

***Language, Identity and Ethnicity in
Post-Apartheid South Africa:***

The Umlazi Township Community

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by

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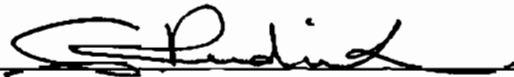
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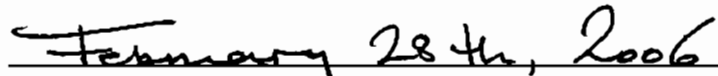
Declaration of Originality

I, STEPHANIE INGE RUDWICK, declare that except for the citations indicated in the text and such help as I have acknowledged, this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted for a degree to any other university.

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Date:





To Joshua

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This thesis explores how language, identity and ethnicity are intertwined in the post-apartheid South African state by focusing on one particular language group, i.e. the isiZulu-speaking community of the Umlazi township. Drawing from general theoretical foundations in the field and sociohistorical considerations, the study explores empirically the significance and saliency of isiZulu in the life experience and identity negotiations of Umlazi residents. By juxtaposing the role and functions of isiZulu with the economically hegemonic role of the English language, the social and cultural vitality of isiZulu is exposed. Using a triangulated approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative empirical methods, the study discusses subjective individual meanings and the involved emic categories, which guide the participants' understanding of who they are in relation to languages in the post-apartheid state. The study discusses how a sociolinguistic dichotomy between culturally and socially grounded identification processes and pragmatic and economically motivated ones manifests itself. The study reveals, inter alia, how language, i.e. isiZulu, is not only regarded as a cultural resource, but as a tool of identification that transcends the boundaries of race, class, religion and politics in a modern day township community. Furthermore, isiZulu-speakers' identities and ethnicities are first and foremost language-embedded, hence they are linguistically salient. It is argued that languages, i.e. isiZulu and English, are powerful devices that create boundaries, which consequently also divide the community. Finally, the researcher explores the implications of this study in the wider context of South Africa's sociolinguistic reality, and suggests that the promotion and development of isiZulu is indeed a worthwhile undertaking in the democratic state.

ABSTRACT (ISIZULU)

Lolucwaningo olusekelwe ngezizathu ezitholakele ngendlela enzulu lubhekene nokuthola ukuthi ulwimi, ubunjalo bomuntu, kanye nobuzwe bakhe, kuvela kanjani njengengxenywe yezinto eziwumphumela wobunjalo bezwe lase Mzansi Afrika emva kobandlululo. Lukwenza lokhu ngokuthi lugxile ohlobeni oluthile lwabantu emphakathini okhuluma isiZulu wase Lokishini laseMlazi. Ngokucaphuna ezisekelweni zezinzululwazi ezithile emkhakheni wezifundo zocwaningo ngemphakathi nemilando yazo, lolucwaningo luhlola indlela oluballuleke ngayo ulwimi lwesiZulu ezimpilweni zabantu baseLokishini laseMlazi, nasezehlakalweni ezimpilweni zabo emizameni yokwakheka kobunjalo babo. Uma sibheka indawo nemisebenzi edlalwa ulimi lwesiZulu kolunye uhlangothi, kanye namandla olwimi lweSingisi kwezomnotho ngakolunye uhlangothi, kuyabonakala ukuthi amandla nokubaluleka kolwimi lwesiZulu emasikweni emiPhakathini alusebenzisayo kubekeka esimweni esingagwinyisi mathe impela. Ngokusebenzisa uhlobo locwaningo olubheka elukucwaningayo ngezingxenyeni ezintathu, bese luxuba nendlela yokucwaninga esebenzisa amanani abantu nezimpendulo eziphuma kubo qobo, lolucwaningo luhlaziya izindlela abantu abasebenzisa imibono yabo ekwakhekeni kobunjalo babo obuxubene nezinga lomnotho abakulo ngalesosikhathi, konke okugcina sekuholele abantu abayingxenywe yalolucwaningo bazibone ngendlela ethile engumphumela wokuthi baphuma ezweni ekade linobandlululo iminyaka eminingi. Lolucwaningo luhlola ukuthi ukungqubuzana phakathi kolwimi losiko olwakha ubunjalo babantu olukhulunywa emphakathi, kolunye uhlangothi, nezinto eziphathekayo ezihlangene nezomnotho, ngakolunye uhlangothi, kuziveza kanjani. Lolucwaningo luyaveza, phakathi kwezinye izinto, ukuthi ulwimi, lapha sikhuluma ngesiZulu, alubhekwa kuphela njengento esebenzela isiko, kodwa njengethuluzi elisebenza ekwakhekeni kobunjalo bomuntu okudlulela ngale kwemingcele yobuhlanga, yezinga lomnotho umuntu nomuntu akulo, inkolo umuntu akuyo, kanye nezepolitiki emphakathini wasemalokishini wanamuhla. Okudlulele, ubunjalo balabo abakhuluma ulwimi lwesiZulu nobuzwe babo ahlukene nakancane nolwimi lwabo. Indlela ulwimi lwabo olusebenza ngayo ichaza bona ukuthi bangobani. Lolucwaningo luthola nokuthi kukhona abagcizelelayo ukuthi izilimi isiZulu neSingisi ayizindlela ezinamandla ezakha imingcele egcina isihlukanise umphakathi waselokishini laseMlazi. Okokugcina, umcwaningi kulolucwaningo uhlola imiphumela yalokhu emiphakathini nasezilimini eniNingizimu Afrika iyonkana, bese ebeka imibono ethi ukuthuthukiswa nokuvuselelwa kolwimi lwesiZulu empeleni izinto ezidingekayo nezibalulekile ezweni lentando yeningi.

Translated by Emmanuel Mfanafuthi Mgqwashu

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BSAE	Black South African English
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DACST	Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
CS	Code-Switching
DET	Department of Education and Training
DOE	Department of Education
HRC	Human Right's Commission
HSRC	Human Science and Research Council
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
L1	First language
L2	Second languages
LANGTAG	Language Plan Task Group
LP	Language Policy
MOI	Medium of Instruction
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NLP	National Language Project
NRF	National Research Foundation
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PRAESA	Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcast Corporation
SAE	South African English
ZE	Zulu English

IsiZulu glossary

Some frequently occurring isiZulu words in the text are listed below

<i>amadlozi</i>	Ancestors
<i>amasiko</i>	'Culture', 'Tradition'
<i>ilobolo</i>	Brideprice
<i>inyanga</i>	Herbalist / Diviner (pl. <i>izinyanga</i>)
<i>isangoma</i>	Diviner (pl. <i>izingoma</i>)
<i>ishebeen</i>	Unlicensed drinking places, located in private homes
<i>isibongo</i>	Praise poem
<i>isihlonipho</i>	Language of respect
<i>isiZulu</i>	Zulu language
<i>isiZulu esijulile</i>	'Deep' Zulu language
<i>ukuhlaba</i>	To slaughter (for traditional purposes)
<i>ukuhlonipha</i>	To respect
<i>ulimi</i>	Language
<i>umlungu</i>	White person (pl. <i>abelungu</i>)
<i>umZulu</i>	Zulu person (pl. <i>amaZulu</i>)

Introduction

South Africa celebrated its first ten years of democracy in 2004, and there is little doubt that – at least from a constitutional perspective – it represents a country that offers freedom and democratic rights to everyone. The 1996 Constitution provides, among many democratic rights, for the linguistic and cultural rights of every citizen and is widely regarded as one of the most advanced and liberal in the world. It furthermore promises to develop ‘previously disadvantaged’ languages and to promote multilingualism as an asset in the country. It is, hence, not only a warranty for pluralism, but also an encouraging advocacy of multilingualism and a plea for ‘unity in diversity’.

If one was to judge from how the local media, in particular soap operas and reality shows, represent the multilingual South African society, it appears as if linguistic and cultural barriers within communities are diminishing and South African people make up one ‘happy multilingual and multicultural society’. The reality, specifically the sociolinguistic reality, however, is very different. Language remains a highly contested issue in many sectors of the ‘New South Africa’. In fact, the ‘Language-question’ increasingly resurfaces in public discussion forums, most notably during conferences that take place in the spirit of ‘African scholarship’, the definition of which is beyond the interest of this study. The frequent practice of a multilingual address among public speakers signals language awareness, although one must admit that practices of this kind are little more than tokenism.

Generally in South Africa, it is the Afrikaans community that has traditionally been referred to when language is pointed out as the foremost element of ethnic identity¹. Similarly, however, in KwaZulu-Natal most isiZulu L1-speakers appear to have a definite and indeed refined sense of the significance of their mother

¹ Although this thesis uses the term *identity* in singular form, this does not entail a one-dimensional approach to the concept. Identity is a multifaceted, multidimensional and flexible construct, as will be seen in the theoretical foundations of this work.

tongue as a social and cultural resource. This observation provides the basic hypothesis underlying this work and will be critically explored in this thesis.

