the local in the development of pop culture seriously, global similarities have to be complemented by local specificities (transl. Gross 2006).

In South Africa, hip hop forms a counterpart to the popular dance music Kwaito which is often mistakenly called ‘South African hip hop’. Kwaito started as a local form of house music to show the ability to celebrate and party after the dawn of Apartheid, and it developed as a local form with lyrics using mainly local African languages and youth varieties of these languages. In this, one finds similarities to local hip hop music. Furthermore, the lyrics in Kwaito are often presented as ‘rap’ but remain mostly repetitive. Kwaito has a very distinct beat which is based on a different beat structure than does hip hop, and originates from the idea of house music as a dance form. It evokes different attitudes in its performers and audiences than hip hop. While Kwaito mostly takes an apolitical approach (Steingo 2005: 343), hip hop in South Africa addresses many different political issues and places a strong focus on its lyrics’ content.

South African hip hop music is so far mostly played, produced and listened to by young people below the age of thirty. It is a growing youth culture incorporating influences from all over the world but is increasingly focussing on the local. In KwaZulu-Natal, hip hop performances take place almost every weekend. Most performances happen in the metropolitan area of Durban but also in Pietermaritzburg and different small towns within the province⁶. Often hip hop shows are organized by hip hop activists themselves within their neighbourhood and occur during afternoons on weekends. With weekly shows on Durban’s Youth Radio (DYR/UKW 105.1) and Gagasi (99.5 FM), local hip hop from KwaZulu-Natal is represented on the media and can be heard all over the province.

KZN’s hip hop performers as well as KZN’s hip hop participants have established distinctive rap representations, particularly with regards to the use of language in their music. They express in their own language their criticism of society and politics, their wishes for the future, and they try to educate their friends and listeners about several topics such as HIV, crime, and ‘respect’.

⁶ This information is based on several informal conversations I held with local hip hop artists and promoters of hip hop shows in KwaZulu-Natal as well as on my own knowledge of and experience in the local scene.

3 Languages in South Africa

This chapter gives a general overview of the language landscape in South Africa as well as a description of the particular situation in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in order to create a basis for the analysis of language choices made by South African hip hop artists.

South Africa is a multilingual country. The 1996 constitution declared eleven languages as national official languages, establishing a unique case of comprehensive language acknowledgement. Most of the official languages belong to the Bantu language families including the Nguni cluster and the Sotho cluster. The Nguni cluster includes the languages of isiZulu, isiXhosa, SeSwati and isiNdebele whereas the Sotho cluster comprises SePedi, SeSotho and SeTswana. Other languages of the Bantu families are XiTsonga and TshiVenda. Further languages granted official status are English and Afrikaans. Varieties that are not officially acknowledged but exist as spoken lingua francas in urban environments throughout South Africa are Iscamtho, Tsotsitaal (Flaaitaal) and the pidgin Fanakalo (Mesthrie 2002). Moreover, there are several minority languages spoken, mostly by immigrants from different parts of the world, e.g. such languages as Chopi, Kalanga, Shona, Chewa, Phuti, Chinese and Polynesian languages, Portuguese, and German (ibid.). Other languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin also are spoken, mainly due to religious practices (ibid.). At the moment, South African sign language is in the process of being adopted as the twelfth official language.

According to Census data from 2001, isiZulu is the most widely spoken language in the country. 23.8% of all South Africans speak isiZulu as their mother tongue (L1), while only 8.2% of the population speak English as their L1. Of the two official languages with a (mostly) European origin, Afrikaans is the more widely spoken with approximately 14 % of the population (mostly spoken by Coloureds in the Cape and white South Africans).

South Africa is still afflicted by the lingering effects of the legacy of Apartheid. However, the new language policies lead towards a multilingual, and hence, democratic approach and support a multilingual education system.

In contrast, during Apartheid, and especially after the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953, mother tongue education was applied for the first eight years of schooling. Black schools were not allowed to teach the same curriculum as other schools but had to teach in their Bantu languages. English and Afrikaans became compulsory subjects at all black schools only at the secondary level. Due to the fact that English was only introduced at a late level in black secondary schools while white, indian and coloureds schools taught all syllabuses either in Afrikaans or English (or both), the function of mother tongue education was seen as to denying "black children access to English as the language of prestige, as the lingua franca of South Africa and as an international language of wider communication" (Maartens 1998: 31).

The Apartheid regime's social and political policies ensured that African indigenous languages remained "languages of low status" (Alexander & Heugh 2001: 20). On the surface, these policies appeared to develop and modernise the indigenous languages "when in fact they were underdeveloping them quite deliberately" (Alexander & Heugh 2001: 20f). Although mother tongue education was enforced in black schools, English and Afrikaans became the most prominent languages of instruction on higher levels, especially at secondary level. This led to the current situation where English and Afrikaans are still the most prominent languages taught in schools throughout the country although the constitution of 1996 states that "the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these [indigenous] languages" (Maartens 1998: 15). English functions in most cases as the language of commerce and power as well as the language of international communication.

3.1 The language situation in KwaZulu-Natal

KwaZulu-Natal is the province with the largest (9.4 million) and yet most homogenous population in South Africa (Census data 2001).

Numerically, the Zulus are the dominant population group in this area and have been so since the days of the great Zulu kings, Dingane and Shaka, who ruled the area from the Pongola river in the north to the Thukela in the south and from the sea in the east to the Buffels river in the west during the early years of the 19th century (Zungu 1998: 37).

IsiZulu is the mother tongue of more than 80 % of the population. English is the second most spoken L1 — approximately 12% to 15% — followed by isiXhosa

with about 20% (Census data 2001). The province of KwaZulu-Natal differs from other South African provinces in having only two prominent languages, and according to Chick and Wade, "the diglossic⁷ situation" (1997: 274) in KwaZulu-Natal is stabilising, "rather than being eroded" (ibid.). As Dlamini says, "Zulu is the native language of almost all black people in this region. [...] In this sense therefore, KwaZulu-Natal has relative linguistic (and cultural) homogeneity" (2001: 201).

IsiZulu is often used when speakers want to mark their ethnicity when interacting with "other linguistic and ethnic groups in the South African context" (Zungu 1998: 45). The young respect their indigenous language and "regard it as the sacred language of their ancestors" (ibid.). At the same time, young isiZulu-speakers aim to achieve proficiency in English to be able to express themselves amongst all South Africans. Also, they often speak 'slang' to identify themselves as part of a certain youth group, and distance themselves from their parents' generation. New urban varieties of isiZulu have developed which include youth slang such as isiTsotsi⁸, and employ code-switching to English.

The language situation in KwaZulu-Natal may be regarded as one of the most stable ones in the country with regard to the preservation and development of the indigenous language. As early as beginning of the 20th century "in Natal, the black child's mother tongue was catered for by making the study of Zulu compulsory as a school subject for all 'native' children" (Maartens 1998: 29). The Bantu education of the Apartheid regime (Bantu Education Act 1953) forced teaching in isiZulu in 'African' or 'Black' schools which supported the broad use of a single Bantu language, a situation which had no counterpart elsewhere in South Africa. At the same time, the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in the 'African' or 'Black' school system was constantly rejected by teachers, other educators and students throughout the province, and therefore Afrikaans was never properly installed as the language of instruction (Maartens 1998).

On the one hand, English was, and still is, the major language of instruction in KwaZulu-Natal's education institutions as it is everywhere else in the country. IsiZulu, on the other hand, traditionally enjoys a very high status and has always played a central role in KwaZulu-Natal, "especially during the Shakan and the pre-

⁷ The term 'diglossia' denotes "a situation where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout a speech community, with each being assigned a definite but not overlapping role" (Mesthrie 2000: 29).

⁸ See section 3.2

Shakan periods" (Zungu 1998: 37). The Zulus' pride in the language has been diminished during apartheid but has not been erased. But "it is only since 1996 that Zulu has received recognition as an official language" (ibid.). Over the years of apartheid, "the lack of recognition severely affected the [high] status of Zulu" (Zungu 1998: 38).

I consider the current bilingual situation of KwaZulu-Natal an advantage for empowering the indigenous language, i.e. isiZulu. Although English is the language of instruction at most schools and all tertiary education institutions as well as the language of commerce, isiZulu is spoken in most households of the province, and increasingly appears in higher domains of life. Street signs as well as directions and warning signs have been changed from Afrikaans and English to isiZulu and English. Many official documents have been translated into isiZulu. Durban has a bilingual phone directory. Due to his refusal to speak English in court, the entire trial against Jacob Zuma was either conducted in or translated into isiZulu, and presented in a very "pure" form of the language although the judge and the advocates mainly used English (Moya in Mail & Guardian 2006). Several magazines and newspapers from this province are written in two languages or favour isiZulu. There are radio stations which mainly use isiZulu, e.g. Ukhozi FM (90.8 FM) and the youth radio stations Gagasi (99.5 FM) and DYR (105.1 FM, Durban's Youth Radio). Some television companies show news and soaps, mainly or at least partly, in isiZulu.

3.2 isiTsotsi

Hip hop has always been a musical form of poetic expression and as such been a playground for 'juggling' with language. Most of the performers of KZN's isiZulu-speaking hip hop scene are younger than thirty years old and use isiTsotsi frequently within their use of isiZulu⁹. Even if their lyrics are mainly expressed in isiZulu, expressions and sayings from isiTsotsi might be included. The following passage is meant to give a brief description of 'isiTsotsi'.

While Msimang (1987) in his article on "Impact of Zulu on Tsotsitaal" claims it is "abundantly clear that Tsotsitaal is a pidgin ... [and] very much in the process of

⁹ This information is based on several informal conversations, as well as several formal interviews, I held with local hip hop artists, and audiences at hip hop shows in KwaZulu-Natal.

creolization" (Msimang 1987: 84), in KwaZulu-Natal the language situation for isiTsotsi appears to be slightly different. With KZN's bilingualism, there is not the kind of contact situation between speakers of different mother tongues as can be found in the Reef¹⁰. Hence, isiTsotsi does not (mainly) function as a lingua franca but as a part of youth language and slang¹¹. With regards to its use in the hip hop community, I will consider isiTsotsi as a sub-variety or youth slang of isiZulu rather than as a language of its own.

IsiTsotsi is "an urban mixed-code" (Rudwick 2005: 305) which is spoken throughout South Africa today with local specificities. In KwaZulu-Natal, isiTsotsi is mainly based on isiZulu. Rudwick (2005: 306) describes the variety spoken in the Umlazi township and other areas in KwaZulu-Natal as "significantly different from the 'Tsotsi' varieties [...] discussed in the context of the Gauteng province, at least with regards to its lexicon". Other varieties of urban mixed-codes include isiCamtho and Tsotsitaal.

The origin of the term 'tsotsi' is widely discussed but very uncertain (Molamu 2003). It may originate from the narrow-bottomed, 'stove-pipe' trousers that used to be the fashion of the youth in 1940s or from the ethnic group of "Tutsi" in central Africa. It might also come from the Sotho term *bo tsotsa* (which means to engage in crime and thuggery) or from a sub-ethnic group of the San on the heart of Southern Africa (ibid.). Independent of its etymological origin, the term 'tsotsi' in South Africa used to be related to gang crime and violent youngsters (ibid.). While it began as the coded language of young criminals, today there are hundreds of thousands of second language users of isiTsotsi all over South Africa. It is widely used in South African music and literature, especially in Kwaito. Nevertheless, it is "mainly seen as an empowerment from the perspective of township people, while rural or suburban residents may [still] perceive the use of isiTsotsi negatively" (Rudwick 2006: 60). But even in the city of Durban, "isiTsotsi carries, despite widespread use and increasing acceptance, a rather ambiguous status among isiZulu-speakers" (Rudwick 2005: 306).

¹⁰ The Reef (the area surrounding Johannesburg in Gauteng) is to be regarded the "fountain-head" of the pidgin language Tsotsitaal (Molamu 2003: XXIV).

¹¹ Whether or not Tsotsitaal as it is spoken in the Gauteng province can be considered a pidgin language based on South Africa's contact situation is a question which still needs to be further researched. Many scholars regard it as a pidgin, however, the majority of research projects on pidgin and creole languages have excluded Tsotsitaal. The very few available articles on Tsotsitaal all indicate that it is under-researched.

While some of the artists in this research try to avoid expression from isiTsotsi in their lyrics to keep them 'understandable' for elders as well as youth (Bhiz, Tsubasa, Zakes 2006), others do not differentiate between isiTsotsi and isiZulu in their lyrics at all (Manielisi, Miracle 2006) but rather see it embedded in the youth culture. Manielisi says,

When I write Zulu [...] it is very 'street' [...] It's the spoken word. It's the spoken language. [...] Because [...] the traditionally known Zulu comes with the domain of being raised from where you are like for example if you're raised in a rural area, the Zulu that you speak is gonna reflect 'cause the things that you see around are gonna be in the language. I haven't seen a cow for some time so I can't talk about a cow. And the language that comes with the cow and isibaya and the whole scenery it forms the Zulu that you speak so the Zulu that I speak forms the urban setting. It's not necessarily isiCamtho or Tsotsitaal [...] It's just language to me (12.11.2006).

By contrast, the rapper Bhiz creates a second character with which he uses isiTsotsi in some of his texts to avoid it in the texts of his other character:

I've got this other character. I call myself Tsotsi Part II. [...] When I'm Tsotsi Part II, I'm just a tsotsi. I rhyme about that – the township life, my friends [...] which is also fiction [but] I don't use [...] Tsotsi when I'm writing my battle rhymes. I only use it when I'm Tsotsi Part II (Bhiz 15.11.2006).

4 Language, culture and ethnicity

As has been mentioned before, the notions of identity in connection with origin, location, space and place play a significant role in hip hop culture. As such, one is (almost) impelled to take a closer look at the specific elements of identity in connection with language in the South African hip hop scene. Language plays an important role in hip hop since the lyrics of hip hop music are spoken words, performed as 'rap' — fast poetic rhymes (see chapter 2). The 'ethnic identity' of the hip hop artists from KwaZulu-Natal, born as Zulus and speaking isiZulu as their mother tongue, is expressed by their choice of language within their lyrics. Furthermore, specific cultural concepts are represented within their texts. The following chapter provides an introduction by defining the notions of *language*, *culture* and *ethnicity* as understood in this treatise.