The South African transformation, admittedly, shows very little evidence with regard to the practical implementation of language related matters. Consequently, there exists a wide and diverse platform of symbolism, lip service and paradoxical behaviour regarding commitments to the promotion and development of the indigenous African languages. Virtually all comments in favour of African language development put forward in academic discourse are expressed in the medium of English. This prevailing paradox, which stresses the importance of indigenous African languages on the one hand, and yields to the English hegemony on the other, poses one of the greatest challenges for Black society in the post-apartheid state. In this study I am not interested in language policy and planning as such, but more in the effects the eleven-official language policy may have for the individual at a grassroots' level. The focus of this work lies in the language practices, attitudes and choices and – more specifically – the implications they have for both the individual and the South African society in general.

Thus, I examine the implications of language(s), in particular isiZulu and English, with regard to how people, i.e. isiZulu L1-speakers in a township environment, perceive themselves and who they are within the community. Their notion of identity, and more specifically ethnic identity, in relation to language(s) in their life is to be explored. It is an investigation that deals with sociolinguistic dynamics at a grassroots' level by eliciting 'common' people's views and perceptions in a KwaZulu-Natal township environment. Overall, I provide an analysis of the 'lived reality' in a particular South African community through a combined approach of an outsider's perspective and an emic² attempt to holistically understand the 'internal truths', ie the insider knowledge of the community.

² The term originally derived from the linguist Pike who drew the distinction between 'phonetic' and 'phonemic' accounts of language (Seymour-Smith 1986: 92). The term emic as used in this study is employed in a linguistic-anthropological sense. Emic analysis stresses the importance of the subjective meanings shared by the language group to be studied and "their culturally specific model of experience" (ibid.).

Apartheid – as a discriminatory, oppressive and manipulating political system – ascribed and prescribed identities for people, whether they wanted them or not. It is partly for this reason that individuals today often have a very ‘restricted’ sense of their *ethnolinguistic* identity, an identity based on ethnic as well as linguistic criteria (in other words a combination of language and ethnicity). The latter, ‘ethnicity’ is a politically and emotionally loaded term, even more so in the South African context than from a global perspective. Ethnicity served as a means to justify segregation, functioned as a discriminatory political weapon during the apartheid years, and hence carries a ‘heavy’ political stigma today. It comes as no surprise then that the relationship between language and ethnic identity is also a ‘burdened’ one, in that the apartheid government ascribed it as inextricable. As a result, researchers speak of *ethnolinguistic* identities in the South African context, with little critical discussion of the adequacy of the term ‘*ethnolinguistic*’ itself.

One of the main purposes of this study is to question whether it remains apt and timely to employ the term *ethnic* and *linguistic* in conjunction. In other words, it shall be critically discussed whether it remains appropriate in the post-apartheid South African state to speak of ‘ethnolinguistic collectivities’. Hence, I examine the *ethnolinguistic* potential of identities in order to explore the relationship between language and ethnic identity within a particular section of the society. Although the focus lies on the relationship between the mother tongue and what is perceived as the ‘culture’ or ‘ethnicity’ of the people, the investigation also poses questions about the multifaceted linguistic potential from which an individual may draw to express his/her identity.

In addition, a central aim of this study is to discuss how identity, in particular ethnic identity, is expressed by and through language and to present a detailed account of the relationship between these variables within the context of a particular case study. In working with this topic in its complex manifestations, I juxtapose isiZulu and English influence in the construction of identities. I am not concerned with, as many recent South African Applied Linguistic studies are, providing the reader with recommendations with regard to the multilingual

development in the country, e.g. language planning and policy, mother tongue education, etc. I merely attempt to foster an understanding of the significance of language in general, and more specifically, to show to what extent isiZulu features in the social and cultural life of the selected South African township community in Umlazi.

Thus, one of the central questions guiding this research is, whether and how Umlazi isiZulu-speakers construct ethnic identity through their mother tongue and to what degree isiZulu represents the cornerstone of cultural and ethnic identity within the isiZulu-speaking community of Umlazi. My attempts to answer this and a few other questions resulted in an investigation that took into account sociohistorical factors and draws largely from findings based on an ethnographic account. While Zulu ethnicity, referred to here as ‘Zuluness’, has been discussed in a variety of contexts – most notably from a political perspective – little attention has thus far been paid to the issue of language. The present dissertation is, among other things, an effort to fill this gap and to explore the complex dynamics of identity construction with a focus on language. I intend to examine how people who refer to themselves as *umZulu* use linguistic resources in order to locate themselves within their multiple life spheres, i.e. in their professional, personal and social interactions. Accordingly, the approach to the concept of ethnicity is sociolinguistic in nature and the primary target remains language.

I have paid close attention to the warning voiced by Frueh (2003: 25) that “scholars who narrow their analysis to a single factor of identity often ignore in-group differences and reify actors as undifferentiated, solid things - an Afrikaner or the Zulu people or the South African nation”. Indeed, from a sociolinguistic perspective there are no undifferentiated and constant forces that could be referred to when speaking about the isiZulu-speaking community in South Africa. In contrast, there exists a diversity of dynamic, flexible and at times conflicting impulses driving the community within contemporary post-apartheid society. That ‘Zuluness’ exists, however, need not be questioned and while I am searching for the relevance of language in the construction of this identity, I am particularly

interested in what implications the findings of this study have for the vitality of isiZulu.

The interplay between language and ethnic identity brings intergroup boundaries to the foreground and unravels “potentially competing ethnicities” (Weinreich 2000: 31). Hence, different languages may be associated with different ethnicities. In light of South Africa’s multilingualism and the economic dominance of English, an investigation of this kind must also consider isiZulu L1-speakers’ position with regard to the English language. Disregarding its role would fail to acknowledge the multifaceted, flexible and hybrid character of contemporary South African society. Some isiZulu L1-speakers today may in fact identify more strongly with the English language than with their ‘original’ mother tongue, and the exploration of this and other dynamics form the foundation of this research.

While focusing on a particular case study, this thesis also investigates the social or ethnic status of isiZulu in a particular context of present-day KwaZulu-Natal and examines how ‘Zuluness’ is sociolinguistically constructed while following a rather apolitical perspective. This has only become feasible in recent years, as the high level of political violence between IFP and ANC affiliated isiZulu-speaking individuals and groups has quietened down. The politics of ‘Zuluness’ or Zulu ethnicity as a politicised concept cannot be a part of this work and has received adequate attention elsewhere (see, for instance, Maré 1991, 1992, 1995; Piper 1998). I would like to argue that a commitment to Zuluness transcends politics in present-day South Africa, as political affiliations are not as much at the foreground of ethnic affiliation as they once were (Dlamini 2001). More pertinent to the study at hand is the question of whether there exists ‘Zuluness’ without isiZulu, or to what extent people make use of isiZulu without ‘Zuluness’ attached. Some of the more pertinent questions include the following:

1. Do participants construct a link between their mother tongue (i.e. isiZulu), Zulu culture and who/what they are, i.e. their identity (ethnic or other)?
2. What role and function is attached and associated with the mother tongue, isiZulu? Do informants consciously promote the language and support the idea that isiZulu may be used in the higher domains of life (i.e. business, technology, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning)?

3. How do participants perceive English? To what extent do interviewees identify with the English language? To what extent do they regard English as a threat to their identity as *amaZulu*?

This thesis offers a contribution to the understanding of how language and ethnicity are intertwined in a community that constitutes the biggest single language group in South Africa. This topic is discussed in five chapters. The theoretical foundation of this dissertation is addressed and discussed in **Chapter 1**. Essential to the introduction of this chapter is the search for definitions of the main concepts. This is followed by a literature review that sheds light onto the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of the topic of 'Language, Identity and Ethnicity'. The last section of this chapter focuses on selected issues around the topic and critically explores isiZulu in the theoretical framework of *ethnolinguistic vitality*, as discussed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977). I conclude this chapter by proposing that there is no set of unified linguistic or social theory one could employ to examine the multiple facets of the complex relationship of language and identity and thus, an interdisciplinary approach is desirable and offered here.

South Africa and the isiZulu-speaking community, in particular, has a unique history and cannot easily be compared to other African countries, which makes sociohistorical considerations all the more a prerequisite for the understanding of this thesis. The sociohistorical background thus finds attention in **Chapter 2**, which provides the necessary foundational knowledge in order to make sense of the particular case study that follows. The first section deals with the historical language treatment and policies in South Africa and is followed by an account of the development of the hegemonic position of English. It further includes a brief overview of the historical development and emergence of ethnic consciousness among isiZulu-speakers in KwaZulu-Natal while paying particular attention to the role of language. As mentioned earlier, for the purpose of this work, I have largely ignored the saliency of political forces in the province. It was inevitable that I limit my perspective in order to do this particular topic justice and to decipher, in detail, the intriguing relation between isiZulu and Zuluness. To echo Marés' (1991: 2) words: "political mobilisation is not an essential aspect of ethnicity", hence ethnic

identity construction may well be investigated without the consideration of the political identities involved in the process. Consequently, the reader should keep in mind that the role of Zuluness as a political organ and mobilised version is peripheral in this study.

In **Chapter 3**, significant emphasis is placed on the issue of methodology as this investigation uses a rather complex methodological framework in contrast to the mainstream sociolinguistic study. Furthermore, and more immediately, I am arguing for a more qualitative methodological approach to the study of language in South Africa. Language, as an essential part of the social and cultural make-up of people, cannot adequately be examined without attempting to gain a more *emic* perspective into the life experience of its speakers. It is, therefore, the contribution of ethnography and the significance of participant observation that makes this study different from most previous studies in South African Sociolinguistics. It is hoped that future researchers may attempt to gain a more *emic* perspective of language-related dynamics in the indigenous African communities and not merely rely on data elicitation through questionnaires and interviews.

Chapter 4 presents both the analysis and the discussion of the data and ethnography. Due to the complex methodological framework outlined above, the analysis is variegated and allows discontinuities in the accounts of the participants. The questionnaires, due to their simplicity, allowed for only minimal level of interpretation as they took up a more census-orientated function in the methodology. Even so, the responses were extremely useful for further engagement, with some critical sociolinguistics issues relevant for the community. In the analysis of the interviews, I display a large number of participants' quotes, in order to make the respondents' perceptions more tangible. The last section, in which the knowledge gained through ethnography is analysed and presented, is divided into three selected life domains, namely a) the educational domain, b) the religious and traditional sphere, and c) the domestic and social settings. These different settings provide for diverse sociolinguistic dynamics as the significance of language(s) in ethnic identity construction varies from one domain to the next.

The final section of this chapter discusses an urban-mixed code referred to as *isiTsotsi* by Umlazi residents. This language variety is a common medium of communication among the township youths and offers a further means of identification for the younger generation, in particular. The last section of this chapter offers a self-reflective stance on the process of the empirical data collection.

Finally, in **Chapter 5**, I provide a final discussion of the isiZulu-Zuluness link in the sections and argue that Zulu ethnolinguistic identity deserves rethinking. The conclusion not only summarises the most pertinent findings and issues raised in this study, but also critically assesses what relevance and implications these findings have in the context of the wider South Africa's sociolinguistic reality, i.e. the question of isiZulu maintenance and South Africa's official commitment to multilingualism. Although this research is based on a particular case study, a large part of conclusions offered here are salient for isiZulu-speakers in KwaZulu-Natal townships in general.

1. Theoretical foundations

1.1. Phenomenological considerations

1.1.1. Introduction

The study of language and ethnic identity has been approached from various disciplines and there exists a vast amount of academic literature on the topic from a global perspective (see Fishman 1999). I opted to conduct this investigation within the field of macro-sociolinguistics, since in South Africa – in particular – most related disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology) hardly include language in their discussion of the topic of ethnic identity. The study of the social aspects of language(s) in the multilingual South African landscape remains a challenging and multifaceted task for sociolinguists and sociologists of language.

This opening chapter serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it acts as an introduction to and discussion of the major concepts employed in this work, and on the other, it provides the theoretical framework pertinent to this thesis. I begin by investigating the link between language and ethnic identity by first discussing three variables to which language is related in this context, i.e. language, culture and ethnicity. Fishman (1999) notes that “a thorough appreciation of the concept of the attachment of culture to languages... is required if we are to do our subject [language and ethnic identity] justice”. Accordingly, the three variables are explored and discussed on their own, and in relation to language, as the latter represents the central element. The aim of the first section is not only to give working definitions and to clarify the terms, but also to generally show how the respective concepts are connected and came to be studied in relation to one another. However, as the study of each of these respective variables (culture, identity, and ethnicity) is in itself extremely complex and encompasses a wide range of theoretical approaches, the discussion presented here is by no means exhaustive. I merely aim to create an understanding of how the core aspects of this research are dealt with in this study. While drawing on some of the work of

international scholars, the discussion of the concepts is clearly dominated by the South African discourse on the topic. In next section (1.2.) previously established paradigms are examined in more detail. The interdisciplinary and complex nature of the topic of 'Language and Ethnicity' does not allow, however, for a concise review of the many theoretical approaches. I instead focus on shedding light on the diversity of the language/ethnic identity links, both from a global and a South African-specific perspective, and provide a more detailed review of the considerations pertinent for this particular thesis.

Evidently, the critical exploration of language and identity in a bilingual or multilingual environment is related to a variety of sociolinguistic contact phenomena that need to be examined. First, I look at the significance of language in the creation and protection of ethnic boundaries because it plays a particularly salient role in the specific case investigated here. The function of language as an ethnic boundary influences how we perceive and position ourselves in life (Edwards 1985). Second, I examine how language attitudes and ethnic attitudes are related. In other words: to what extent is the dislike of a language coupled with a dislike of the people who speak the language? Furthermore, I am concerned with the question of whether it is the identity of an individual that influences his/her language attitudes, or whether the reverse is true, i.e. that one's linguistic behaviour marks one's identity. Third, I approach the educational domain and explore how linguistic identities are therein communicated and constructed. The role that the educational system plays in the relationship between language and identity, particularly in the South African context, cannot be denied. Much of the research data of this thesis was collected in secondary schools and other educational institutions, thus the language of learning debate constitutes a substantial part of this thesis, i.e. the questionnaire findings. In the forth section of this chapter, I examine the potential correlation between language shift and a shift in identity construction, and lastly I analyse the position of isiZulu in KwaZulu-Natal via the theoretical framework of Giles et al.'s (1977) *ethnolinguistic vitality*. Although located in sociolinguistics, this study is by nature interdisciplinary and it is, therefore, not surprising that it draws from a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches.

1.1.2. Language and culture

... the relationship of language and culture is an exceedingly complicated one: the language, which is spoken by one population, is a reflection of the total culture of the population. But one can also say that language is a part of culture. It is one of those many things, which make up a culture..." (Lévi-Strauss [orig. 1958] reprinted 2000: 402).

As one of the pioneers in anthropological linguistics, Sapir (1921) notes that different languages represent different social realities, which essentially captures a notion that many sociolinguists base their research paradigm on. In the last half of the past century, studies dealing with the social and cultural aspects of language have coalesced to create an academic discipline known as *sociolinguistics* or the *sociology of language*. I begin this chapter by referring to one of the problematic definitions that prevail in the field as it is fundamentally linked to the topic of language and identity: the distinction between language and dialect, which is so often referred to as being ambiguous (see Wardaugh 1992).

In the South African context, the term language, as distinct from dialect, is linguistically as well as socio-historically problematic, because what is presently regarded as different languages were initially different dialects belonging to bigger language clusters. Missionaries introduced linguistic and social boundaries between languages that were merely varieties of one larger language family. Herbert (1992), among others, notes that missionaries created orthographies for 'standard' varieties of languages that were, in fact, mutually intelligible.

Evidently, the missionaries were unaware that they in fact recorded sister dialects of much bigger dialect clusters (Msimang 1992: 4) and the different varieties were ultimately claimed to reflect the identity of a particular ethnic group³. What further entrenched the separate development of these varieties was the legislation of the apartheid government, which included the 'invention' of separate language

³ An 'ethnic group' is defined in the sense of Barth (1969) as a group, which

- is largely biologically self-perpetuating;
- shares fundamental cultural values, realised in overt unity in cultural forms;
- makes up a field of communication and interaction; and
- has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

committees for each of the nine indigenous African varieties. Msimang (ibid.) refers to this process as ‘linguistic balkanisation’, while Alexander (1997: 82) notes in more detail that

[...] even where it was possible in linguistic and political terms to allow the varieties of a particular language cluster or sub-group, such as the ‘Nguni’ group, to converge into a more embracing standard written form, they were systematically kept separate through lexical and other corpus-planning manoeuvres.

IsiZulu⁴, the one language on focus here, is in fact a variety of the Nguni language family and can only be considered a separate language variety since the 19th century. The Nguni language family also includes isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati, each with its own separate history and complex development, characterised by language contact with other languages, i.e. Khoisan, English and Afrikaans (Kamwangamalu 2001b: 374). According to Msimang (1992) it is unnecessary to treat isiXhosa as distinct from isiZulu, or siSwati as different from isiNdebele, as they could well be seen as a cluster of dialects. For this reason, it is no coincidence that there have been attempts (cf. Nhlapo 1944, Alexander 1989, 1992b) to suggest a possible harmonisation of the Nguni language cluster (the same accounts for the Sotho language family).