Language can be considered as a "cultural practice" (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 272). As such it is both "an instrument" as well as a "product of culture" (ibid.). It is a cultural symbol and a culture's capital. Language reflects the cultural character of its speakers in their vocabulary as well as their "ways of speaking" and "their

discourse conventions" (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 274). Hoijer describes the connection between language and culture based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:

[...] language plays a large and significant role in the totality of culture. Far from being simply a technique of communication, it is itself a way of the perceptions of its speakers and it provides for them habitual modes of analyzing experience into significant and formidable barriers to cross-cultural communication and understanding (1954: 94).

As evidenced above, Hoijer views language as "as a structured subsystem" that has "intimate relations with the core covert metaphysics observable in the cultural system at large" (1954, as cited by Lucy 1992: 78). This notion suggests that people acquire the cultural specificities of the group they belong to such as "values, norms, beliefs, views and behavioural patterns" via "linguistic interactions" (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 274), and that they express as well as practise their cultural identities through the means of their language.

Often circumlocutions seem necessary when translating from one language to another as some lexemes have no translation equivalents. Although different languages do not necessarily predict a different perception of the world, cultural concepts may be deeply implemented in the language, and therefore may appear to be language-specific. A concept that is based in the culture makes sense to the people who are part of that particular cultural group. Consequently, they develop lexical items to describe these particular matters, traditions, rituals or performances while other groups do not perceive the same concepts as part of their culture, and as a result, are 'lacking' vocabulary for them. "Most human behaviors [sic.] are language imbedded and, therefore, language is an inevitable part of culture" (Fishman 1985: xi). In this case, certain concepts may become untranslatable for speakers of a different language. Sometimes it is not even necessary to refer to different languages to create untranslatability of concepts of one group to another. Interest groups within one cultural group can create their own vocabulary for their interest which may not be used by the rest of the cultural group, and therefore may remain inaccessible for them. Furthermore, cultural specificities can result from a specific way of thinking which may be hard to transfer into another language due to the different trains of thought that they are based on: "language form and habitual speech enable or tend to foster ways of thinking" (Hanks 1996: 243). The knowledge of specific cultural elements which are known amongst the speakers within a particular cultural group, and due to that, the ability to understand the full

concepts of these elements which are culture-, and hence, language-specific are referred to as *interpretative schemata* by Webb & Kembo-Sure (2000: 274). There are linguistic signals in a language which are used and understood by speakers in a culture. Those signals work as *contextualization cues* (ibid.) within the communication but can lead to cross-cultural miscommunication.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language and culture influence each other mutually but not in a "causal way" (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 123). Languages "reflect the world in which people live" (ibid.). Their world views are portrayed "in their vocabularies", and shown in "the lexical meanings of the sounds, structures, and varieties of a language" (ibid.). The use of language also reflects the world in which people live in the ways in which who may talk to whom, when and about what (ibid.). Hence, the cultural concepts that are developed, perceived, and used within a particular group are mirrored in the group's language use. Language is an "index" of culture (Fishman 1985: xi).

Furthermore, Kembo-Sure and Webb describe how "cultural changes [might] lead to language change". Such change can include, for example, additional lexical items for the use and development of technological items that have not existed in a language before or "changes in the meaning of words" due to changes in the way of their perception and use (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 123). So language is "an important bearer and mirror of culture" and a "phenomenon [that] plays a central role in the exercise of cultural power" (Malan 1995: 265).

The notions of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic identity' remain vague concepts although they have been extensively researched. Little agreement has been achieved amongst scholars in the field¹². Especially in post-apartheid South Africa, a country of brisk and vigorous changes, the topics of 'identity' and 'ethnicity' are rather complicated ones in which language takes on a central role. This view is certainly significant in the South African context as languages "have served the interest of particular groups" in the country (Malan 1995: 265). Although in the past, the term 'ethnicity' has unfortunately been misused, carrying connotations of nationalism, racism and tribalism, it still serves as an important concept in the context of this research with regards to language and identity in South Africa. I emphasize, however, the idea of

¹² Several different approaches and conceptualization are described in the viewed literature (for more details see Isajiw 1974, Gans 1979, Banks 1988, Gudykunst & Schmidt 1988, Fishman 1997)

ethnicity in connection with the linguistic field and draw on the definitions by scholars such as Fishman, Isajiw and Gudykunst.

'Ethnicity' signifies "belongingness" to a group (Fishman 1997: 239), especially in comparison to others who are not within this particular group. Members of one ethnic group "differ with regard to certain cultural characteristics from the other members of their society" (Isajiw 1974: 113). Hence, the members of a certain group do not simply construct their belonging by identifying with each other from 'within' but also by emphasizing their difference to others. In Isajiw's definition, 'ethnic groups' are to be regarded as groups with a "common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exist as subgroups of larger societies" (ibid.). For him, the characteristics of ethnicity are "same ancestral origin", "same cultural traits", "a sense of peoplehood" and a common "type of relations" (1974: 118).

"Ethnicity is 'peopleness'. i.e. belonging or pertaining to a phenomenologically complete, separate, historically deep cultural collectivity, a collectivity polarized on perceived authenticity. This 'belonging' is experienced and interpreted physically (biologically), behaviorally [sic.] (culturally) and phenomenologically (intuitively)" (Fishman 1985: 70).

The members of a social group can either be aware or unaware of their belonging (ibid.). While Isajiw still uses a definition of ethnicity with a very strong tie between the terms 'ethnicity' and 'culture', Fishman describes ethnicity as "both *narrower* and more *perspectival* than culture" (Fishman 1997: 329). It is narrower because not all cultural phenomena fit into the ethnic concept of a group while it is, at the same time, more perspectival than culture because it depends on the perspective of each member of the group individually. Some cultural patterns might be important for one member of the group but not for the other. Ethnic attribution in this sense is "fundamentally subjective, variable and very possible non-consensual" (Fishman 1997: 329). Since ethnicity is a subjective construct, it becomes clear why it can only be seen as a vague concept rather than a defined term. "One's sense of one's own ethnicity waxes and wanes, emphasising some group features and then others, depending on the current social situation one is engaged in" (Gans 1979, as cited by Banks 1988: 17). Ethnic identity is very subjective and refers to individual decisions by the self-identified. At the same time, "language and ethnic identity are related reciprocally, i.e. language usage influences the formation of ethnic identity, but ethnic identity also influences language attitudes and language usage" (Gudykunst & Schmidt 1988: 1). Therefore, language choices are closely linked to ethnic identity

(Gudykunst & Schmidt 1988: 11). The use of a particular language, and it might even be a specific variety of a language, provokes selected recognition and identification effects in speakers and hearers. The subjective perception of ethnic belonging plays a central role in sociolinguistics, and is a key concept in this paper concerning language choices in hip hop music.

5 *Izimbongi*¹³

Several artists in this research (Bhiz, Manielisi, Tsubasa, and Zakes 2006) see the origin of rap in the tradition of the praise-singers/praise-poets as found in the Zulu culture. This chapter gives a brief introduction to the phenomenon of 'praise poets' (*izimbongi*) in the Zulu tradition to supply the link between the tradition of 'oral literature' and hip hop lyrics as spoken words.

The role of an *imbongi* is a responsible one in African society, for it involves articulating the feelings of the community, and encapsulating these sentiments in concise poetic phrases. Not only does the *imbongi* praise, but must also ponder, even offer criticism [sic.]. Like a jazz musician, the lines of the *imbongi* are never fixed - they are improvised, at times melodic, at times melancholy. And not always guaranteed to please with tame platitudes [sic.] ('Poetry Africa' Programme 2006).

Izimbongi (praise poets) recite news and stories, and perform praises as *izibongo*¹⁴ (praise poems). They use a metaphorical figurative speech to describe, for instance, a person, an incident, a heroic deed, a clan or a village. In history, headmen and kings of the Zulus have had several *izimbongi* to spread their news and inform the community about their doings and accomplishments. *Izibongo* play an important role in the cultural tradition of oral literature to preserve common cultural memory as these poems have a "regenerative power of memory" — one of the "key literary features of praise poetry" (Gunner 1999: 53f). *Izibongo* are recited in a rhythmic manner. Grant observes the performance of an *imbongi*:

The poem was broken up into short phrases, each of which appeared to be uttered with one breath. A magnificent rhythm was in this way apparent to the hearer (Grant 1993: 86).

Grant describes the character of *izibongo* as follows: "The stately rhythm and dramatic power of the Izibongo, together with their picturesque and forceful

¹³ *imbongi* [sg.]/ *izimbongi* [pl.] (isiZulu)

¹⁴ *Izibongo* also means 'surnames' in isiZulu, and refers in this context to the idea that surnames were given to a clan because of certain achievements, doings or specificities of the father of the clan by *izimbongi*.

imagery, raise them above the level of prose" (1993: 87). He portrays the "use of 'praise-names' expressive of certain attributes of the chiefs" as a significant feature of the praise poetry (ibid.). Puns are very common (ibid.). Furthermore, an "intensively idiomatic" language is used which makes it "difficult of translation [sic.]" (ibid.). Vail and White, who published a collection of descriptions and examples of praise poems in several African cultures, describe the content of *izibongo* as "licensed by a freedom of expression which violates normal conventions [...], in ways that the prevailing social and political codes would normally not permit, so long as it is done through poetry" (Vail & White 1991: 43). This freedom of expression can also be found in the hip hop lyrics of this research when, for instance, Manielisi describes his morning routine in small details or makes the listener picture his mother giving birth to him, or, for example, in Bhiz' lyrics when he critically plays with biblical metaphors although he goes to church regularly. Verbal brutality, fights, criticism, anger, but also beauty — the figurative speech in hip hop lyrics in isiZulu mirrors the tradition of praise-poets.

Rap music [...] has always been here. It never went anywhere. [...] To praise-sing that's it. That's rapping. It's just that now it is brought into a more rhythmic form of sticking to the rhyme and creating songs that are more based on rapping than the song in terms of rhythms and vocalising 'cause you usually do a song like [...] at the end I'll talk about me as I'm at the stage now where I'm so and so from somewhere [...] I drink from this water tap [...] Rapping has always been there. [...] Now it's just more focused (Manielisi 12.11.2006).

6 Methodology

The following chapter introduces the methodology of the current research project. The gathering of data will be described, including the techniques of participant-observation, interviews, and written text analysis.

In recent years, participant-observation has become a significant method of qualitative research in sociolinguistics. It is an interdisciplinary approach but widely accepted as a variety of informal field methods (Johnstone 2000). Participant-observation aims at a full and holistic understanding of community structures in order to analyze particular elements of the researched communities. In the case of this treatise, the language use of a particular group of youth was observed in their hip hop lyrics.

My profound interest and personal participation at hip hop events allowed me to be a participant-observer in the hip hop community of KwaZulu-Natal. Attendance at hip hop performances, parties and events as well as listening to recordings that originate in the province of KwaZulu-Natal were part of the research. Being a part of the audience at shows and concerts, I could observe audience and artists on stage simultaneously. At the same time, my position as a non-South African separated me from the isiZulu-speaking youth in KwaZulu-Natal. This unique position within the community eased my objective position as an observer. It allowed me to be an 'insider' in the audience but at the same time to remain outside of a group which has the same or a similar ethnic background.

Data was collected at local hip hop shows, during informal conversations with the artists, and in formal interviews. The selection of artists was restricted to hip hop artists who write and perform their hip hop lyrics predominantly or exclusively in isiZulu. Five artists were chosen to participate in the investigation. The artists agreed to provide written versions of their lyrics as well as their own translations from isiZulu into English. It is important to note at this point that the lyrics have not been transcribed from audio recordings of the songs, but were written on paper by the artists themselves¹⁵. Furthermore, the translations of the songs are personal translations by the artists, and often do not represent a literal translation of the texts but are rather of an explanatory nature.

Although English and isiZulu are widely represented in the hip hop scene in KwaZulu-Natal, this research does not deal with a quantitative comparison of the use of these two languages. This selection of artists does not allow any hypotheses concerning language shift or change. Due to the limited scope of this short treatise, the selection of artists included in the research was narrowed down to five. Nevertheless, this research still represents a variety of different approaches to hip hop lyrics, due to the fact that the chosen artists exemplify different 'rap' styles and techniques in isiZulu, and belong to different subgroups within the hip hop community in KwaZulu-Natal.

What did the participants in my research project gain through it and why did they participate? Hip hop artists are 'public figures'. They appear and perform on stage

¹⁵ As mentioned in the introduction, the texts were given to me in handwritten format. I typed them up and reconfirmed the spelling, grammar and structure of the typed text with the artists on the day of the interview (see chapter 1).

and in cyphers¹⁶. They record their songs and publish them to be heard on the radio, and as records at home. Their personal interest is to be known and heard widely. A written analysis of their music and lyrics in an academic context offers an additional approach to their objective of gaining popularity, and as such supports their own effort. Hence, they were readily available and very keen to be interviewed which facilitated the research.

This research is not meant to form a pure content analysis of the lyrics themselves but rather focuses on specific aspects of these lyrics, particularly the artists' view of the topics in relation to their language of choice. Therefore, the analysis of the lyrics includes the content of the interviews with the artists.

Their attitudes towards and motivation for the choice of isiZulu were questioned according to the topics used in their hip hop lyrics. The interview structure was based on a qualitative approach (Mayring 1990, Dorian 1999, Johnstone 2000). Interviews were held as 'problem-centred' conversations ["problemzentriertes Interview"] (Mayring 1990: 50). This approach included topic-orientated procedures in which I as the interviewer was leading the interviewee towards certain topics and problems but was mainly guiding an open conversation in which the interviewees could answer freely without pre-set alternatives for answers. The interviews were held individually, not as a 'group discussion', and included questions¹⁷ that were closely related to the individual lyrics written by the interviewed artist. The scope of this treatise does not allow a detailed analysis of the interviews themselves but, as mentioned above, the content of the interviews is used for a more thorough analysis, and hence, a better understanding of the lyrics¹⁸.

Though the collected lyrics differ in style and topic, a quantitative analysis of the interview data is applied to extract certain patterns of language choice, and the motivation for such choices. Furthermore, individual language attitudes are examined with regard to the written text.

¹⁶ See Glossary.

¹⁷ These questions are included in the appendices.

¹⁸ See Appendix.