At the time (mid 20th century), however, when the unification of the orthographies could have still been a reality, the National Party (NP) under the leadership of Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd decided to enforce the divisive apartheid laws and created what came to be known as Bantustans or Homelands. Nonetheless, the debate on the possibilities of a Nguni and Sotho unification, remains a contested issue among scholars (see, for instance Brown 1992, Cluver 1992, Jenkins 1991, Louw 1991). Neville Alexander revived the topic of harmonisation or standardisation first in 1989 and suggested that for both the Sotho and the Nguni language clusters, a single written variety should be developed in order to create closer unity between the African communities. In the South African sociolinguistic literature the approach has been referred to as the *Nhlapo-Alexander proposal*. Linguists are

⁴ There exists a multitude of dialects and varieties of isiZulu spoken in South Africa (Nubian 1991 or Zungu 1995). To distinguish these, however, is beyond the scope of this work.

certainly reluctant to accept an undertaking in which seven language varieties in their own right would be reduced to two so-called 'standard' forms. The world's linguistic heritage is permanently decreasing as it is, and language engineering of this kind would harm the rich linguistic landscape of South Africa, even if it initially only had orthographic implications.

Although "harmonisation" would offer, from a practical perspective, an easier and more effective approach to the promotion of the indigenous African languages in the country, it has never found sufficient support for implementation. I argue that this is primarily due to the common and widespread belief that language and identity in South Africa are inextricably linked. Zodwana, for instance, expresses scepticism towards the idea of harmonisation as follows:

I do not wish to say that Neville's suggestion of standardising Nguni and Sotho would be a futile exercise. If it were possible, in fact, it would be an ideal option (...) It is common knowledge that language is not only a symbol of group identity, but also a weapon used to protect this identity (Zotwana 1989: 76).

In this regard, language is not only understood as an identity symbol, but also as the very means by which the boundary is maintained, hence a tool of protection. So, despite the "arbitrariness with which the standard languages were created" (Makoni 1996: 262) and the mutual intelligibility within Nguni and Sotho varieties, *harmonisation* seems to have little support. Considering the 'virulent reaction' African academics showed to Alexander's harmonisation proposal (Mesthrie 2002: 23) the cultural symbolism associated with the respective varieties seems alive and potent. In view of this, it only carries secondary value that *harmonisation* may offer an easier and more effective approach to the promotion of the indigenous African languages in the country. The exploration of the potential of isiZulu as a cultural symbol and identity marker, however, becomes even more pertinent and salient for investigation. Before I provide some theoretical underpinning of the approach to 'identity' as applied here, I briefly turn to the concept of 'culture' in the South African context in order to employ the link between 'language and culture' as the basis for the discussion of the concept of ethnolinguistic identity.

Culture

Culture, as one of the key concepts of anthropology and intercultural communication, has been defined in a variety of ways and the last thing I attempt to do is to re-invent the wheel.⁵ Most undergraduate textbooks in these disciplines start with a sentence similar to that of Williams (1983: 76) who notes that culture is, “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language”⁶. Most aptly, Rapport and Overing (2000) remark that the term [culture] is so highly complicated that we may have just as many definitions as individuals trying to define it.

Consensus among scholars about the definition of the term clearly does not exist and for the purpose of this study I am not so much pursuing *what culture is* but *how* I – or rather the participants of this study – *deal with culture* in the context of language. White (1947), one of the early anthropologists, points out the importance of language in the study of culture as it encompasses all symbolic behaviour. Accordingly, it is language, in particular, that allows for the transmission of ideas from one generation to the next. “To understand culture is to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language within material and institutional context” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 4). It is these ‘signifying practices’ of language that are highlighted by most sociolinguistic scholars when language is presented as a resource; a basic human right or a cultural symbol. As language is further approached as “the key to the heart of culture” (Edwards 1985: 15) it is widely seen as a symbol, a weapon, and the very medium by which particular cultural identification processes are expressed.

Essential within the context of this contemporary study is the understanding of culture as a flexible concept, much in the sense of Geertz’s (1977) notion of culture as constructed ‘webs of significance’. Hence, it is a “dynamic, changing process of signification whereby individuals and self-defined groups assign existential

⁵ As early as 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn list and survey nearly 300 definitions of the term ‘culture’ (Seymour-Smith 1986: 65).

⁶ Extensive anthropological debates occurred in the last decade which culminated in some scholars openly questioning the utility of culture as a concept. For further reading see Brightman (1995).

meaning” (Malan and Walker 1995: 265). Culture is not discussed as something that is cast in stone or homogenous but it is approached as a human trait that is progressive and permanently in flux. While acknowledging contemporary individuality, the sense of a shared culture may manifest itself in various different ways. Thornton (1988: 24) argued that culture itself should be understood as a resource and “while there are differences in the way people behave and think and live, this reflects their differing access to cultural resources, as well as their use of these resources to make statements to each other and about themselves”. Most contemporary discourse in sociolinguistics discusses culture as a resource and language(s) as potential parts of this resource. Yet, neither language(s), nor culture(s) are static but are rather regarded as something that is permanently negotiated. In other words, “we construct culture by picking and choosing items from the shelves of the past and the present” (Nagel 1994: 162).

The term ‘culture’ must therefore be understood as something in motion, ‘a verb’ rather than a ‘noun’ (Alexander 2002), indicating that we are dealing with a flexible and changeable phenomenon. First, individuals that are perceived as belonging to the same ‘cultural group’ may have very different perceptions of what constitutes their ‘culture’, and second, these perceptions may shift from context to context. “In any specific interaction, one finds only part of the group culture, and an individual carries basically a personal theory of the group culture, not necessarily a complete or static one” (Ferdman and Horenczyk 2000: 85).

Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that many people perceive their or other people’s ‘culture’ as something that is by no means mutable. Moreover, elders in an ethnic group, which is considered to have an ‘indigenous’ culture may not approve of cultural innovations of the younger generations and, in contrast speak of ‘cultural loss’ due to western influence. With reference to the mother-tongue, the loss of the language is frequently perceived as a cultural loss as well (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000d).

South Africa (as a multilingual and multicultural country), where the culture of African, Asian and European people coexists, overlaps and inter-mingles, is a prime example for cultural hybridity. Despite the extensive cultural contact and increased 'westernisation', many ethnic groups in South Africa distinguish themselves and are distinguished by others through so-called 'cultural' criteria. This happens despite recent attempts in South Africa to look beyond cultural differences and to embrace a unified 'new' South Africa.⁷

Generally speaking, Afrikaner culture differs to a great extent from the culture of those among the white population who regard themselves to be of British stock. Similarly, Zulu people distinguish their culture from the culture of Xhosa or Sotho people. Although in some cases the cultural differences may appear minute and insignificant and hard to grasp for outsiders, their existence cannot be denied. According to Hall (1997: 7), people can only be considered as belonging to the same culture if "they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other". However, despite increasing intercultural acceptance, mutual intercultural 'understanding' within the South African society is still in its infancy.⁸

South African society remains, albeit unofficially, rigidly divided and stratified, and individual efforts to cross these lines are scarce. In praxis, the South African society is still largely segregated and the dealing with the 'other culture' often does not go beyond notions of tolerance and acceptance. Ironically, people in South Africa often seem to justify lack of understanding regarding particular events and behaviours with the notion of 'cultural differences'. What these cultural differences really are, however, remains vague and hence, the term 'culture' appears more like a token or label rather than anything of concrete significance.

⁷ It has been argued that in South African 'culture' is "a tinderbox that we seem to nervously circumnavigate, despite, or perhaps because of the huge political and emotional investment attached to it" (Clark 2003: 3).

⁸ See the pioneering textbook on intercultural and cross-cultural communication in South Africa by Kashula and Anthonissen (1995).

Fishman (1999: 445) points out that in many areas of life “the language *is* the culture”. The South African Constitution (although merely on paper as it seems) provides for linguistic and cultural pluralism of the state and promotes the linguistic and cultural freedom of all ethnolinguistic groups. Against this background it is appropriate and timely to investigate how young South Africans feel about the link between language and culture and what categories they choose for themselves in the post-apartheid state.

One of the central questions to be answered in this thesis is how far language is perceived as an intrinsic part of the culture and ethnic belonging by the ethnolinguistic group to be studied. Several members of the African intelligentsia have based their struggle for mental liberation from the colonial heritage on an approach based on the language-culture link. Ngugi wa Thiongo, (1986: 13), for instance, stresses the character of language as a carrier of culture and regards the two variables [language and culture] as inseparable on the basis of a reciprocal relationship. Language in this respect has three important aspects. The first implies that “language as culture is a product of the history which it in turn reflects” (Ngugi 1986: 15). Accordingly, the history of a sub-group – for instance, whether people were suppressed or empowered – would be reflected by their language as well as by the culture, which then would either have an inferior or a superior social and political status in the society. Indeed, the South African case shows evidence of this paradigm as the historical oppression of the indigenous African languages and cultures was and still is reflected in extremely low social and economic status of the languages. The second aspect of language as a carrier of culture is what Ngugi describes as:

An image-forming agent in the mind of a child. Our whole conception of ourselves as a people, individually and collectively, is based on those pictures and images, which may or may not correctly correspond to the actual reality of the struggles with nature and nurture, which produced them in the first place... Language as culture is thus mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature. Language is mediating in my very being (1986: 15).

Clearly, Ngugi expresses the functions that a language has in the construction of ourselves or, in other words, in the construction of identity. He particularly stresses the function of language, i.e. the mother tongue in creating harmony in an individual's life. Ngugi clearly insists, in what is essentially his third argument, that it is particularly the mother tongue and home language through which positive reality is transmitted (*ibid.*).⁹

Language, as approached by Ngugi (1986, 1993), is first and most importantly a cultural phenomenon, which stands in a mutual relationship to the society. To speak one's home language is regarded by most people in this world as the most intimate form of communication. This, however, does not imply a primordial perspective on the subject, as language is by no means approached as something constant, but rather as a dynamic and potentially changeable phenomenon in the social world. Fishman, Gertner, Lowy and Milan (1985: xi), for instance, suggest that language is not only a *part* of culture, but also that "every language provides an *index* for the culture with which it is most intimately associated, and every language becomes *symbolic* of the culture with which it is most intimately associated". If one wants to gain deeper understanding of the processes involved in the language-culture link, one must evaluate these three relationships in terms of their saliency in a particular environment. People frequently employ the concept 'culture' either to ally themselves with others, or to distance themselves, and language is further employed as *the* means in the creation of this dichotomy. Culture is consequently necessarily ambiguous, as it rests on subjective meanings and individual perceptions.

In the context of the theoretical reasoning on the link between language and culture, one could refer to a variety of ancient sources that deal with this relationship. But it is generally the writings of the German Romanticists that are most frequently referred to. In the 18th century, the German scholar Wilhelm von

⁹ Ngugi has extensively published on the issue of the domineering function of the English language on the African mind "...the most coveted place in the pyramid and in the system was only available to holders of an English-language credit card. English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial élitedom" (Ngugi 1986: 115). In the late 1970s, Ngugi rejected English as a medium of expression in his writing and started to publish in Gikuyu, his mother tongue.

Humboldt (1767-1835) recognised a correlation between language and culture in the context of the concept of '*Weltansicht*' [worldview].¹⁰ It is often argued, not only in popular but also in academic discourse, that it is in particular the mother tongue language that is most immediately experienced, treasured, praised and defended against linguistic subordination of any kind. Language is and always has been an arena of struggle among individuals and entire communities.

While outlining how language and culture came to be studied in relation to each other the *Sapir-Whorf* or preferably *Whorfian Hypothesis*¹¹ deserves mentioning, as the writings of Whorf were the first formulation that adequately captured important notions on the relationship between language, culture and perhaps more importantly the perception of reality. Essentially, the hypothesis entails two main premises; that of *linguistic relativity* (W_1) and *linguistic determinism* (W_2), and claims that there is a mutually constitutive relationship between a group's language, their culture and their worldview. In its most compelling form the hypothesis maintains that people who use languages with different grammars hold a different view of the world and thus perceive the world differently (for more detail see, Fishman et al. 1985; Hoijer 1954; Lucy 1992a, b; Whorf 1956a, b, c). The hypothesis has been explored from various perspectives, most notably within the paradigms of cognitive- and psycholinguistics. Despite the abovementioned research conducted in the field, the validity of the thesis is still under debate.¹²

Linguistic determinism, as the strong version of the hypothesis has been widely discredited by linguists today (cf. Weinstein 1983; Fishman et al. 1985; Gumperz and Levinson 1996)¹³. Most respected scientists today favour the 'weak version' of

¹⁰ For a detailed summary of Humboldt's conceptualisation of '*Weltansicht*' cf. Heeschen (1977)

¹¹ The description Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is not entirely correct, as in fact it was only Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) who formulated the deterministic theory that is generally referred to as Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Whorf was, however, a student of Edward Sapir (1884-1939) from whom he received most of his inspiration. Sapir himself was heavily influenced by the pioneering work of the renowned anthropologist Franz Boas (Salzmann 1998:42).

¹² For early criticisms see Berlin and Kay (1969); for a more recent critique, see Gumperz and Levinson (1996).

¹³ Weinstein (1983: 28), for instance, who strongly disagrees with the work of Sapir and Whorf, concludes "little is left of the intellectual case for the position that language structure and words limit choice, that choice of form and language is not possible because each mother tongue determines perceptions of the universe".

the Whorfian hypothesis in the context of cultural studies, which is subsumed below in a simplified manner (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000c: 123)¹⁴:

1. Language reflects the world in which people live, in their vocabularies, the lexical meanings of many of their words, and even in the socio-cultural meanings of the sounds, structures, and varieties of a language;
2. Our use of a language also reflects the world in which we live, in the ways in which people from different cultures greet one another, and in the rules that govern who may talk to whom, when and about what;
3. Languages can develop into symbols of their associated cultural worlds and identities; and
4. Cultural changes lead to language change (for example, technological changes have brought about the addition of new terms and words, as happened when computers became a feature of modern societies); this includes changes in the meaning of words, as in the case of words such as *nation*, *tribe*, *people*, *democracy*, etc.

In a sociolinguistic framework these four essential premises are more or less accepted. Fishman et al. (1985) critically explore the hypothesis from a sociolinguistic perspective and took the examination a step further than previous researchers by suggesting that scholars should acknowledge a third premise of the Whorfian paradigm (W_3). This W_3 is linked to “pluralistic language policies, to cultural democracy and language maintenance efforts, to enrichment bilingual education, and to sympathy and assistance for the Third World in efforts to attain pan-human sanity and salvation” (Fishman et al. 1985: 482).¹⁵ Among these scholars Whorf together with Herder are regarded as advocates of the enrichment of ethnolinguistic diversity and opponents of linguistic and cultural imperialism.

It is the third and fourth premise above that form the wider paradigms to be investigated in this case study. In particular I investigate to what extent isiZulu, the language which is focused on here, is a symbol of its associated cultural world and identities. Furthermore, I am interested in how linguistic and cultural changes impact on the way people perceive themselves. It has been noted that people in contemporary South Africa are reluctant to explicitly draw a link between

¹⁴ I hereby apologise to those familiar with the details of research and the debate around the hypothesis, as they may argue that it is inadequate to reduce the explanation of such a complex theoretical phenomena to four short paragraphs.

¹⁵ According to Coetzee-Van Rooy (2000) W_3 relates to language-identity research as language is clearly seen as a resource and a basic human right.

language, culture and ethnic identity in public discourse (Niedrig 1999). In this thesis, I examine whether isiZulu speakers perceive their mother tongue as a major part of their 'self' concept, and how far language(s) (isiZulu and English) could be regarded as symbol(s) of an associated culture concept. IsiZulu, indeed, offers various examples for the reflection of Zulu culture. The respect for elders [*ukuhlonipha*], for instance, which is clearly one of the core elements of Zulu culture, includes a specific language variety, known as *isihlonipho*. This linguistic practice, although no longer used as widely in urban areas, suggests significance of respect for authority and seniority among isiZulu-speakers (see i.e. Zungu 1985 and Dowling 1988 and Finlayson 1995 with regard to isiXhosa).¹⁶

It remains to be seen, however, whether isiZulu is perceived as a core cultural symbol in the community investigated. Although this work does not deal with a causal relationship between language and culture in the Whorfian sense, the approach acknowledges that language, any language, has the potential to develop into a strong cultural and ethnic symbol. My personal hypothesis revolves around the assumption that isiZulu is perceived as a cultural resource and represents a factor that is not only treasured significantly in the community, but one that also transcends boundaries created by other cultural elements. The central question deals with how far isiZulu contributes to the construction of a 'Zulu identity', 'Zuluness' or to a less differentiated 'Africanness' in juxtaposing it with the more dominant language, English.

Several scholars working in the Southern African context have explicitly argued that language is a 'cultural resource' that needs to be promoted and protected (Herriman and Burnaby 1996: 10; Matsela 1995: 48, Webb 1994: 255). Furthermore, in recent years, increasing numbers of black academics have taken up the challenge to research the possibilities and the potential inherent in African indigenous languages. The recent volume *Black Linguistics*, edited by Makoni et al. (2003) gives testimony to this development.

Essentially, it is argued that

¹⁶ The issue of *isiHlonipho* will receive further attention in Chapter 4.4.

The early work on African languages was, by and large, carried out by white missionaries and linguists with limited expertise in the languages they were describing and inventing as part of empire building. Because of the less than ideal conditions under which some of the work on Black Languages began, it is logical to raise questions about the current nature of the conditions under which knowledge of these languages is being produced (Makoni et al 2003:9).

Hence, the significance of African languages in the lives of educated African language speakers has increasingly been given attention. Thus far the research focuses on the role of African languages as significant conveyors and transmitters of knowledge, in particular in education (Alexander 2004, Alidou 2003, Bamgbose 1991, Heugh 2000a; 2002, Madiba 2004, Ndimande 2004, Roy-Campbell 2003, to mention only a few).