7 Translatability

As has been mentioned before, questions addressed in this research include: Are particular topics language-specific and can only be expressed in isiZulu? Do the artists' feel capable of translating traditional Zulu ideologies into English and capturing their essence in the other language? Is the language choice based on the deeper 'expressibility' of certain topics in isiZulu? This chapter presents various ideas in relation to the issue of translatability, with the difference between linguistic and cultural translatability being introduced and discussed.

The process of translation is usually associated with "converting one language into another" (Iser 1994: 1). But it is not only a question of languages. Cultural concepts need to be translated to communicate cross-culturally, and this transmission is based on the medium language which is, as mentioned above, a part of the culture itself. Many scholars have dealt with the topic of translatability (or *un*-translatability) between cultures, especially with regards to text. Most of the scholars in the field of translation studies and translatability (e.g. Schulte & Biguenet 1992, Simms 1997, Venuti 2000) consider Benjamin's (1923) "The Task of the Translator" a seminal text. In Benjamin's text, which is the preface to his German translation of the French text "Tableau Parisiens" by Baudelaire, he develops a philosophy about translations of texts in which he notably refers to the idea of common misunderstandings and misinterpretations between the author and the reader (or the speech producer and the recipient) of language and text in the first place, let alone the difficulties that come in during translation from one language to another, or from historical data to newer texts. His point is that the difficulties in translation have to be found in the original, and he asks whether the meaning will be understood by the readers themselves. Benjamin differentiates between the 'intended' and the 'mode of intention', where the former points to the referent of the term and the later indicates the contextual interpretation.

[Das] Gesetz, eines der grundlegenden der Sprachphilosophie, genau zu fassen, ist in der Intention vom Gemeinten die Art des Meinens zu unterscheiden. In 'Brot' und 'pain' ist das Gemeinte zwar dasselbe, die Art, es zu meinen, dagegen nicht. In der Art des Meinens nämlich liegt es, daß beide Worte dem Deutschen und Franzosen je etwas Verschiedenes bedeuten, daß sie, für beide nicht vertauschbar sind, ja sich letzten Endes auszuschließen streben; am Gemeinten aber, daß sie, absolut genommen, das Selbe und Identische bedeuten (Benjamin 1923, 1972: 14).

Without distinguishing the intended object from the mode of intention, no firm grasp of this basic law of a philosophy of language can be achieved. The words Brot and pain 'intend' the same object, but the modes of

this intention are not the same. It is owing to these modes that the word Brot means something different to a German than the word pain to a Frenchman, that these words are not interchangeable for them, that, in fact, they strive to exclude each other. As the intended object, however, the two words mean the very same thing (transl. Zohn 1968: 18).

The 'intended object' aims at the similarities between the two meanings of both expressions while the 'mode of intention' or the 'way of meaning' indicates two very different concepts. These two different 'modes of intention' are culturally predetermined, and depend on the context of the intended meaning. Although both words signify 'bread', the German and the French still have different associations with these particular expressions, and they are therefore used with different modes of intention.

Due to the difference in the mode of intention, Benjamin refers to the translation of the full meaning of the original as remaining unfulfilled. It remains unfulfilled because the meaning is connected to the mode of intention in such a way that it cannot be transmitted into the other language.

Treue in der Übersetzung des einzelnen Wortes kann fast nie den Sinn voll wiedergeben, den es im Original hat. Denn dieser erschöpft sich nach seiner dichterischen Bedeutung fürs Original nicht in dem Gemeinten, sondern gewinnt diese gerade dadurch, wie das Gemeinte an die Art des Meinens in dem bestimmten Worte gebunden ist (Benjamin 1923, 1972: 17).

Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original. For sense in its poetic significance is not limited to meaning, but derives from the connotations conveyed by the word chosen to express it (transl. Zohn 1968: 21).

Therefore, the translation and the original are always dissimilar because the relationship between content and language in original and translation remains different.

Es ist nicht übertragbar wie das Dichterwort des Originals, weil das Verhältnis des Gehalts zur Sprache völlig verschieden ist, in Original und Übersetzung (Benjamin 1923, 1972: 15).

Unlike the words of the original, it is not translatable, because the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation (transl. Zohn 1968: 19).

Translation and original as described by Benjamin remain *unlike similarities*. The translation can only transmit information, "something inessential" (Benjamin 1923, transl. Zohn 1968: 15), especially in the case of bad translations (Benjamin 1923). "This different perception and mental organisation of reality can be used to explain the existence of certain 'gaps' between languages" (De Pedro 1999: 548). De Pedro builds upon the above mentioned thoughts, and develops three important ideas to bear in mind during translations (in the tradition of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis):

'Gaps' are based on the acknowledgement that certain terms are specific to each linguistic community. Some 'concepts' can be common in several linguistic communities and still have different connotations. Each language community structures reality in a diverse way, according to its own linguistic codes (De Pedro 1999: 548).

An opposing view on translatability is based on the idea of Universal Grammar by Chomsky (1981, 1995) although Chomsky himself warned about a broad generalisation concerning translation with regard to his theories (De Pedro 1999: 551). Nida and other scholars (De Pedro 1999) support the idea of a 'universal translatability' based on the ground of universal syntactic and semantic categories. Although Nida admits that "languages differ radically one from the other" (1964: 2), he argues that that "which unites mankind is greater than that which divides, and hence there is, even in cases of very disparate languages and cultures, a basis for communication" (ibid.). Friedrich, on the other hand, claims in his speech 'Zur Frage der Übersetzungskunst' (1965) that "the art of translation will always have to cope with the reality of untranslatability from one language to another" (transl. Schulte & Biguenet 1992). Wren (1967) states only a few years later that "fundamental differences in patterns of thinking among peoples must impose relatively narrow limits" (as cited by De Pedro 1999: 550). He claims that an African language would be "incompatible" with a European one if one wanted to do a comparative literature study (Wren 1967, as cited by De Pedro 1999: 551). While the current research is not a literature study, but deals with text in music, Wren's claim nevertheless has to be taken into consideration with regards to the translation of hip hop lyrics from isiZulu to English.

De Pedro describes the transmission of cultures as an impossible mission in contrast to text translation which may be a 'self-contained process'. While culture "can be explained or interpreted in its specific manifestations", translations remain "too restrictive a concept" (De Pedro 1999: 557). The readers understand the source text because "they belong to the source culture" (ibid.). What makes the text untranslatable is that "it will not be grasped by the readers of the target text merely because of their belonging to a different cultural and/or linguistic community" (ibid.).

As Iser puts it, "translatability aims at comprehension" (1994: 5). In contrast, "encounters between cultures" or "interactions between levels of culture engage

assimilation or appropriation" (Iser 1994: 5). By making steps towards each other and "trying to get out of a different culture or on the different intra-cultural level" whatever appears interesting, "attractive", "useful" or "what has to be combated and suppressed for whatever reason" (ibid.), assimilation or appropriation take place.

Therefore, following De Pedro and Iser, it seems appropriate to assume two different aspects of 'translation', and hence, of 'translatability'. On the one hand, the literal translation of a text as a whole refers to the different lexemes of the two languages, and it remains a question of finding the most appropriate terms to translate a text. On the other hand, the second aspect of translation refers to the transmission of cultural concepts from one culture to the other.

If translatability makes us "focus on the space between cultures" (Iser 1994: 9), it "requires a discourse that allows for transposing a foreign culture into one's own" (Iser 1994: 10) and is likely to fail if the negotiation of "the space between foreignness and familiarity" (ibid.) does not reach its aim. Cultural concepts such as certain rituals based on the call for the ancestors or the sense of '*ilobolo*' are Zulu-specific and seem therefore only appropriately expressible in isiZulu. The question of which cultural concepts appear in the lyrics at hand and how are they transferred into the English context is addressed, alongside others, in chapter eight below.

8 Lyric analysis

This chapter provides the analysis of five different hip hop lyrics which can be found as full texts in the appendices. The analysis includes two parts: The first part delivers a detailed investigation of the lyrics. The analysis is applied to both excerpts from the original texts in isiZulu [printed in italics] and quotations from the interviews with the particular artist¹⁹. The second part of the analysis forms an interpretation of the data; each song is presented under consideration of several aspects such as self-description/self-praise, identification and affiliation with the Zulu culture, references to Zulu traditions, notions of spirituality including biblical references as well as criticism of Christianity, concepts of time and space, and figurative speech. Most of these elements are found in all five tracks. 'Concepts of

¹⁹ As mentioned in chapter 1, the interviews were held in English. The transcription of the quotations represents the authentic speech of the artists.

time and space' are mentioned as a separate category because they form a link between the modern hip hop culture with a focus on time, location and space on the one hand (see chapter 2), and, on the other, the notions of time and space as they are perceived in the Zulu culture with reference to ancestry.

8.1 *Lo ongasenbla* by Bhiz Isangoma Samagama

The artist 'Bhiz Isangoma Samagama' (short form 'Bhiz') expresses his allegiance to the Zulu culture at first view by using this name. *Isangoma Samagama* can be understood as 'a word wizard' or a traditional healer who heals with words, and states not only the connotation of a person who is clever in handling words such as a 'rapper' but also shows distinct signs of embedding in the Zulu culture.

His track *Lo ongasenbla* does not concentrate on one topic but rather consists of a mixture of different themes which are all used for self-description. The track delivers a self-praising chant about his person as a rapper, and furthermore, praises all hip hop artists who rap in isiZulu. "I'm not a concept person [...] I do phrases. [...] every rhyme that I write [...] I'm always dissing" (Bhiz 15.11.2006).

The following analysis refers to different aspects of his lyrics such as self-praise, history, biblical references as part of a value system, and spirituality. The last part of the analysis points out elements of figurative speech.

a) Self-description/self-praise

Bhiz starts off by saying that he is such a progressive MC that no other MC can follow his rhymes because their 'mindframes' are too limited. His style is better than others, consequently he outtakes his 'opponents'²⁰ — just like the Martial arts movie actor Bolo Yeung [Bolo Yang] who plays, for instance, in the movie 'Enter the dragon' (1973) outwits his opponents with his fighting power.

*Akukho mc engangilandela ngoba ngidukisa umkhondo
Kumabonakude womqondo ngikukhipha estayeleni njengo Bolo*

He continues by saying that he is full of energy (like the 'engine' of a car), and continues to praise that if the two artists [referring to himself in the third person, and his partner K-Blaq who mimes the 'wheels of the car'] die, there will be no

²⁰ Opponents are other rappers in the sense of 'battle' on stage (see Glossary).

more future for anyone because they mean 'everything' — as the impetus of the world.

*uk-Blaq amasondo mina kulemoto ngizoba injini
ukufa kwethu sobabili
kusbo ukuthi ayikho inqubeleka phambili*

Reminding one of the loss of human beings in the wars King Shaka's army fought, he also points out his own 'gloriousness' and that of the other isiZulu rappers by saying that lives are lost whenever the isiZulu rappers go by.

*Sizigi zezimpi ezaliwa ngesikhatshi
uShaka efuna ukungena ngodli emkhosini
la esidlula khona kufa iningi*

Just as 'a dog finishes all the water with its tongue' (an idiom expressing the idea of 'finishing something bit by bit'), Bhiz describes himself and other MCs whom he is friends with as people who beat their opponents bit by bit.

*Umama blezi etbiinja iyawagada amanzi ngolimi
Imina lowo nama emceez*

In the following, Bhiz changes the mood of his expressions. His expressions turn from death and war to 'sweetness'. He describes words 'like flowers', so nice and beautiful, and his rhymes are blooming like flowers in a garden.

ngizenerhyme etshahwe ensimini amagama intshalo eyiblukene kaningi

The 'calming' atmosphere continues as Bhiz refers to himself as 'iswidi' (a sweet) for children and as smooth as a peppermint after a cigarette for the smoker. He makes himself look as if he calms 'throats' (with mints) and people (with his 'soothing style'), and makes them happy.

*kwingane nguswidi
kosanda kuqala ubhema ngismoothies*

Switching back to a rather dark picture, even the most evil figure, 'Satan', is so scared of Bhiz that his horns shrink and his tail disappears. Satan becomes 'in need of a tail' just like a mountain rat because mountain rats do not have tails (see below).

*uSathane wabona mina impondo zancipha
umsila wamuwela njengembila ngokuyalezela*

Bhiz describes himself [again in the third person by using his name] as so talented that other rappers get scared of him. He says that rhyming and rapping is as easy for him as writing the name of King Shaka's mother.

*Isangoma Samagama sibhula ukuthi uma kukhona mina kurevezela inqwaba
kumina ukubhala irhyme efana negama lamaKaShaka lolo ubhala*

Bhiz announces in this text passage that he will deliver to his listeners a rhyme that will scare them so much that they turn in their sleep, and feel attacked the next morning when they eat their breakfast, a rhyme that makes their mind go bad like rotten vegetables or a stew that was cooked a long time ago.

*Nansi irhyme ezokushiya uphenduka mase uyolala
ikubhlasele ngakusasa usadla
nbolelwe umqondo njengesishebo esidala sablala*

Still referring to the notion of something old (like rotten stew, see above), Bhiz clarifies in his lyrics that being old is not necessarily connected to being 'mature' as a rapper — *ukukhula* [to grow up]. Just being old does not make one a better rapper than anyone else. The other artists have to offer more than just 'age' to be accepted as good rappers.

*akusho ukuthi ukukhula ngemnyaka
nakwi imic umdala*

In the following, his expressions become very violent: He threatens to kill and bury potential offenders.

*Abazama ukunginisa ngibayisa kwelinye ekhaya ngaphansi kombhlaba
ngibambe ukuthi amangenaba*

Bhiz uses the idiom *Ingwe idla ngamabala* ('The leopard is conspicuous by its spots'²¹) which has a different meaning in isiZulu than the English idiom 'A leopard can't change its spots'. The English idiom stands for the notion that "a person's character, especially if it is bad, will not change, even if they pretend it has"²².

If a speaker refers to another person as *Ingwe idla ngamabala*, it calls for respect as well as caution towards the person. It is safer to stay distant and respectful for the sake of one's own protection. Because the leopard is dangerous, one has to be careful just at the sight of its spots, and one has to remain aloof. Bhiz changes the word order, (i) to refer to himself as being the one who ate the leopard to get these spots (Bhiz 15.11.2006) with the aim of being recognized as dangerous just by sight, and, (ii) to build a connection to the next phrase in which he refers to the disorder of those words which got scrambled when he spat them out. If anyone tried to put them back into order, they would finish and lose their strength with this action.

Ngadla ingwe namabala

²¹ 'ingwe' (English-Zulu/Zulu-English Dictionary 1990: 566)

²² <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/leopard+can't%2Fdoesn't+change+its+spots>, cited on 17.11.2006

*ngaphalaza lamagama anumbapha x2
abazama ukunwabelanisa bayophelela amandla*

Bhiz remains in the evil atmosphere and describes how hard he is on other MCs: He used Satan's fork to poke holes into other MCs when he 'killed' them the day before and left their mind with 'scars':

*uSathane wabona mina impondo zancipha
umsila wamuswela njengembula ngokuyalezela
ngamphuca imtoloko ingakho lemece engibulale izolo
ngiyishiye imbhobo x2
umqondo uneyibazi
ingolobane yo*

To create an even darker mood for his listeners, Bhiz refers to the star that lit above the birthplace of Jesus Christ as being unable to bring light into the scene. In his verse, not even this star can brighten up the dark atmosphere that he causes. Thus, he, the heathen, puts himself above the power of God's son.

wazi ngisho nenkanyezi yezazi ingahluleka ukukhanyisa kulobu-bumnyama

Continuing with his self-praises, Bhiz uses biblical references and compares himself to Daniel who survived in the lions den. In his last sentence, he even opposes God. Bhiz describes a scenario in which God threatens him by saying 'I will get you' (*ngibambe likashone*) which means "I'll get you before the sun sets". The artist uses this 'threat' as if he is able to hold "the sun physically [...], and after that the sun never sets", and no-one sees the evening. "It will never be dark. [...] I punished God for saying that [...] he'll get me. I punished him by holding the sun." (Bhiz 15.11.2006).

*Angothinteki njengoDaniel emphandweni weyingonyama
unkulu x2 wathi ngilibambe lishone kwangaphinde kwabla*

b) Identification and affiliation with the Zulu culture

Bhiz refers to the history of the Zulu people and reminds his listeners of the heroic deeds in the history of the nation by describing how K-Blaq, he, and all other rappers who perform in isiZulu (*si*) are like the stomping of the Zulu warriors in King Shaka's army (p. 28).

I'm also part of the Zulu warriors. [...] In the way I write my rhymes I see myself as a Zulu warrior. First when I was writing this, I was [...] thinking about the dudes who rhyme in English. Me, I'm a member of Ibutho, of the Zulus [...] and we are against the dudes who sing, who rhyme in English. [...] By saying 'we', I mean like me and the other forces, my Zulu forces (Bhiz 15.11.2006).

As mentioned before, he points out his own 'gloriousness' and that of the other rappers in saying that 'lives are lost' whenever the isiZulu rappers go by.

*Sizigi zezimpi ezaliwa ngesikhatbi
uShaka efuna ukungena ngodli emkhosini
la esidlula khona kufa iningi*

As has been said before, Bhiz claims that rapping and rhyming is as easy as writing the name of King Shaka's mother.

kumina ukubhala irhyme efana negama lamakaShaka lolo ubhala

c) Spirituality: Biblical references/criticism of Christian faith

Biblical figures play an important role in Bhiz' lyrics. He is a regular church-goer, partly because his mother takes him to church every Sunday (Bhiz 15.11.2006). In his verses, he expresses the freedom to criticize the bible as well as the Christian faith in general, and uses biblical references for his own 'stories'. God, Hezekeil, and others want to escape from him because he is the *umhedeni* [heathen] who is so evil that he even fights angels and clips off their wings.

*kuzalwa kwami kwabalekisa unkulux emkhathini
uZakewu wabona mina wafuna ukugibela emthini
bakhobhwa ukhubhla ebbayibhelini imina umHedeni
ohwisana neyigelosi ngesahluko sepeni
ngiqothule amaphiko ukuze zibale unomphele lapha emlabeni*

Njengembila ngokuyalezela stands for a religious tradition in isiZulu (Bhiz 15.11.2006) in which it is told that God had a tail for all the animals, and it was said that they should come to God and pick up their tail. But the mountain rat was too slow and told the other animals to tell God to bring the tail for the mountain rat because it could not make it on time. God never received the message because the animals did not tell him about it. The moral of the story is, firstly, that it is better to do things yourself and not to depend on other people, and secondly, that you should do things yourself on time without delay (ibid.).

*uSathane wabona mina impondo zancipha
umsila wamuswela njengembila ngokuyalezela*

As mentioned above, Satan's fork becomes Bhiz' instrument to poke opponents and leave them with scars:

*ngamphuca imtoloko ingakho lemcee engibulale izolo
ngiyishiye imbhobhoz
umqondo uneyibazi
inqolobane yo*

Not only Satan is cited but also the 'Three Magi'; Bhiz refers to the star that was seen above Christ's birthplace.

nazi ngisho nenkanyezi yezazi ingahluleka ukukhanyisa kulobu-bumnyama

As has been said before, Bhiz opposes God. He holds the sun so it never sets, and defies God's word.

*angothinteki njengoDaniel emphandweni weyingonyama
unkulu x2 wathi ngilibambe lishone kwangaphinde kwahla*

d) Figurative speech

Speech is an important element in hip hop music, and even becomes its own art form within this particular kind of music. Many rap artists are juggling with language and speech. The whole verse by Bhiz is interspersed with idioms, and figurative descriptions. Therefore, many phrases mentioned above reappear in this passage. Most of the expressions used are of a humorous or ironic nature, and as such partly include semantic nonsense or unexpected illogicalness.

Inkukhu nomthunzi is an old expression for weed and refers to a tree under which chickens used to sit and pick seeds. In the context of the rhyme, Bhiz plays with the idea of chickens as birds which can fly to describe the state of being high due to marihuana consumption.

inkukhu nomthunzi sindiza sonke emoyeni

As mentioned before, Bhiz describes himself as energetic like the engine of a car, and portrays himself and other isiZulu rappers as the 'stomping' Zulu warriors. Bhiz is like 'sweets' and 'mints' (*Kwingane nguswidi, Kosanda kuqala ubhema ngismoothies*), and uses metaphors such as words are flowers which blossom in a garden, or 'finishing his opponents bit by bit just like a dog finishes the water with its tongue', and 'fighting angels by clipping off their wings' (*umHedeni ohvisana neyingelosi ngesahluko sepeni*).

Several idioms and phrases known in isiZulu are mentioned in the verse:

Inja iyavaqeda amanzi ngolimi (The dog finishes the water with its tongue).

Ingwe idla ngamabala (The leopard is conspicuous by its spots²³).

Ngibambe likashone (I'll get you before the sun sets).

Word puns such as the scrambled idiom *ngadla ingwe nambala* are also used.

8.2 *Hamba uyobuza Unyoko* by Tsubasa a.k.a. Blizzard

Tsubasa [short form 'Tsu'] who also calls himself 'Blizzard' started to write hip hop lyrics in 1998/99. In the beginning, he wrote his lyrics in English, copying the style of African-American hip hop of that time. But after a while, he decided to change to the language he feels "comfortable" with, the language that he speaks every day (Tsubasa 10.11.2006). Tsubasa writes and performs his rhymes in isiZulu because

in order to express the things that I see 'this side', I wouldn't quite do justice if I did it in English, you know, 'cause most of the things that I know are in the township, and township is Zulu all the way. [...] it's just kasi, loxion ... (Tsubasa 10.11.2006).

Although the whole verse *Hamba uyobuza Unyoko* ('Go, ask your mother') by Tsubasa is limited to one single topic (a self-praise in which he exaggerates the glorification of himself to the fullest), it includes several concepts that can be related to Zulu culture and tradition. Furthermore, political criticism, references to the bible, and mourning about a general loss of values can be found.

a) Self-description/self-praising

In his self-description, he presents himself as 'such a great MC' that he is a disaster, a hurricane, a source of a river, and a dream at the same time. The negative connotations of disaster and hurricane merely refer to the idea of 'sweeping' the audience away with his 'great ability' to rap. He describes himself as such an amazing rapper that even Dingane wishes to resurrect Shaka to be able to defeat him.

Ngismangaliso sesphepho esadiliza izindonga zase Jerico
Ngijubela lomlilo, ngumthombo we limpompo
Ngiphupho elihle lokhokho izwi labo bonke kulomhlaba abangasekho

Mangi bamba imic ngesandla sokudla kushabalala izinsizwa
Isibongo kompetha noDingane usefisa ukuvusa uShaka

²³ '-ngwe' (I:nglish-Zulu/Zulu-English Dictionary 1990: 566)

Tsubasa uses the name of Osama Bin Laden as a metonymy for explosion and war (not with a positive connotation) (Tsubasa 10.11.2006). When Tsubasa says that Osama Bin Laden applauds him for his rhymes, he emphasizes the forcefulness of his rhymes.

kuzwakala kuncoma uOsama Bin Laden emablatshi

Finally, Tsubasa returns to the bible and lets his verse end 'peacefully'. The peacefulness is expressed by the metaphor of the 'prince of darkness' who is calmed down by Tsubasa's self-proclaimed 'amazing' lyrics to such an extent that he becomes a priest. Again, Tsubasa uses a representation of the evil (like Satan in Bhiz verse, and Osama Bin Laden above), submitting to his power as a rapper.

*Umnikelo wezimvu isahluko esiqoshwe eBayibhelini
Ngisbo inkosi yabathakathi
Impisi yamphendula umpristi*

b) Identification and affiliation with the Zulu culture

"Through my music, I represent, I make sure people understand who I am and where I come from" (Tsubasa 10.11.2006). Tsubasa feels very strongly embedded in the Zulu tradition and expresses the need to promote and support the language, i.e. isiZulu as well as specific cultural concepts within his lyrics, up to the point that he tries to avoid swear words and isiTsotsi so that his lyrics can be heard and accepted by elders as well as by youth. "I'm holding it down. I'm playing my part. I'm making sure the language doesn't die. Either music and clothing or whatever, Zulu has been there for a long time and is still gonna be" (ibid.).

Shaka's half-brother Dingane who is said to have been present at (or maybe even involved) in the murder of the legendary Zulu King Shaka, and Shaka himself are both two of the most prominent figures in the history of the Zulu people. Tsubasa plays with the historical event that is known widely amongst Zulus as a tragedy by saying that he is so great that Dingane wishes the resurrection of Shaka to be able to defeat him.

Isibicongo kompetha noDingane usefisa ukuvusa uShaka

Tsubasa traces the origin of hip hop as it is known today to the United States and African-American culture while, in his point of view, the origin of rhythmic spoken words lies in the old tradition of *izimbongi* "those were Zulu rappers [...] that's lyrics right there" (Tsubasa 10.11.2006).

c) *Amadlozi* ('ancestors'), *amasangoma* ('Traditional healers', 'wizards')

Several traditional concepts based on the Zulu culture are mentioned in reference to his self-praise:

Isboba is the staff that *amasangoma*²⁴ receive when they finish their initiation. It is a very powerful²⁵ instrument, and is only handed over to initiated *amasangoma* who have finalised their training with their mentor.

Ngishoba lenyanga

Tsubasa describes himself as the 'dream' and 'voice' of the forefathers and refers in his English translation to 'our forefathers' as the ancestors of all Zulus.

Ngiphupho elible lokbokho

Izwi labo bonke kulomhlaba abangasekho

The ancestors are called by burning a specific herb — *imphepho* [*Helichrysum miconiaefolium*²⁶] (Tsubasa 10.11.2006). The English equivalent for the use of these herbs is often referred to as 'incense' although the notion of 'incense' as a 'fragrance spending object' does not seem to capture the full idea of *imphepho* which is burned because of its spiritual power.

Mina neNkondlo isiphiwo sephimbo

njenga Madlozi nemphepho

Magadlela in this context comes from the custom of giving each other or oneself 'praise names' or descriptive names that get attached to the naming of a person. *Magadlela* is in this case one of Tsubasa's own names. The idea of *izithakazelo* (clan praise names) relates back to the praises of the *izimbongi*²⁷ (Tsubasa 10.11.2006) in which the praise poets used several names to describe certain incidents or achievements in the history of the described and praised person. Usually these praise names are transferred from generation to generation (from father to son) (ibid.).

*Izimfene nezimpaka*²⁸ describes the baboons that witches travel with as well as the witches' cats; in the Zulu tradition, it is said that witches ('evil spirits') travel on the back of a baboon (ibid.). In the use in Tsubasa's verse, the witches' baboons and

²⁴ *Amasangoma*: Traditional healers in the Zulu culture

²⁵ The term 'powerful' refers to the notion of spiritual power.

²⁶ Berglund 1989: 113

²⁷ See chapter 5

²⁸ *Izimfene* (pl) (isiZulu) are "baboons" (English). *Izimpaka* (pl) are "witch's cats" (English) (English/Zulu-Zulu/English dictionary 1990: 509)

cats run away when he is on the microphone because of the strength and power of his rhyming.

*Masekhuthemeleza uMagadlela
kubaleka izimfene nezimpaka*

The notion of *izithakazelo* has been mentioned above. In the context of this paragraph, it refers to the family tree of the praised person. If all praise names are taken into consideration, it adds up to such a 'great bunch' that it is very explosive (negative connotation used in a positive sense) and therefore 'dangerous' for any antagonist who tries to 'battle' Tsubasa.

*Izithakazelo zika inki kuphuma imix
iziqhubumbisi zama vesi*

d) Concepts of time and space

Tsubasa presents himself within a holistic concept of time and space: He is not only the beginning but also the end. He refers to the biblical metaphor of Alpha and Omega, and describes himself as the centre of time (a God-like figure), not only having the power of one who begins but also one who ends time.

*NguAlfa ngu-Omega
Ngisqalo ngisphetho*

He refers to himself as the bridge for the thin space between life and death (ibid.).

*Ngivala izikhala nopotsho
ezibhukanisa impilo nogoganyawo*

e) Figurative speech

As mentioned before, Tsubasa portrays himself as the *ishoba*, he is the beginning and the end, a disaster, a hurricane, a source of a river and a dream at the same time.

8.3 Industry by Zakes

In his song *Industry*, the rapper Zakes criticizes the music industry, mainly the major music labels. His criticism is aimed at their way of only signing certain artists, and the way they dictate how artists have to produce their music, how they have to behave and how they should sell themselves. Although the track seems to focus on the music industry itself, several other elements are included.

a) Self-description/self-praise

In the beginning of the song, Zakes informs the listener about his person by telling the story about his life after high school.