Nationalistic Africans, it is argued, have often seen the causal relationship between language, culture and cognition as an important dimension in the quest for mental liberation in Africa (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 53).¹⁷ Ngugi writes “the domination of the people’s language by the language of the colonised nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised” (1986: 16). Reasoning in this vein has, either implicitly or explicitly, built the basis of many socio- and ethnolinguistic debates in Africa and has been used mainly for the promotion of the indigenous African languages. However, L.S. Senghor, a leading African intellectual, employed an interpretation of the theoretical premise of *linguistic relativity* for quite a contrary purpose: According to Weinstein (1983: 31), Senghor argued that French had a valuable sense of method and will of clarity, which the African languages apparently lack. He further claimed that Africans think differently when using their mother tongues and cannot transform their mindsets into that of Europeans.

¹⁷ Some African nationalists recognise a cause and effect relationship between the promotion of the African languages and decolonisation. In general, however, this approach has found little support in language policies in Africa and has been criticised for making “a fetish of language, endowing it with the power of colonisation or liberation in a manner that is ahistorical, static and undialectical” (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 55).

This clearly shows that a deterministic view of the relationship between language and culture must be viewed critically. *Linguistic determinism*, which is regarded as a strict and rigid paradigm, can foster narrow-mindedness and ignore the complexity inherent in the relationship between language, culture and thought. In this spirit, Weinstein (1983: 32) warns that “ideas of ‘linguistic relativity’, whether based on ethnic or class varieties of language, cannot be proven; they seem contradictory and possibly dangerous, since they may be manipulated to promote race or class prejudice and discrimination”.

Unfortunately, Whorf’s work has been widely misinterpreted and misused to spread some rather dubious thoughts. A good example of this is what Pullum (1991) has termed the ‘Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax’.¹⁸ It is indeed an “ironic twist”, as Pinker (1994: 64) remarks that “the original efforts to demonstrate that the so-called ‘primitive cultures’ had as complex linguistic systems as European ones was widely misinterpreted and employed to treat ‘other cultures’ psychologies as weird and exotic compared to our own”. It is crucial for this thesis, that the ambiguity attached to sociolinguistic interpretations of the *Whorfian paradigm* is highlighted. This is because it gains particular relevance in South Africa due to the fact that the majority of the draconian legacies of the Afrikaner Nationalist Government were – to some extent – related to the ideas that frame interpretations based on, or at least linked to, *linguistic determinism*.

During the discriminatory apartheid system of Bantu Education the maintenance of languages and cultures were propagated and the relationship between these two variables claimed to be inextricably linked. Hence, the theoretical framework was implicitly misused in order to justify a racist strategy. In order to succeed in the South African corporate world, proficiency in English and/or Afrikaans was [and still is] a prerequisite. Despite this fact, the speakers of the indigenous African languages were, in the past, forced to use their mother tongue as a medium of instruction up to Grade 8. By employing this strategy and a static view of the

¹⁸ Unlike many sources claimed in the past, the Yupik and Inuit-Inupiaq s have no more words for snow than English speakers, for instance, who live in an environment in which snow plays a significant role (for more detail, see Pinker 1994: 64).

involved in both its reflexive and its formative modalities” (Alexander 2003: 11) is critically evaluated. It remains to be seen whether ten years after the first democratic elections, individuals in the isiZulu-speaking community turn away from apartheid-based descriptions, or whether they naturally affiliate with particular *ethnolinguistic* criteria and see language, culture and identity as inseparable. If the latter is the case, Kenneh’s (1998: 36) assertion that “both language and culture are the blueprints of identity and value for a nation or a people” gains relevance.

1.1.3. Identity

Whenever one of the central themes of a study is *identity*, it is a crucial undertaking to clarify which of the many concepts of identity is being researched and how it is approached and understood. Although I am primarily concerned with identities that are language-embedded, a working definition of the ‘identity complex’ itself must be established. In recent years the one-dimensional concept of ‘identity’ underwent a crisis as post-modern and post-structuralist thought declared ‘identity’ as heterogenous concept. Certainly, every individual identifies her/himself according to various categories in every day life. Furthermore, these categories are context-dependent and consist of a multitude of dimensions, such as, linguistic, political, social, cultural, ethnic, religious and geographic categories. Every individual portrays not only one, but a whole range of images based on multiple categories. Particularly at a time of rapid political and social change, as has been the case in South Africa, the question of ‘identities’ becomes rather complex and complicated.

Due to the fact that the study of ‘identities’ involves such a wide range of discourse possibilities, it is important to clearly delineate the limitations of this work. As this thesis is primarily interested in linguistically constructed identities, in particular ethnic identities, it is beyond the scope of this work to discuss, in depth, the multifaceted concept of identity by itself. Thus, I merely problematise the discourse on identity briefly and summarise some major approaches to the concept.

Scholars of several disciplines within the field of Human Sciences have approached the study of identity from their respective disciplines. Approaches overlap, contradict and complement each other to various degrees, but it is clear that the post-modern and post-structural perspectives dominate scholarly preference today. In post-modern terms, identity is conceptualised as fluid. This means that there is no single factor that constructs and reconstructs identity, but rather multiple and inter-related factors.

Furthermore, “identity is endlessly created anew” (Tabouret-Keller 1997: 316) because due to “shifting national and regional boundaries” we create “hybrid social and cultural identities” (Luke 1995: 83). Hence, from the post-structuralist perspective, ‘identities’ are always constructed and reconstructed and consequently at no time pre-existing. Every individual has a variety of choices and alternatives to pick from in the process of identity construction, hence, “people are composed of not one, but several, sometimes contradictory identities, enabling subjects to assume a variety of shifting identities at different times and places” (Barker and Galasinski 2001: 125). Thus, identity formulation in this sense is permanently created anew and presents a transformation process itself.

Introducing the concept of identity must entail a distinction between a personal and individual level of identity on the one hand, and identity construction in a social world, (social/collective identity²³) on the other. The social environment and societal forces that come into play in the process of constructing identity have been highlighted most notably in the research efforts of Henry Tajfel (1978) and his associates. Sebba and Wootton (1998: 284) point out that “the linguistic medium by means of which social identities are constructed may itself be a part of the identity, but we cannot assume a fixed relationship between a social identity and the language of the utterance that evokes (or invokes) it”.

²³ There exists a number of theories of social identity construction, but one of the earliest ones, which assigned a crucial role to language, is the tradition of the ‘Symbolic Interactionism’. Herbert Mead (1934) was one of the first scholars to explicitly emphasise the saliency of language in the formation of the social self. According to his theory the formation of the social self is created through agreeing with the symbols of the group to which someone belongs, particularly linguistic symbols.

Therefore, despite the fact that language clearly plays a significant role in identity construction, it may not be an important category of identification for a particular individual. Bloom (1998: xii) calls it the “the gravest contradiction in human life” that even though “we live in a social order, we remain individuals and although we are idiosyncratic ‘selves’, we live embedded in many collectivities”. Individual and social identity, however, often complement each other. A linguistic identity is automatically social because language is the most common medium used in social interaction. But, every individual has his/her own ideosyncratic and idiolectal way of expressing her/himself. However, theories of intercultural communication studies suggest that individuals in African societies have a more collective sense of who they are, and one’s personal identity is predicated upon the relationship to the immediate community. In the words of the Umlazi artist Isaac Nkosinathi Khanyile: “I see myself as part of the community from which I come. It is my community that connects me with the past, my present and my future. Without this my existence would carry no meaning. This is what gives me identity [...]” (MacKenny n.d.).

Tabouret-Keller (1997) argues that it is language that conciliates individual and collective identity due to the fact that language presents not only the very means of connecting the two concepts, but also that of expressing them. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) further introduce the concept of linguistic behaviour as a series of *acts of identity* that provides for the personal identity on the one hand and the search for social roles on the other.²⁴ It is clear that with regard to language the idiosyncratic and idiolectal feature of identity and the collective level of identification often correspond; indeed, the former cannot exist without the latter.

As mentioned above, language functions as a central mediator in the process of socialisation and thus represents a symbol of collective identity on the one hand and a marker of an individual identity on the other (Bartholy 1992, Tabouret-Keller

²⁴ The work of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller has found widespread recognition up until recently among scholars drawing on the framework of speech acts as an act of protection of one’s identity (e.g. Kamwangamalu 1992; Slabbert and Finlayson 2000). Parts of the general theory on language in relation to ethnicity formulated by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) can be usefully employed for investigating the South African context as the abovementioned scholars have shown.

1997). Individuals construct their own unique personal identity in a process of differentiation to other people and this differentiation is often expressed by and through language. The establishment of linguistic boundaries is a common characteristic in multilingual states and may entail complex and multifaceted strands of identity constructions during the course of one conversation. Language is crucial for the development of the self and is both a symbol and a means to express how we perceive ourselves in the world. A conversation between two isiZulu mother-tongue speakers, for instance, may start out in English but switch to isiZulu during the conversation. However, bilingual and multilingual communication patterns are not always based on concrete motives and necessarily produce a specific identity. The linguistic choices that individuals make in a multilingual environment are not necessarily always conscious.