*ngaged' is'kole impilo yaqala yang'dlela
is'baca, ngithi ngifun' uk'lekelela edladleni
ngenz' isaka, ongam'la namanang'
bagqobh' amasango bagqobh'iyichabha
ngisale ngiququd' inzipho, ngiseses'koleni
ngangithi konke kuzobalula kodwa
konke kumuncu kuble kwe taste kalamula*

In his common encounter (life after school), he includes his unpleasant experience as a black South African with white and Indian employers who did not want to hire him because of the colour of his skin. By talking about his underwear and socks that have holes, he points out the poverty he had to face after school.

ngisho namasokisi ami aney'mbobo

He gives the listeners further information about his person by introducing himself as a rapper who started writing lyrics in 1994. Furthermore, he presents himself as being the one who is telling the truth in his lyrics, and refers to the truth as being something that happens behind closed doors in the 'corporate world' while everyone knows about it although people attempt to hide 'it'. He criticizes the corporate world for putting this 'dirty truth' out of sight (see also below).

*94 ngaqala ngaqageka ngaqathazi
amaqiniso ngepeni phezu kwephepha,
wena owabona iboss iqaq'uzip iqathaza, iG String
yeseecretary e-office zinumqageko*

Zakes finishes his songs by referring to his person again as the greatest MC with lots of skills. Similar to Tsubasa's reference to tragedies, he declares himself to be a great and dangerous disaster like the tsunami in Asia in 2004. He describes himself as being difficult to grasp as the tsunami in Asia was.

ngiphehi idisaster like 2004 December 26 utsunami

b) Identification and affiliation with the Zulu culture

Although in the lyrics at hand, Zakes has no direct reference to the history of the Zulu nation or any other traditional reference, several aspects of his identity were mentioned in the interview, such as for instance, why Zakes writes his lyrics in isiZulu instead of English: "English is very limited. [...] But if I am speaking or if I

am spitting [rapping] in my own tongue, I’m being original, I’m being me” (Zakes 07.11.2006). He further says:

The originals of rap..., maybe you are to think that I’m selfish or too proud of my culture, but it’s Zulu. Back then, iNews which is imbongi will say something about a king in a very creative way. In our days, we rhyme. They rhyme, but not too much but they will state exactly the incident that the king killed a lion with bare hands and whatever [...] They’ll try and put that [...] in a very creative manner. That’s where it started. It started from the villages, way back. Back then, they didn’t know that they were rapping. They were just, you know, feeling whatever they were feeling ‘cause they didn’t write nothing at all on the paper ‘cause back then, there was no such thing as paper and pen. So they just tried to think about what just happened and talked about it (Zakes 07.11.2006).

By referring to *izimbongi* as the origin of rap, he puts a clear emphasis on the local impact of oral tradition on the modern musical form of youth culture (also see chapter 5).

c) Spirituality: Criticism of Christian faith

Similar to Bhiz’ ambivalent attitude towards Christianity as a belief system that is both embraced and attacked, Zakes criticizes the Christian church as a western concept but admits to his belief in God at the same time, and calls to God as the father and caretaker to help him out.

*ngiyamazi umdlali wami kodwa
angisiboni is’dingo sokuy’esontweni
yet abasontayo bang’ biza mbedeni
balunge benjalo, ngiyayjika lento manje
[...]
baba siza lamula,
indodana yakeho emasimbeni ncukula, takula*

d) Concepts of time and space

Zakes describes himself as surrounded by his enemies, and friends, and by time (yesterday, today and tomorrow) but he is the ‘centre’ (just as a home theatre studio is surrounded by its loudspeakers). This concept resembles the one described by Tsubasa (see section 8.2).

*izitha nabangani, nekusasa nemanje nengay’zolo
konke lokhu kungikakile wena owabona
ibome theatre nama surrounding speakers*

e) Figurative speech

“IsiZulu is such a rich language. If you translate it into English, it sounds so light” (Zakes 07.11.2006). Like the commonly used element in fairytales and stories told in

the Zulu tradition, his lyrics have a ‘moral of the story’ (*inqikithi nesisekelo*) in which he figuratively describes the major labels’ behaviour regarding the artists they have signed.

*kule music industry kugcwela amapimp
kanti ama-artist wona izeqamgwaqo
ononkilozi ngisho ungagxumi ume ngezinyawo
uthi hhayi-hhayi ushaye itoyi-itoyi
lova usazoresay’k’lwa
njengo doti*

Zakes uses lexical borrowings²⁹ at this point such as *taste*, *kule music industry*, *ama-artist*, *amapimp*, and *resayekhwa* (recycle) — expressions which are borrowed from English and used within his isiZulu-sentences to describe his criticism of the music industry, and to put an emphasis on certain elements. His general choice for isiZulu as the “rich language” (Zakes 07.11.2006) is articulated by certain sayings and idioms that he uses in the song as e.g. *singabantu asoze sayangaxanye singemanzi* which literally translates as ‘We are people who take different paths on our way’. The general meaning of the idiom expresses the idea that people have different views on things which includes the notion that people *are* different. He employs the idiom as it is commonly used without changes in its structure (see interpretation below).

He uses allegoric language in isiZulu to utter the ‘dirty truth’ by saying how the boss unzips his secretary’s pants (has an affair with his employee) and refers with this figurative expression to the ‘real story’ behind closed doors.

*94 ngaqala ngaqakeka ngagathazi
amaqiniso ngepeni phezu kwephepha,
wena owabona iboss igaq’ uzip igathaza, iG String
yesecretary e-office ziwumqakeko*

Zakes addresses *bawofethu* [my brothers] in his lyrics, and means anyone who is interested in listening and understanding his texts. He does not refer to a particular audience, and claims that he would even continue to rap in isiZulu if he was to perform overseas (Zakes 07.11.2006).

8.4 Bhazumba by Manielisi

Manielisi started writing hip hop lyrics in 1994 (the advent of democracy in South Africa), about the same time as Zakes. From the beginning, he wrote his lyrics in

²⁹ “‘Borrowing’ is the technical term for the incorporation of an item from one language to another” (Mesthrie et al. 2000: 249).

isiZulu. He says, "I had to make a decision like 'who are you rapping for and why'" (Manielisi 12.11.2006). His decision was based on the idea of entertaining his audiences, and of making them understand his messages.

Performances [...] it's just always about the audience. They have to hear what you say. They have to [...] understand the concepts. [...] They have to be clear in what you're saying. So, at the earliest stage, it was always like ok, I'm gonna write the way I speak (ibid.).

Manielisi's song *Bhazumba* can be split into three different parts. In the first part, the rapper introduces himself and describes his surroundings. The second part deals with 'business' and the music industry. In the third part of the song, Manielisi informs his listeners about South African history and the struggle against Apartheid, and criticizes the present mental state of South African's youth. Although Manielisi includes a lot of criticism in his song, he considers his song an entertaining party song (Manielisi 12.11.2006) because of the puns he includes as well as the entertaining melody of the chorus: *Bhazumba, bhe, Bhazuma* [sic.] (sung as a chant).

a) Self-description/self-praise

Very basic explanations about his daily life are offered to the listener at the beginning of the song: Manielisi delivers a description of his morning habits of waking, stretching, washing, bowel movement, and breakfast, and invites the listeners with his details into the imagination of his daily routine up to the point where he leaves the house and makes his way through the town.

*Umzimba uphansi njalo ekuseni mangivuka ngiyakhuma ngizamula
Kube yima ngizelula endlini encane ngiyazikbulula
Mang'qeda ukuy'kbuculula ngithi ukuseta okusakudla
Emva kwelokho ngiyaziphuma
Les'gebengu as'cushwa
Mayazin'umhambi wayo indlela okwani uk'phambuka?*

The first verse has a general theme which 'opens up the stage' for Manielisi's further performance. With a question included in the first lines, he addresses the listeners directly while at the same time emphasizing that he knows where he is going.

As'vayisane

Using the 'slang' term *vaya*, Manielisi invites his listeners to go together with him: 'Let's go together, I take a step, you take a step' but very carefully like a child who

just starts to walk³⁰. Naming the place of his childhood and referring to people he grew up with who ended up either sick in hospital or in prison because of crime, the listeners are informed about the life in KwaMashu (one of the biggest townships around Durban), and get at the same time introduced to Manielisi's critical view on South Africa's society.

*Esi'qhawuqhawin ngiphuma khona ngok'dabuka
Ngalomzuzu kulolusuku ngibong'umdlali eyami inbliziy'isabbakusa
Baning'ey'bhedlela emajele abahlwele kodwa kimi zisachusha*

While others took a different path and ended up in misery, Manielisi is thankful for being alive. Where life is 'hard', you learn to be strong to be part of the fittest in the struggle of the 'survival of the fittest'.

*La! Kunswempu khona uyaqunga man'funa
As'phive ngokufana ngoba nalo njal' isinamuvu liyabukwa*

Still introducing himself, Manielisi enters the stage ready to perform ('he warms up the stage') and warns his opponents about his abilities as a rapper, using figurative speech to scenarize his air. He calls upon opponents: *Uban' ongamele?* [who can challenge him] but explains in the same breath that he will be successful anyway because he always 'scores'.

*Mang'judumalis' by' nkundla njenge lable lembawula kunoma uban'ongamele
Mang' khabele ziyaduma*

He claims in his lyrics that he does not even have to try his luck because things change immediately when he goes by. He has already been successful, and everyone else can stop searching for the success because it was him who scored.

*Hay'uk'zama nje kujik'amasondo mang'dlula
kulez' ey'funi' nselelo kulelinqaku ngiyadabuka*

Manielisi exaggerates his self-description even further by calling upon his listeners to understand when he 'sews it' to make it clearer and lays it 'down' onto the listeners like a 'table-cloth onto the table'.

*lemisho ngiyayithunga mawungay' fici nyay'grubha
wena yithi ngikundlalele okwendwangu yetafula*

In the chorus of the song, Manielisi asks one question three times during the song. He asks his listeners "who stays silent?" (see English translation) while he is 'leading the song', and invites his listeners to celebrate with him when he is talking about

³⁰ *ukucathuzza* is the isiZulu-term for the steps of a child who is in the process of learning how to use his/her legs. The pronunciation of the verb resembles the sound of a child's first steps.

'the truth'. Manielisi says he is holding it 'down' [which means he is creating a great atmosphere], while the 'ethnic sound' is 'blazing'.

*Uban'uthule mina mangi y'vuma
Ungajabula kanye nami mang'bluba indlub'ekhasini kabusba namuhla
Isigqi sakwantu siyavutha mangiyibambe phansi.
Bhazumba hbe! Bhazumba [chanted]*

The second verse deals with the music business, and the difficulties to get the good record deals.

*Kanti bevu kuphi mawuzotsbel' ukutbi lesigqi uyas'gabuka
Isifike yabulula imnyaka amajit'epaquza kudwa luth'uk'qhamuka?
Engath'izandla ziyavuzza*

Although he and his friends have been trying to get into the music business for years, they have not had any success yet. Still, Manielisi criticizes everyone who has not heard his rhythms yet because he and his friends perform very often, and should be well known to a regular hip hop audience. They have not been successful (have not found 'feet' meaning 'a proper stand in the business') which is expressed by the saying that 'it seems as if the hands are leaking or dripping'.

*Akubuyisel' uk'shwebula
Mina mangikhubulele emgondweni
ngithole okuy'emloyeni
Ngaphambi kokutbi umuntu abuyele emlotheni*

Stopping his own complaints in the song because they do not pay off, although, it sometimes feels like 'sour grapes' to be in the music business for so long without being known, Manielisi says he is able to feed himself without anyone else's help because he is clever enough.

*Uk'bluphaka, uk'hluleka, uk'zubeke it's true kuyacusula
Maw'kbuluma ube ulele kumane kuthiwe uyaphupha
So kuxebuka amaqupha mang'hvel'esami's'k bundla
Ng'e, inisil'akulula ikakhulu mawungaqephi*

Manielisi is annoyed by particular problems in society such as poverty, failure and laziness. *Maw'kbuluma ube ulele kumane kuthiwe uyaphupha* [You are said to be dreaming when talking in your sleep] refers to the notion of saying things but not implementing them. But Manielisi makes clear that he fights for his career. He refers to the idea of handling things oneself to make sure they get done the way one wants them to be, and it is only going to be the handling person who gets the profit for it — no-one else.

*mancane ngenpel'awempumelelo amathuba
kodw'iyodw'impundulo mangithatha ukuzibuza*

*zibambele mathupa ukuze zingabi ningi izandla
ey'jun'ukublanjuluhwa nges'kbathi sok'hlafula
man'bamb'elakb'iqhaza nawe akek'bozoy'lamula*

b) South Africa

The third part of the song refers to the history of the struggle against Apartheid, and the South African youth today. Manielisi criticizes the general shift of values of a careless youth who are not aware of the dangers of drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. He further reminds his listeners of the dangers during the struggle against the Apartheid regime.

*Ha! Usabuza impendulo'umanqoba ngoba
mas'phuka umoya thina sifana nababulwa*

In connection to the second verse, Manielisi emphasises once again that one needs 'that drive', otherwise one is just like 'defeated people'.

By pointing out to his listeners what he perceives as the secret and brutal strategies of the Apartheid system under the government of P. W. Botha and F. W. De Klerk (as one can see in the excerpt of the lyrics below, he refers to both politicians in one sentence), Manielisi describes his own growing up in the 1970s as a black child in the middle of the struggle when neighbours, friends and relatives disappeared and got kidnapped because an informant had posted their names to the officials.

For me, to step on stage and be a rapper from South Africa when hip hop is known as an American thing, I have to step up and be who I am and take the history that I come with, that I come from and put it there. [...] This is the stance that I come from. [...] But I have to document where I'm from... (Manielisi 12.11.2006).

Like American hip hop artists who talk about their neighborhood or rap about the crime in their African-American surroundings, Manielisi ensures that his listeners understand where he is from, and what it meant to grow up in South Africa during Apartheid. He refers to the arbitrariness against black people during these times when 'teargas was used in the streets to keep protests down', and 'freedom fighters were killed or put into prison'. But nevertheless, the struggle continued despite the huge losses. Manielisi describes in his lyrics that many protesters remained and 'did not give up' so the whole situation of the struggle became more difficult for everyone, it became "worse" (see English translation). Still referring to his origin, he points out the reversed state of the country now where June 16th is celebrated as a holiday and reminder of the brutal oppression of the protesting youth in 1976 in Soweto.

*Ya! Fihhe! Sakhula omashinini le eMshinini 76 bathunjwa
Man'usuku lweshumi ne'thupha myaka yonke luyagujwa
Amabhuda maningi kakhulu amuka
Abanye bangabuya ngoba mhlawumbe omunye 'y'mpimpi zamuzwa
Phansi kwaP/nol'W sanuka isisi es'khalis'anyembezi
Iy'gayigayi zaqunga bhayi! Ibhayi kwashuba*

Referring to the history of the struggle against Apartheid, Manielisi talks about the days when 'comrades' were adored by girls because they were the ones who fought for their ideas. However, Manielisi also emphasises the danger these comrades were in because they lived in the risk of death.

Moving in his lyrics chronologically towards the recent past, Manielisi refers to the liberation of political prisoners and the change in South African politics as well as the first democratic elections. In the last part of the song, Manielisi criticizes the recent mental state of South African's youth who only want to party and have sex. Furthermore, he condemns the state of South African's society where survival becomes a challenge because living becomes more expensive, and the difference between rich and poor grows more extreme every day.

*Amadela kufa ey'ntombini enogazi
oCombrad zibafuna baning'abasala axox'indab' amathuna
Umhlaba wonke wabuka ey'ntilongweni iy'boshwa zaphuma
Zafunga zagamela ukuthi akusakuya ngabala las'khumba
Amalungelo eningi bathi vele ayabusa
Nok'chan'impela makungabbemi kuyaphuza

Zonke zifun'ukuqatshulwa kwel'intengo yempilo kodw'eyemali iyanyuka
Ongenaluth' uyantula bes'onotho eyaqumba kucinani'y'qhwaga zithwali'y'khal
ziyaphuca*

c) Spirituality

Manielisi ends his song by calling 'God' for help before he returns to his chorus and takes his listeners back into the spirit of celebration: *Bhazumba, hbe. Bhazuma.*

Khuzo baba! Khuzo!

d) Concepts of time and space

Manielisi refers to the cycle of life and death by mentioning the return to the ashes (*umlotha*) at the 'end of the day'.

*Uk'hlupheka, uk'hluleka, uk'zubeke it's true kuyacusula
Man'kbuluma ube ulele kumane kuthive uyaphupha
So kuxebuka amaqupha mang'hvel'esam'is'khumla
Ng'e, inisi'akulula ikakhulu mawungaqephi*

e) Figurative speech

Isinamuvu liyabukwa is an idiom in isiZulu which stands for a certain cultural concept. It refers to the pride of a person who is calm and mature enough to wait until everybody is done with their 'things' to be the one who does the 'right thing' in the end. Manielisi uses the idiom in this context to explain why people are not gifted equally [*as'phive ngokufana*], and puts even further emphasis on the description of himself as mastering the situation in comparison to his opponents who are too impatient.

*Ziyaduma*³¹ refers to South African football games. Whenever someone scores, the fans in the stadium 'thunder' so the expression *ziyaduma* is linked to 'scoring a goal', and is used in this context to express Manielisi's success.

*bay'uk'zama nje kujik'amasondo mang'dlula
kulez' ey'funi' nselelo kulelinqaku ngiyadabuka*

The information is like 'food for the ear'. When it gets to the ear, it needs to be chewed while the meaning of *ukuzwa* (to hear) in isiZulu also means 'understand' so if the information is properly heard and understood, it 'can be chewed'.

lokudla kwendebe wena mav'kuzwa hlafuna

As mentioned above, the chorus which is repeated three times during the song clarifies the concept of the text by suggesting that the further the rapper progresses in the song, the more truth will be told. Manielisi uses an idiom that refers to the idea of 'telling the truth' which is related to the English idiom 'to spill the beans' but with a different meaning than the English idiom (Manielisi 12.11.2006). While the English idiom refers to a more sudden 'telling the truth', the isiZulu saying explains the process of getting to the truth by 'unwrapping' or 'unpeeling' as if someone was peeling off different layers of the story to get to the core of the truth.

mang'hluba indlub'ekhasini kabusha

As mentioned above, Manielisi makes it clear that he fights for his career while expressing this, his speech turns into very brutal figurative speech which draws a picture of 'peeling knuckles' in a fight.

So kuxebuka amaqupha mang'hwel'esam'is'kibundla

³¹ *Ziyaduma* (isiZulu): 'They are noisy' (lit. translation) — *ukuduma* (isiZulu) means to 'thunder', to 'be noisy', but also to be 'well known'.

Imaginatively expressive, Manielisi describes his mother giving birth to him in the 1970s. Today she is getting old.

70's ngaphushwa owang'beletha kuleyomnyaka namblanje nyaguga

Referring to childhood memories, Manielisi refers to a disciplining method that is known to many African children; when you are asked to go somewhere to do something such as buying milk from a store, the parent or older sibling spits on the floor, and tells you to come back before the saliva has dried. It is a disciplinary method which forces the children to hurry up and make sure that they get back in time because saliva evaporates quickly in the heat of South Africa's sun (Manielisi 12.11.2006).

*kusafelw'amathe phansi uma uyingane maw'tbunya
futhi kumele unafice ekbona lapho maw'buya*

Finally, figurative speech is used when saying that he gets something into his mouth if his mind is growing.

ngithole okuy'emloyeni

8.5 Uqamba amanga by Miracle

The last track in this analysis differs slightly from the other hip hop tracks as it is initially self-praising but changes to a more self-descriptive, and even self-lowering, portrayal of the artist. Miracle calls his track a 'rock poem', an idea he came up with to get rid of anger and frustration. "Sometimes I get angry and I do not have the necessary means [...] to release that anger so I decided to play around with the concept of rock poems" (Miracle 07.11.2006). The course of the 'rock poem' at hand is based on a call-and-response-scheme between a performer and an audience. The performer begins with self-praises on a very high level but the audience doubts his words so he lowers himself in his description more and more until he admits that *yena akalutho* – 'he is nothing'. Whenever a verse is over, the audience shouts *uqamba amanga* ['You are lying'] in response, and forces the artist to explain himself more clearly. Before each performance of the 'rock poem', Miracle tells his audience how to react, and the audience's response gives the whole track its rhythm (ibid.).

"I needed people to participate in this [...] so people [...] shout me off like 'you are lying' because I needed to hear that myself as an artist, as a poet, as an MC so I can get more like explaining like 'no [it is rather meant like] this' and people come back with that" (ibid.).

a) Self-description/self-praise

Miracle starts his track by describing himself in front of the audience as someone who is nervous and anxious. In response to that, the audience is called upon for the first time to doubt his description and get back to him by saying *uqamba amanga*.

*uma ngimi lana
kugijima igazi, kublanya imizwa
(uqamba amanga)*

Miracle picks up the first criticism and continues in his explanation how the mind starts wandering and bodies jump because he is such a wonderful performer. The audience is asked again to respond with a doubt:

*kuzula umqondo
kugxuma imizimba
(uqamba amanga)*

In the second part of his track, the atmosphere slowly changes. Miracle begins to lower himself a little by describing himself to be on the search, a wanderer who is like a nomad. He starts to take the focus off himself (*'akuyisimi ukukhula'*). He further directs the focus of the audience to a wish of beauty, and describes himself as if he was in apprehension that all will turn quiet at some point.

*mina
omqondo, mizimba zula
khanda ligwel' amaphupha
nbhiziyo yebhunguka
akusiyimi ukukhula
ngifunda ngiyokuthola
konke okuhle phambi
kokuthula*

In his track, the audience does not follow his change as quickly. They still respond with doubts (*uqamba amanga*).

Miracle characterises himself as someone who offers himself to life like a man 'offers himself' to a woman. He claims to be 'true' because the truth is 'linking arms' with him.

*mina, msheli
wempilo khwapheni
neqiniso*

In his description, he lowers himself even further by describing himself and people like him as those who can fly without wings [who do not have any means] but have one single task which is to 'see God's face'.

*mina nezam sindiza
singena mpiko*

*mbhoso ukubona
ubuso bukaThixo*

At this point, he offers himself to God: *oBawo nangunaye uSiphephelo*³² and describes himself as a person who 'is nothing', someone who has got nothing to present in terms of material items but a wish for peace and love. He concludes the 'rock poem' but the role he gives the audience in his call-and-response-track is not to listen to him. Furthermore, he describes the audience as not having heard that he has become very 'honest' at the end of the track, and allows them to voice their doubts.

*ngithi yena akalutho
uzifunela nje
unthandu noxolo
(uqamba amanga)*

b) References to Zulu traditions

Miracle warns his audience to be careful because he says he 'kidnaps minds'. However, Miracle is not satisfied with the English equivalent of the Zulu word (Miracle 07.11.2006). The cultural concept of *kipita* is a very complex one and does not fully agree with the notion of 'kidnapping', a term that is often used as a translation for *kipita*.

The verb *kipita* in isiZulu expresses the unlawful action of a Zulu woman to follow her lover to his house to live with him although the family has not received any *ilobolo* (bride price). This notion includes that the usual negotiations between the families of the bride and the groom about the bride price, and the exchange of the bride price have not taken place, and furthermore, the parents of bride and groom have not agreed to the match. Therefore, the move of the woman remains 'unlawful' although she follows the man of her own free will. In the original concept of the exchange of *ilobolo*, the family of the woman feels betrayed if the couple decides to live together without being married because they "didn't get what they deserved" so "it is taken as if [...] she was kidnapped. [...] But most of the time there is nothing wrong with it [her move]" (ibid.). 'Kidnapping' adds a negative connotation to the term although it does not have to be read in a negative way if both woman and man agree freely to stay together. This full notion is expressed in the context of Miracle's use of *ukukipita imiqondo* [to kidnap minds]. He convinces

³² Miracle is his pseudonym, Siphephelo his first name.

the minds of the listeners of his ability to perform and to leave their 'owners' and follow him (ibid.).

*qaphela
imigondo ngiyayikipita*

c) Concepts of time and space

By using the 'slang'-expression *nginguvula vala* [I open, I close], Miracle refers to the concept of Alpha and Omega. In the context of this verse, the idea of 'beginning and end held by him' is further supported by the description of a very 'swift' move. He opens and closes quickly and intends to express that the situation is not going to change – "it's not going anywhere" (Miracle 07.11.2006). He describes himself as being the one who is in control of the situation. "I am that energy. That whole space is mine" (ibid.). The 'slang'-term *nginguvula vala* "as used mostly by *amapantsula*" also means "I am ill, [...] I am the thing" (ibid.).

*nginguvula vala
jengesticabha ebusika*

d) Figurative speech

As mentioned before, Miracle describes himself and people like him like having one single task — to 'see God's face'.

*mina nezam sindiza
singena mpiko
mboso ukubona
ubuso bukaThixo*

As also mentioned before, Miracle describes himself as someone who kidnaps minds, opens and closes like doors in winter, links arms with the truth, and says he is a heart of a nomad.

8.6 Interpretation

In the introduction of this treatise, hip hop is described as a musical medium for the expression of identity amongst urban youth all over the world through the means of beats, dance, art, and language. For instance, Fenn and Perullo (2000) observe that a particular use of language, accent and vocabulary in hip hop music from Malawi and Tanzania has important effects on the creation of a group identity. Most obviously, the aspects of self-description and self-praise play a central, if not the most

important role in the lyrics presented in this treatise. As mentioned in chapter two, "hip hop celebrates *Me* and *We*, as opposed to *You*" (Perry 2004: 89). From this perspective, the hip hop artists from KwaZulu-Natal whose lyrics are investigated in this research employ common features of global hip hop music which are independent from language choice or ethnic background. At the same time, the origins of self-praise can be traced back to the traditions of the *izimbongi* (see chapter 5) who included self-description and self-praise in their praises for royalties, or other high-ranking officials, to refer to their own personality and family background³³.

With regards to the analysis at hand, one finds a significant difference in hip hop lyrics expressed in isiZulu in comparison, for instance, to hip hop music from the U.S.A. Self-description or self-praise in American hip hop mainly occurs with reference to the individual, or sometimes the crew of the artist which includes the '*We*' as mentioned by Perry (2004) but does most often not refer to one people, i.e. the US-American people as such. The specific features of self-praise in isiZulu become apparent if one takes a closer look at the representation and praising of the *Self* in the hip hop lyrics represented in this research. The artists in this investigation all include features of a joint feeling for Zulu people as a whole. This expression of 'Zuluness' in the hip hop lyrics is represented by the language choice as well as by the topics expressed in the lyrics. Tsubasa says, "I make sure the elements of hip hop are still in the lyrics, but sounding [sic.] very ethnic" (Tsubasa 10.11.2006). The artists identify themselves as hip hop artists, and furthermore as Zulus, and even use hip hop as a tool to support and enhance their own culture (or better 'cultures' [Tsubasa's non-monolithic approach (10.11.2006)]). As one can see in the analysis, Zulus as a 'nation' as well as a 'people' are featured within the representation of the *Self* — or the other way around, the *Self* is represented through typical Zulu elements; the investigated isiZulu-speaking hip hop artists praise themselves in praising their people and their 'Zuluness'. It is rather a praise of a nation which incorporates the individual as 'itself' than an exposition of the individual on its own. For instance, Bhiz reminds his listeners of the stomping of the Zulu warriors of Shaka's army and speaks of "Zulu forces" (Bhiz 15.11.2006) when talking about himself and his co-rappers. Furthermore, traditional concepts are mentioned in

³³ The artists clearly express that they see themselves as following this tradition and go as far as to state that hip hop has its origin in the tradition of *izimbongi* (Chapter 5 & 8).

reference to self-praise. For instance, traditional healers play a role in the lyrics at hand such as in Tsubasa’s song as well as in Bhiz’ artist name.

Strikingly, the significant role of the ancestors in the Zulu culture is portrayed in the lyrics, not only in various direct references but also in the concept of space and time in which the artist functions as the beginning and the end, i.e. the artist is the offspring of his ancestors, and at the same time, the future ancestor of his offspring. In addition, the ancestors and the ‘currently living’ people occupy the same time and space in the Zulu culture. This concept does not only reflect the notion of the artist as being in a spatio-temporal ‘centre’, but furthermore, reminds one of the roles of the ancestors in the perception of time in the Zulu culture.