As rational human beings we individually choose which language(s) we allow to play a role in the construction of our identities. Newly acquired languages can develop into symbols of additional identities. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2003) argue for a new theoretical approach to the negotiation of identities in multilingual settings by merging social constructionist and post-structural thinking. Central to this is Bourdieu's (1991) model of symbolic domination, Heller's (1988) pioneering ethnographic accounts, and approaches that foreground the significance of power relations. Essentially, the scholars have four main concerns.

- 1) Linguistic and identity options are limited within particular sociohistoric contexts, even though continuously contested and reinvented.
- 2) Diverse identity options and their links to different language varieties are valued differently and that sometimes it is these links, rather than the options *per se* that are contested and subverted.
- 3) Some identity options may be negotiable, while others are either imposed (and thus non-negotiable) or assumed (and thus not negotiated).
- 4) Individuals are agentive beings who are constantly in search of new social and linguistic resources, which allow them to resist identities that position them in undesirable ways; produce new identities; and assign alternative meanings to the links between identities and linguistic varieties (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003: 27).

These four concepts clearly highlight the complexity of language-identity relationships in multilingual settings. In Africa, for instance, the mother tongue is generally used as a marker of ethnic belonging, while English counts among black people as an indicator of an educated status and identity (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000c). Accordingly, bilingual and multilingual speakers who engage in code-switching also switch identities while they do so. This occurs sometimes subconsciously, other times, however, the speaker has a specific goal in mind²⁵. An isiZulu-speaker may, for instance, choose to speak English in a particular situation in order to demonstrate his/her identity as an educated South African. In another situation, however, s/he may consciously choose to speak isiZulu in order to ‘connect’ with people.²⁶

In the context of the frequent occurrence of code-switching in South Africa, Finlayson and Slabbert (1997) conclude that meeting the conversation partner half-way with language’ (in an inter-ethnic encounter) encompasses an awareness of a personal linguistic identity. It is pointed out in this context, however, that isiZulu speakers – particularly males – are generally very reluctant to accommodate other African languages (ibid.). In a different sociolinguistic context, that of Hebrew and an Israeli identity, it has been argued that “choosing Hebrew meant rejecting other languages” (Spolsky 1996: 188). Applying this to isiZulu-speakers, it would mean that if isiZulu-speakers are reluctant to learn/speak an African language other than isiZulu, they may subconsciously discard other African languages.

In inter-ethnic communication isiZulu mother tongue-speakers have often been observed to be disinclined to accommodate their conversation partner.

Zulu speakers and their non-Zulu addressees often do not share the hierarchy of saliency. Zulu speakers are perceived to foreground ethnic identity in inter-ethnic communication, whereas the rest of society would specifically refrain from doing so (Finlayson and Slabbert 1997: 418).

²⁵ Myers-Scotton’s (1993a) theoretical model which is based on the distinction between ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ choice has received considerable attention in this context.

²⁶ For more detail on English-isiZulu code-switching, see Ramsay-Brijball (2002, 2004).

The authors further question, “If speakers consistently foreground the index of ethnic identity, as Zulu speakers are said to do, are they acting against societal norms or merely affirming their own norms?” (Finlayson and Slabbert 1997: 416)²⁷ An answer to this question is, of course, not easy to find. Suffice it to say at this point that many isiZulu speakers appear to make substantial use of Gumperz’s (1982) ‘we-code’ as a boundary marker between themselves and the speakers of other languages.²⁸ African immigrants from other countries who reside in KwaZulu-Natal sometimes experience exclusion based on language due to the fact that they are not proficient in isiZulu.

The role the mother tongue plays *vis-à-vis* an additional language in the construction of our identities, remains the focus in this work and shall be approached from a variety of angles. I am interested, *inter alia*, in finding out, under which circumstances individuals choose not to speak their mother tongue and why they choose another language, i.e. English as a medium of expression under specific circumstances. Coulmas (1997) argues that no one is imprisoned by his/her mother tongue but has a choice in which language plays which role in his/her life. He clearly argues against a primordial understanding of language and approaches language behaviour in general as a ‘matter of choice’.²⁹

In this context, Coulmas (1997) refers to prominent writers, such as, Vladimir Nabakov, Samuel Beckett or Chinua Achebe and stresses that their work has proven that it is not *only* the mother tongue which is suited to express the innermost, deepest thoughts. There is no doubt that this statement holds some truth, otherwise functional bilinguals would be a sociolinguistic impossibility.

²⁷ It is mentioned further that, “when foregrounding Zulu ethnic identity became associated with being a member of the Inkatha Freedom Party, i.e. when it became politicised, Zulu speakers started being more accommodating and less inclined to foreground their ethnic identity” (Finlayson and Slabbert 1997: 416).

²⁸ The ‘we-code’ is understood in terms of solidarity among the participants of a conversation. When the ‘we-code’ is chosen people demonstrate their membership of the group who uses this particular code. Other languages are ‘they’-varieties and only appropriate for out-group communication.

²⁹ Similarly Williams (1979: 60) stresses that “language groups as status groups... are not of a permanent character but change because individuals are constantly calculating the advantages and costs likely to result from different courses of action”.

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Nonetheless the question arises whether writers such as those mentioned above, may not have preferred to write in their mother tongue, assuming they would have been able to reach an international audience. Coulmas (1997: 39) does acknowledge that choosing to speak one's mother tongue in a particular situation may indeed present an act of cultural identity. Drawing from the work of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), whose theory of linguistic acts as 'acts of identity' has been highly influential, Kamwangamalu remarks that, "through language individuals project their identity, their inner universe, and shape it accordingly to the behavioural patterns of the group with which they wish to identify" (1992: 35). Clearly, in a multilingual society, multilingual speakers have a repertoire of social identities, and depending on context and setting, individuals use a number of linguistic strategies to express their identities.

In Africa particularly, this linguistic repertoire is remarkably diverse and may include the ethnic mother tongue, an additional African *lingua franca*, mixed varieties and English or French. The extensive occurrence of language contact further triggers phenomena such as code-switching, mixed-codes, pidgins and creoles, which from one perspective or another are linked to issues of identity construction and negotiation. Two terms relating identities to language shall be on focus here, 'ethnic identity', which will be dealt with at some length below; and 'cultural identity', that will be defined at this point. Although some scholars, in particular sociolinguists (see Edwards 1985), do not distinguish between 'ethnic' and 'cultural' identity, I attempt to do so by suggesting a perhaps 'unconventional' distinction for the simple purpose of avoiding confusion in this work.

In searching for a definition of 'cultural identity' one comes across the work of Stuart Hall (1990), who argues that there are two different ways of thinking about the concept. First, 'cultural identity' is to be defined in terms of a shared culture and thus a collective 'one true self', which people with a common history and ancestry hold. This identity provides a stable, unchanging and continuous frame of reference and meaning. Second, there is a different view, one which is adopted in

this work, that recognises that this 'one true self' is concerned less with what 'what we really are' than with – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'.

'Cultural identity', in this sense, belongs to the future as much as to the past, undergoes transformation and is subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power (Hall 1990: 225). Thus, cultural identity is to be defined in the words of Stuart Hall as a reflection of:

the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history (Hall 1990: 223).

This definition of cultural identity is particularly relevant in the context of this work as it does not only point out the importance of a historical and cultural experience, but also highlights the ever-changing nature of these experiences. The question, however, that comes to mind, is whether this definition may not be equally applicable to the concept of 'ethnic identity' and ethnicity. This, indeed, is a point where we start to find ourselves on slippery ground. Making a clear-cut distinction between the understanding of 'cultural identity' as explained above, and the concept of 'ethnic identity' as explained later, is extremely difficult as definitions tend to overlap. Especially in sociolinguistics, there is little terminological differentiation in this regard; some scholars prefer the former term while others use the latter.³⁰

For practical reasons, I intend to employ the term 'cultural identity' only when I am speaking of a person's 'active involvement' in practices s/he perceives as 'culturally important'. Cultural identity in this sense may or may not be part of an individual's 'ethnic identity'. However, it always includes the individual in an active role in the society. Thus, some sort of 'doing' and 'behaving' characterises 'cultural identity' as employed in this study, whereas ethnic identity does not necessarily imply this, but may simply be used as a label that an individual

³⁰ With particular regard to the language debate in South Africa, the concept of 'cultural identity' is closely connected with 'ethnicity' (Niedrig 1999: 27) and researchers have increasingly dealt with 'cultural identity' as a research concept in the context of language in education research (i.e. Coetzee van Rooy 2000).

employs to identify him/herself without any particular action attached to it. Importantly, however, the features of cultural identity can vary across persons belonging to the same group (Ferdman and Horenczyk 2000: 86). For example, two people who consider themselves to be ethnically Zulu, may have equally strong feelings with regard to their Zuluness, but define it in two very different ways. The differing ascription of the respective cultural features are representative of their cultural identity, which plays a part in their ethnic identity, and hence, their Zuluness. At this point I must emphasise that ethnicity is approached from a sociolinguistic perspective, and focuses on language and language-related phenomena. Exploring ethnicity in South Africa is a contested issue due to the politicisation of the concept, as Perry observes:

the concept of ethnicity served as a cynical political weapon in the early stages of colonial divide-and-rule strategy, and later with the consonant Bantustan policy of the apartheid regime. Understandably, ethnicity bears the burden of considerable political freight (Perry 2004: 59).