In their self-description, the artists often refer to themselves in the third person by using their own names as a reference (which can be either their pseudonym or their name) or by using praise names referring to their family tree (*izithakhezelo*) which, again, includes traces of their origin as well as a projection of the artists’ future that go beyond the artist as an individual. For instance, Miracle introduces himself in his ‘rock poem’ to God as *uSiphephelo* ‘who is nothing’ [*oBawo nangunaye uSiphephelo. Ngithi yena akaluthe*], Bhiz Isangoma Samagama says in his lyrics *Isangoma Samagama sibhula ukuthi...* [‘Isangoma Samagama is so divine that...’], and Tsubasa names himself in the lyrics *uMagadlela*.

The tradition of ‘breaking with taboos’ (without penalty) in praise-poetry and praise-songs by *izimbongi* (see chapter 5) such as criticism of royalties is taken up by the hip hop artists. They break with taboos in that they ‘take on’ the ultimate representatives of ‘good’ (God, Angels) and ‘evil’ (Satan, Osama Bin Laden).

Moreover, the language choice of isiZulu makes a political statement to represent the strong connection to the artists’ ethnicity (see chapter 4). The artists do not rap in isiZulu because they are not willing to rap in English or because their English is not advanced enough but because they want to represent local specificities, and feel more ‘comfortable’ with isiZulu. Some feel more authentic when rapping in isiZulu while some see it as a clear statement towards their own language and culture if they use their ‘own tongue’. A number of topics addressed in the hip hop lyrics at hand occur as language-specific like those notions of *ukukupita*, *amadlozi*, *izithakhezelo*, and *ishoba*. Although the translations deliver explanations of these traditional cultural concepts — which still appear to be important in the culture today — the artists

refrain from a full transmission of the meaning from isiZulu to English, and rather express their dissatisfaction with the essence in English (see chapter 7).

With their choice of isiZulu, the artists positively affirm their own ethnicity. Through the language they enhance a general pride in Zulu traditions and culture. They employ the music form hip hop with its focus on the lyrics to preserve their culture and language to emphasise their origins. The rapper Tsubasa refers to the Zulu nation as

Zulu has been the most powerful nation in Africa so people need to know where we come from. [...] right now, there's a bit of uncertainties about the Zulu cultures. Most people tend to look down on Zulu people as a whole (Tsubasa 10.11.2006).

As a result, the use of the artists' indigenous language also empowers an entire people which finds its new self-esteem in the new South Africa after the humiliating years of Apartheid.

The choice of the indigenous language is further emphasized by the avoidance of slang and other forms of youth language by some of the artists. While for instance Manielisi uses the language he 'speaks every day', a language that is "very street" (Manielisi 12.11.2006) which includes isiTsotsi and other forms of urban slang spoken in the metropolitan area of Durban (see section 3.2), Tsubasa and Bhiz decline new urban varieties in their lyrics, and prefer to use traditional expressions and styles. One aspect of this traditional approach to their indigenous language is the significant use of traditional versions of idioms which have not been changed within the rhymes in the lyrics at hand. The only example of a scrambled idiom was found in Bhiz' song: *Ngadla ingwe nambala*. By using idioms as they are commonly known in a medium that is mainly perceived and listened to by youth, the artists contribute to a preservation of the language amongst the younger generations of isiZulu-speakers.

It is notable that the isiZulu-speaking hip hop youth in this research turn towards traditional concepts and ideas, and even see their role in preserving traditions rather than rejecting 'old fashioned' items of their ancestral generations as can often be observed in youth culture. One may see this phenomenon in the context of 'African renaissance'³⁴, and as a move towards shaping a proud identity after the degrading experiences of African people during Apartheid. Instead of rebellion against the

³⁴ Mbeki, T. (1998). The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World.

older generations of their own culture, the Zulu youth seeks to create a group identity within their culture to overcome the lingering effects of the Apartheid legacy.

As part of this phenomenon, it seems worth taking a closer look at hip hop lyrics in other languages such as English as well as in older songs from the birth of hip hop music to compare the usage of idioms with contemporary isiZulu hip hop. One may find that the reason for employing idioms in their original form is based on a rather traditional approach to isiZulu in general, and furthermore, of a rather preserving nature in the sense of traditions in contrast to the use of innovative language expressions and idioms in hip hop from elsewhere.

9 Conclusion and suggestions for further research

The above analysis has revealed many different aspects of hip hop music from KwaZulu-Natal. For this short treatise, it was possible to investigate only a few of them. Therefore, the outcomes of this research will hopefully inspire further investigations in the field of language choices amongst the hip hop youth in KwaZulu-Natal in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Some aspects that may lead to a more thorough understanding of the comprehensive dynamics in the hip hop scene in KZN could be addressed. First of all, the results of this treatise could be tested by taking larger numbers of participants into account, since the range of texts for this treatise had to be limited. In addition, a quantitative analysis of hip hop lyrics on a larger scale than in the current research may shed light onto language dynamics in urban hip hop in KwaZulu-Natal such as, for example, 'language shift' or 'language loss', or maybe 'language preservation' and 'language creation'.

Furthermore, a comparative study of the two languages English and isiZulu as they are spoken and used in the hip hop scene in KZN could contribute to a detailed understanding of language choices between the two languages by artists and audiences. One could investigate whether the language-specific topics as they were found in the research at hand are only limited to Zulu traditions. For instance, maybe one finds similar language dynamics in KZN as found for the hip hop scenes in Malawi and Tanzania by Fenn and Perullo (2000) (see chapter 1). Also, my research focuses on the artist's side of hip hop music. In a study similar to the one

by Fenn and Perullo (2000), one could take the discourse about hip hop in KwaZulu-Natal and the language of hip hop audiences into consideration.

Moreover, a contrastive analysis between hip hop lyrics from KwaZulu-Natal and hip hop texts from other provinces in South Africa concerning content and language choice could reveal the dynamics of language choices by youth in the country more generally. Also, a comparison between hip hop lyrics from South Africa and other countries such as the U.S.A. (the 'founding' country of the youth culture hip hop) or other African countries could shed light onto language vitality in the hip hop scenes on a more global level.

Appendices

Lo ongasenbla by Bhiz Isangoma Samagama

*Akukho mc engangilandela ngoba ngidukisa
umkhondo*

*Kumabonakude womqondo ngikukhipha estuyeleni
njengo Bolo*

*uk-Blaq amasondo mina kulemoto ngizoba injini
Ukufa kwethu sobabili kusho ukuthi ayikho
inqubeleka phambili*

*Sizigi zezimpi ezalwa ngesikhatshi uShaka efuna
ukungena ngodli emkhosini*

La esidlula khona kufa iningi

*Umama blezi ethiinja iyawagada amanzi ngolimi
Imina lowo nama emceez*

*ngizenerhyme etshahwe ensimini amagama intshalo
eyiblukene kaningi*

Kwingane ngusnidi

Kosanda kuqala ubhema ngismoothies

*Ukuzalwa kwami kwabalekisa unkuluxx
emkhatshini*

*UZakewu wabona mina wafuna ukugibela emthini
Abakhobhwa ukhubhla ebhayibhelini imina
umHedeni*

*obwisana neyingelosi ngesahluko sepeni
ngiqothule amaphiko ukuze zibale unomphela
lapha emhlabeni*

*inkukhu nomthunzi sindiza sonke emoyeni
uSathane wabona mina impondo zancipha
umsila wamuswela njengemmbila ngokuyalezela
ngamphuca imitoloko / ingakho lemcee engibulale
izolo*

ngiyishiye imbhobox

umqondo uneyibazi

inqolobane yo

*nazi ngisho nenkanyezi yezazi ingabluleka
ukukhanyisa kulobu-bumnyama*

*Isangoma Samagama sibhula ukuthi uma
kukhona mina kuvezela inqwaba*

*kumina ukubhala irhyme efana negama
lamakaShaka lolo ubala*

*Nansi irhyme ezokushiya uphenduka mase uyolala
ikubhalele ngakusasa usadla*

*ubolelwe umqondo njengesishobo esidala sablala
akusho ukuthi ukukhula ngemnyaka*

No MC can follow me because I lose track

In your mindframe I run out your style like
Bolo Yang [Bolo Ycung]

k-Blaq will be da wheelz and in this car I'll
be da engine

If both of us die, it means there is no going
forward

We da stomping of wars dat were fought
when Shaka forcefully wanted 2 take ova da
Thrown wherever we pass many loose their
lives

My mom always tells me dat a dog finishes
da water with its tounge

Dats me and mcees

I'm cumin with a rhyme from garden /
words are different kind of flowers

To a kid I'm sweetz /

2 who eva dat has just started smoking I'm
smoothies (mints)

My birth chased away God from
Atmosphere

Hezakileil saw me & he wanted 2 climb da
tree

Dat what they forgot 2 write in da bible dat
I'm da heathen who fights Angels with a

pen and clips off their wings
so dat they'll be stuck on this earth

Us and chicken we fly high together
But when Satan saw me his horns grew
small

And became in need of a tail like a
mountain rat.

I stole his fork dat why da cat [that MC] I
killed yesterday left it with holes

his mind with scars, da walking (Zulu)
library

Even Jesus' 3 followers star can never
lighten this darkness

I'm so devine dat whenever I'm around
MC's start shakin / frightened 2 me writing
a rhyme is like King Shaka's mothers' name
dat easy

here's a rhyme dat will make you turn in
your sleep

da next day it will attack you while you're
eating

and make your mind rotten, stale like a stew
dat was cooked a long time ago

*nakwi imic umdala
Abazama ukunginisa ngibayisa kwelinye ekhaya
ngaphansi komhlaba
ngihambe ukuthi amangcwaba*

*Ngadla ingwe nambala
ngaphalaza lamagama awumblapha x2 abazama
ukunwablanganisa bayophelela amandla*

*Angothinteki njengoDaniel emphandweni
weyinyonyama
unkulu x2 wathi ngilhambe lishone kwangaphinde
kwalaba*

being old doesn't mean dat in da mic your
grownup
whoever tries 2 take me on I take them to
their new home underneath da earth and
named it graves
Ate a cheetah [leopard] and it spots
And vomited these words / which are
scattered
Whoever tries to put them together will lose
their strength
No one can touch me like Daniel in da lions
darn
God said "I must hold da sun and they
never saw da evening."

Hamba uyobuza Unyoko by Tsubasa a.k.a. Blizzard

*NguAlfa ngu-Omega
Ngisqalo ngisphetho
Ngismangaliso sesphepho esadiliza izindonga zase
Jerico
Ngijubela lomlilo,
ngumthombo we limpompo
Ngiphupho elibhe lokhokho
Izvi labo bonke kulomhlaba abangasekho*

*Izibazi zehawu nomkhonto
ezasbiya izinkedamu ebusweni besilo
Mina neNkondlo isiphiwo sephumbo
njenga Madlozi nemphepho
Ngimfiblo yekhubalo lesifo esekhathaze
umphefumulo
Ngivala izikhala nopotsho
ezibhukanisa impilo nogoqanyawo
Izinhlungu ziphola njenga maseko
Isizwe siphela phambi kwamehlo njengo Mlingo*

Ngishaya icilongo ngimiphezu kwentaba mlilo

Ngishoba lenyanga ngishwaqisa uLucifer

*Masekhubemeleza uMagadlela
kubaleka izimfene nezimpaka
Ngizokumangaza kuhle kwelanga liphuma ngase
ntshona
ngese Bhubesi isbindi ngalwa impi ngesblilingi
eRhuwanda
Mangi hamba imic ngesandla sokudla
kushabalala izinsizwa
Isibongo kompetha noDingane usefisa ukuvusa
uShaka*

*Izithakazelo zika inki kuphuma imix
iziqhushumbisi zama vesi*

I'm the Alfa, the Omega
The beginning, the End,
The incredible hurricane that brought down
the walls of Jericho.
I'm the spark to a blazing fire
The source of the Limpompo river
A beautiful dream of our forefathers
The voice to all those that have gone before
us
Battle scars of shields and spears
That left orphans in the face of the beast
Me and my poetry, the gift of my voice
are like the ancestors and incant
I'm the secret herb to a deadly disease
That has crippled the soul
I'm bridging every loophole and space
Separating life and eternal death
Pain cools slowly like fire stones
The Nation is wiped out in front of our
eyes, disillusioned
I'll be blowing the trumpet on top of an
erupt volcano
I'm the staff of a traditional healer, causing
fear even to Lucifer
When I start chanting evil forces start
vacating [baboons that witches use]
I will astonish you, like the sun rising in the
West
With the heart of a lion I fought with
slingshot in Rhuwanda
With the mic in my right hand, I wipe out
the strongest of men
It's a disaster even to Heros, Dingane
wishes to resurrect King Shaka
All praises to ink it's a mix of explosive
verses

*kuzwakala kuncoma uOsama Bin Laden
emablatbi
Umnikelo wezimvu isabluke esiqoshwe eBayibbelini
Ngisho inkosi yabathakathi
Impisi yamphendula umpristi*

even Osama Bin Laden is giving me props
from his place of hiding
Sacrifices of Lambs are inscribed in the
Bible,
Even the Prince of darkness I repented, and
he became a priest.

Industry by Zakes

The artist ask me to point out that his translation is not a one-to-one translation regarding the literal meaning of the vocabulary but rather based on the general idea of translating the concept of the song into English for people who do not understand isiZulu. His 'punch-lines' which work in isiZulu do not have the same function in English but at least the general message of the song as a whole has been brought across (Zakes, 07.11.2006).

Verse 1

*I es'iqalo senyathuko ebhek' emphumelelweni
uk'dlondlobala kwestayela salomjita
sincike kumanyolo owafakwa esathulweni
ngizok' tsbela lokho kuphela zalo
ngoba okunye kuyimifiblakalo
njenge nkonzo yocans' ekamelweni*

*bafowethu ngiyawuthanda lomculo
kodwa uthi kuseyikho uma sesifakana
emandleni, senzela phansi, singabantu
asoze sayangacanye singemanzu,
ngiyamaz' umdlali wami kodwa
angisiboni is'dingo sokuy'esontweni
yet abasontayo bang' biza mbedeni
balunge benjalo, ngiyayjika lento manje
bafowethu ngicel' ukuthula
ebadleni ngenza eyam'into
kusbo inbhokomo ezandleni
isuke iyoblala enbliziyweni
ukbomise ukuthi usonthandweni
kudideke nama majors ang'gay'iDeal egrand
awuzwa ke wachitheka u-ink
ephpheni bafowethu...*

Verse 2

*ngaqed' is'kole impilo yaqala yang'dlela
is'baca, ngithi ngijun' uk'lekelela edladleni
ngenx' isaka, ongam'la namanany'
bagqobh' amasango bagqobh'iyichabha
ngisale ngiququd' inzipho, ngiseses'koloni
ngangithi konke kuzobalula kodwa
konke kumuncu kuble kwe taste kalamula*

Verse 1

This is the beginning of the journey to
greater opportunities, this man is growing,
higher & higher
because of the manure on his shoes
I'm only disclosing that, cause the rest is
private and confidential like sex behind
close doors
my people what's up with you all?
Why is this fussing and fighting? We're not
animals,
we're human beings, we need to stop
fighting over senseless things
In God the creator I trust, but I don't see
the reason to go to church, yet the Christian
claim to know him
they are quick to judge me, only God can
judge
let me do my thing, if you're down
you applaud, you make noise like water falls
convince these major labels to offer me a
better deal, ah...!
Awuzwa ke watchitheka u-ink
ephpheni bafowethu

Verse 2

When I finished school, I saw life in a
different dimension.
I was trying to help out at home, making
money
White people, Indians, they are closing the
doors and gates on me
I'm nervous, biting my nails not knowing
what to do
While I was still in school, I thought life
would be much easier but everything is just
sour

baba siza lamula, indodana yakho emasimbeni
ncukula, takula,
i anda yami iney'mbobo
ngisho namasokisi ami aney'mbobo
kuphela into engiyiphethe umqondo
94 ngagala ngagagake ngagathazi amaqiniso
ngepeni phezu kwephepha, wena owabona iboss
iqaq' uzip iqathaza, iG String
yesecretary e-office zinumqakeko

mina nginentshisekelo ngisho umfokaMcananyane
lapho ekhonqozok'ishela ukuthi nginesami isabelo,
nansi inqikithi nesisekelo
kule music industry kugcwela amapimp
kanti ama-artist wona izeqamgwaqo
ononkilozi ngisho ungagxumi une ngezinyawo
uthi bhayi-bhayi ushaye itoyi-itoyi
lova usazo recycle (asazoresay'k'lwa) njengo doti
lokh' engik'shoyo akubon' ub'xoki,
it's a pity
ukuthi kulaba abaphumelele akukho noyedwa
oxoxa es'phelele
is'tori baxoxa imbudane basho lokhu nalokhu,
nalokhu-nalokhu, abanamabloni basibalisela
ngensomi emini bebade ilanga lingekashoni

ubani oyisoni? Yini ndaba kule game kube
namabizethize?
mina ngigode phambili emuva lutho phinde-phinde,
ngiphethe idisaster
like 2004 December 26 utsunami, insumansumane
bolova vumani uk'dikibala,
udlondlobala, izitha
nabangani, nekusasa nemanje nengay'zolo
konke lokhu kunqakakile wena owabona
ibome theatre nama surrounding speakers

Father help, your son is in trouble
pull him out
My underwear got holes, my socks got
holes,
The only thing that's valuable is the mind,
From 1994 I've started writing the truth on
a paper with a pen
doing what the corporate world is doing
behind closed doors anyway without anyone
knowing (the real truth like a boss unzipping
the secretary's pants)
I got a drive, even the sound of Umcananyane
will approve my talent
here is the moral of the story
the music industry is full of pimps (*shady*)
they trick artists, they sell their souls
you can even jump & toy-toy (*protest*) about
what I said but it's not gonna change
if you're an artist, they will still recycle you
like waste. What I'm saying is the truth. I
don't tell you lies.
It's a pity that those who are already
successful are not telling those stories.
The majors (major labels) are telling us lies,
saying this and that
They are not ashamed to tell us bedtime
stories during the day
Who's the sinner? Why are too many
obstacles in this game?
I'm moving forward (not back)
I'm a disaster like 2004 December 26th
tsunami
I'm unbelievable
Real MC's approve me
getting fed up; moving forward
enemies, friends, tomorrow, today and
yesterday
all of this is surrounding me
I'm the home theatre, they are the speakers.

Bhazumba by Manielisi

Umzimba uphansi njalo ekuseni mangiruka
ngiyakhuna ngizamula
Kube yima ngizelula endlini encane ngiyazikbulula
Mang'qeda ukuy'khuculula ngithi ukuseta
okusakudla

Emva kwalokho ngiyaziphuma
Les'gebengu as'cushwa
Mayazin'umbambi wayo indlela okwani
uk'phambuka?

My body is down every morning when I
wake up, I'm gloomy, I stretch and I yarn, I
relieve myself in the toilet,
When I'm finished, I clean myself up, I
make myself breakfast

After that I'm out
This outlaw can't be trapped
If you know the way you are going, why go
astray?

*As'vayisane ulandele nginyathel'ulaldele engathi
inga' isacathuza
Es'qhawqhawin ngiphuma khona ngok'dabuka
Ngalomzuzu kulolusuku ngibong'undlali eyami
inhliziy'isabhakuzo
Baning'ey'bbedlela emajele ababhwehwe kodwa kimi
zisachusha*

*I.a! Kunswempu khona nyaqunga mav'funa
As'phive ngokufana ngoba nalo njal' isinamva
liyabukwa*

*Mang'judumalis' ly' nkundla njenge lable
lembawula kunoma uban'ongamele
Mang' khabelela ziyaduma*

*Hay'uk'zama nje kujik'amasondo mang'dlula
kulez' ey'funi' nselelo kulelinqaku ngiyadabuka*

*Iemisho ngiyayibunga mawungay' fici uyay'grubha
wena yithi ngikundlalele okwendwangu yetafula
lokudla kwendebe wena mav'kuzwa hlafuna*

Chorus:

*Uban'uthule mina mangi y'ruma
Ungajabula kanye nami mang'hluba
indlub'ekhasini kabusha namuhla
Isigqi sakwantu siyavutha mangiyibambe phansi.*

Bhazumba hbe! Bhazuma.

*Kanti bewu kuphi mawuzotshel' ukuthi lesigqi
uyas'qabuka
Isifike yablula imnyaka amajit'epaquza kodwa
luth'uk'qhamuka?
Engath'izandla ziyavuzo
Akubuyisel' uk'shwabula
Mina mangikhulele emqondweni
ngithole okuy'emloyeni
Ngaphambi kokuthi umuntu abuyele emlotheni*

*Uk'hlupheka, uk'hluleka, uk'zubeke it's true
kuyacusula
Mav'kbuluma ube ulele kumane kuthive
uyaphupha
So kuxebuka amaqupha
mang'hvel'esam'is'khundla
Ng'e, inisi'akulula ikakbulu mawungaqephi
umphakathi ungakuboni angiyiphathi eyokuzwa*

Let's go together, I take a step, you take a
step like a child's taking its first steps
KwaMashu, that's where I'm from, where I
originate
In this moment this day, thank god that my
heart is still beating
There's many who are in hospitals and in
jail, it dimmed on them but in me everything
is ok
Where it's hard you invigorate if you like.
We are not all gifted equally because at the
end those who dance best are the ones who
dance (those who master anything are the
ones who dance at the end)

When I warm up/blaze the stage like a coal
from the barn fire who can stand against
me, when I kick, I score [ziyaduma = like in
football]
not trying my luck, the wheels turn, when I
go past [things change]
whoever is still looking for something, those
who still want to earn points, I'm sorry, I've
already scored
these sayings I sew them when you don't
understand [slang]....
let me lay down on you like a table cloth
[news/information] food for the ear and if
you can hear it than chew it

Chorus:

Who's silent when I'm leading the song
You can rejoice with me while I am
unwrapping the truth [like 'spilling the
beans']
the ethnic sound it's burning, when i'm
holding it down

Where have you been if you say you haven't
heard this rhythm
It's been years since for us trying get in this
business
but not finding feet (like our hands leak).
Winding doesn't pay off me if a mentally fit
gets food to feed before I return to the
earth's dig (earth's dust)

poverty, failure, laziness gets me pissed
(angry) because if you talk while you sleep
than you are said to be dreaming
So my knuckles peel when you are fighting
for my position
The truth is it's not easy.
Especially if you are not recording than the

*mancane ngemp'el'awempumelelo amathuba
kodw'iyodw'impundulo mangithatha ukuzibuzza
zibambeke mathuba ukuzi zingabi ningi izandla
ey'fun'ukublanjululwa nges'kebathe sok'hlabana
maw'hamb'elakh'iqhaza naye akek'hozoy'lamula*

Chorus

*Ha! Usabuzza impundulo'umanqoba ngoba
mas'phuka umoya thina sifana nababulwa
70's ngaphushwa owang'beletha kuleyomnyaka
namblanje uyaguga
Kusafelw'amathe phansi uma uyingane maw'thunya
Futhi kumele unafice ekbona laphe maw'buya*

*Ya! Ebbhe! Sakhuba omashinini le eMashinini (Jo-
Burg) 76 bathunjwa
Man'usuku lweshumi ne'thupha mnyaka yonke
luyagujwa
Amabhuda maningi kakhulu amuka
Abanye bangabuya ngoba mblawumbe omunye
y'mpimpi zamuzwa
Phansi kwaP/ noF/W sanuka isisi
es'khalis'unyembezi
Iy'gayigayi zaqunga bhayi! Hhayi kwashuba
Amadela kufa ey'ntombini enogazi oCombrad
zibafuna baning'abasala axox'indab' amathuba
Umlaba wonke wabuka ey'ntilongweni iy'hoshwa
zaphuma
Zafunga zagamela ukuthi akusakuya ngabala
las'kumbha*

*Amalungelo eningi bathi vele ayabusa
Nok'chan'impela makungabhemi kuyaphuzza
Zonke zifun'ukuqatshulwa
kwel'intengo yempilo kodw'eyemali iyanyuka
Ongenaluth' uyantula bes'onotho eyaqumba
kucinani'y'qhwaga zithwali'y'khali ziyamphuca*

Khuzza baba! Khuzza!

Chorus

public is not knowing (does not know)
(Umphakathi awuk'boni
angiyiphath'eyokuzwa)
(Public not seeing not mentioning hearing)

But there's one answer if I start to question:
Handle things yourself so there could not be
many hands who want to get something
when it's time for dividends
When you play your part and I'll play mine;
no one can defeat that

No question, the answer is victory because
we submit to defeat if we lack passion, born
in the seventies and the woman who gave
birth to me is aging today.
When an adult sent you to get something
from the store you had to come back before
saliva dries from the floor.
So yes, we grew up, 1976 Mashinini (A
political activist in June 16)
some were kidnapped and others
disappeared, now the 16th is revered,
a lot of brothers & uncles left families
because an informant was listening.

Under the PW Botha and F/W De Klerk
regime, teargases in the streets,
die-hards not giving in, it got thick (got
worse)
when if you were a comrade you got liked
by chicks
Many got left behind; cemeteries can tell a
story
The whole world saw this and the prisoners
got freed
And they vowed judgement because of
one's skin
So now it is said that the majority's will
succeed; where if the youngest one doesn't
smoke, he drinks.
They all want to be kissed [Indulging in
sexual behaviour early]
The price of living increases, the not poor
are in need, the rich will bling. Where the
bullies envy they get their weapon and get it.
Intervene father intervene

Uqamba amanga by Miracle (a 'rock poem')

*uma ngimi lana
kugijima igazi, kublanya imizwa
(uqamba amanga)
kuzula umqondo
kugxuma imizimba
(uqamba amanga)
ngingwula vala
jengesicabha ebusika
(uqamba amanga x 3)
qaphela imiqondo
ngiyayikipita
(uqamba amanga)*

*mina
omqondo, mzimba zula
kbanda ligcwele amaphupha
nbhizyo yebhunguka
akusiyimi ukukhula
ngifunda ngiyokuthola
konke okuhle phambi
kokuthula
(uqamba amanga)
mina, msheli
wempilo khwapheni
weqiniso
mina nezam sindiza
singena mpiko
mbhloso ukubona
ubuso bukaThixo
oBawo nangunaye uSiphephelo
ngithi yena akalutho
uzifunela nje
unthandu noxolo
(uqamba amanga)*

as I stand here
my blood pulsates and my feelings go wild
(you are lying)
the mind wanders
and bodies jump
(you are lying)
I open, I close
swift motion like a door in winter
(you are lying x 3)
be warned,
I kidnap minds
(you are lying)

I of the wandering
mind and body

heart of a nomad
it is not I, it has to do with growing
up swearing that I shall receive all that is
beautiful before
it all is quiet
(you are lying)
I always propose to
life (to be my woman)
with the truth as my concubine
I and those like I
we fly, fly without wings
and our only mission is to
see God's face
O' Father here is Siphephelo
i say he is nothing
he wishes only
peace and love
(you are lying)

Interview questions

1. Where do you usually perform?
2. Would you consider yourself as part of a crew?
3. How many songs of yours have been published?
4. What would you consider the biggest show you ever performed at?
5. When did you start to rap yourself?
6. Who do you mainly rap for?
7. Have you always rapped in isiZulu?
8. When do you think hip hop started in KZN?
9. Where do you see the origin of rap as an oral form of music?
10. How did you get the idea to write lyrics?
11. Can you explain your choice of language?
12. Is it easier for you to write lyrics in isiZulu or in English?
13. How is your language choice reflected on the actual process of writing the lyrics?
14. Do you use idioms in your songs? If so, why?
15. Do you use the idioms in their common way? Why?
16. Talking about the song that you have chosen for the analysis within this research: Can you explain your song in detail?
17. Do you think your translation of the song captures the full meaning of it?
18. Have you translated your lyrics before?
19. Can you describe your approach to the translation?
20. One last question, do all your family members support your approach to hip hop music in your mother tongue?

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Lyrics:

Bhiz Isangoma Samagama: *Lo ongasenbla*

Manielisi: *Bhazumba*

Miracle: *Uqamba amanga*

Tsubasa: *Hamba uyobuza Unyoko*

Zakes: *Industry*

Interviews:

Bhiz Isangoma Samagama, Durban 15.11.2006

Manielisi, Durban 12.11.2006

Miracle, Durban 07.11.2006

Tsubasa, Durban 10.11.2006

Zakes, Durban 07.11.2006

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