It is for these reasons that many South Africans, in particular the educated elite, are opposed to ethnicity as a driving force of African society. Nevertheless there is no doubt that ethnic and ethnolinguistic ties exist among communities all over the South African social landscape. Zuluness, as a particular South African version of ethnicity is regarded as an ethnic identity based on a profound human experience that involves a variety of sources, language being only one. Zuluness, as argued here, may well be approached as a flexible construct with no specific political affiliation. In the words of Piper “indeed, the evidence that exists suggests that, while situationally expressed and variously understood, it [Zuluness] remains a commonly embraced and meaningful identity among ANC and IFP supporter alike” (Piper 1998: 259). Having established this understanding, it is now appropriate to explore the concept of ethnicity in more detail.

1.1.4. Ethnic identity and ethnicity

Despite decades of extensive research, there still exists confusion about the concepts of ethnic identity and ethnicity, and many scholars who employ the terms do not even bother to explain its meaning³¹. The fact that many studies deal with ethnic identity and ethnicity as given concepts and provide no explicit definition of how the term is used does certainly not contribute to clarification. The following section is intended to shed light on this rather hazy situation, while I aim to explain how the concept of ethnic identity is approached in this work from a sociolinguistic perspective.³²

Ethnicity remains a slippery concept particularly in the African context, where the term has a troublesome history with regard to the fact that it was mistakenly employed in public discourse as a synonym of 'tribalism' and other controversial terms in order to explain conflict phenomena. Schrire, for instance, notes that "ethnicity, like most social struggles, is tied to its pay-offs and their continuance over time. These vary according to the level at which conflict occurs" (Schrire 1980: 8). I want to argue, however, that the construction and negotiation of ethnicity, especially on the basis of linguistic behaviour, does not necessarily take place in conflict situations. Ethnic identity is simply one of the many identities individuals may want to construct on the basis of how they perceive themselves in the world in comparison to others. As mentioned earlier, ethnic identity and ethnicity are discussed in relation to language in the context of a sociolinguistic study. As Reagan (2002: 429) notes, in South Africa "it is important that appropriate manifestations of ethnicity be recognised". I argue that ethnicity may, among other things, be manifested and supported by and through language. While I am referring to international scholars during the discussion, the focus is clearly the South African discourse. Ethnic identity is tacitly and inevitably socially

³¹ Bank's (1996: 2) comment with regard to ethnicity "the wheel has been invented several times over" is certainly valid. Despite sound interdisciplinary efforts to find a definition for the phenomenon, there exists little consistent theorising among scholars with regard to the use of the term.

³² I purposely refrain from a discussion on the concept of nationalism, which frequently surfaces in research on ethnicity for two reasons. First, the meaning of the term is unsatisfactorily wide in the context of this study and goes beyond the main research aim and, second, the term has political connotations that are not of interest here.

constructed and thus is a particular social identity. Nonetheless, I argue that the personal level of identity and the individual part of the social identity must be investigated, as a particular ethnic identity can only be adequately understood through the individual perceptions of those concerned. The subjects participating in this empirical study are all individuals living in some kind of collective order, but perceptions of the constituency of ethnic identity may differ from one individual to the next.³³

Academic 'ethnicity discourse' often starts with a definition of the term 'ethnic group', which was already defined in the first section of this chapter in reference to Barth (1969) whose work clearly presented a milestone in ethnicity research in general. Frederic Barth, who is widely considered the proponent of the instrumental theory of ethnicity, laid the foundation for the anthropological understanding of the term by emphasising the importance of *boundary* construction. With reference to Barth (1969), many scholars have taken up the *ethnic boundary* as the central focus of their work. De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1975: 9), point out that an ethnic group is a *self-perceived* group of people who hold traditions such as, religious beliefs, language and a sense of historical continuity in common. But, the essence of ethnicity is its social construction as an ascription of the 'self' in reference to the 'other'.

However, ethnic identity is not merely constructed from 'within' the group. The members of a group themselves certainly create a feeling of belonging as a means to identify with each other, but this bond is also acknowledged by outsiders. As stressed by Fishman (1977: 16) "ethnicity is both, an aspect of a collectivity's self-recognition and an aspect of its recognition in the eyes of outsiders". In reference to South Africa, it is pertinent to highlight that ethnicity as a collective bond between people is not necessarily only self-perceived, but was also previously ascribed by the apartheid government.

³³This demands reflection on the methodology of this investigation as the interviews, for instance, on which this research is based were conducted in a variety of ways. Subjects are questioned individually as well as collectively, which needs to be considered carefully in the analysis.

Barth (1969) was also the first to argue that it is not so much the ‘cultural stuff’ that an ethnic group shares. Evidently influenced by the work of Barth, Edwards defines ‘ethnic identity’ as:

allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate – with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialisation or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.), or by more subjective contributions to a sense of ‘groupness’, or by some combination of both (Edwards 1985:10).

If it is ‘culture patterns’ which maintain a sense of ethnic identity, it is of primary importance to identify these. Fishman argues, however, that it needs to be considered that “ethnicity is both *narrower* and more *perspectival* than culture” (Fishman 1997b: 329). It is narrower because certain aspects of culture have no saliency for ethnic identity formation and it is more perspectival because ethnic identity constructions are subjective and do not depend on consensus between involved parties (*ibid.*). In other words, someone who perceives herself as ‘Zulu’ may regard one cultural pattern as particularly important for her Zuluness while another person who considers herself to be a ‘Zulu’ may dismiss the same cultural pattern as insignificant.

Pascht (1999: 58) notices that with reference to the anthropological discourse on ethnicity, there exist opposing views regarding the saliency of ‘culture’ as a defining factor. The proponents of the formalistic approach regard ‘culture’ as immaterial because within an ethnic group one could observe a whole range of diverse cultural traits (*ibid.*). Other scholars, however, clearly view a shared ‘culture’ as an essential component of an ethnic collective. Keyes (1976) for instance, while acknowledging that the content of culture may alter, argues that it [culture] remains a primary defining characteristic of an ethnic group. Similarly, Erikson (1992) argues that cultural differences need to be taken into account if one wants to adequately describe and analyse ethnicity. Roosens (1989: 19) remarks that “ethnicity can only be manifested by means of cultural forms that give the impression that they are inherent to a particular category or group of

individuals". It has further been argued that 'culture' may indeed be one of the core elements of ethnic group claims, however the perception of the concept is of a heterogeneous character (De Kadt 2000: 72).

Ross (1979) concludes that ethnicity depends on subjective feelings for its creation and cannot be regarded as an observable objective reality. Due to this subjectivity, ethnicity is not a very tangible concept, and it has puzzled academics of many disciplines. The question arises over whether a general definition of ethnicity is at all desirable or appropriate, as multiple researches have proven that the characteristics that distinguish one ethnic group from another vary greatly. Isajiw (1974: 117), in comparing 27 definitions of ethnicity, concludes that the most frequently mentioned attributes are (a) common ancestral origin, (b) same culture, (c) religion, (d) race, and (e) language.

Despite extensive debate surrounding what it 'really' is that constitutes ethnic collectivities, researchers seem to have reached a certain level of consensus with regard to two main factors in the construction of ethnic identities. First, there is the crucial role of the belief in a *shared history* and, second, the perception of a *boundary* between the groups' members and 'others'. The former is what Erikson describes as 'myths of common origin' (1997: 39) and Maré (1995: 15) explains as a 'story of the past'. The latter criterion, as already mentioned, is pioneered by Barth (1969) and has been subscribed to by several authors in the past few decades. Ethnic identity is also explained as a collective defence mechanism against feelings of threat and inferiority (i.e. Bloom 1998). This collective feeling of threat could only emerge because of the awareness that there are other groups, which are perceived as possibly greater and/or superior. A crucial factor in ethnic identity construction is, therefore, a differentiation process, whereby individuals or groups compare themselves to others in terms of various criteria.

Thus far, 'ethnic identity' and 'ethnicity' have been used interchangeably without distinguishing between their natures and most scholars in sociolinguistics make no distinction between the two terms. I intend to follow this example after demarcating the context in which I am using 'Zulu ethnicity' by referring to Maré

(1995: 243). Accordingly, ethnicity has a dual meaning as a “flexible and reflexive social identity, in flux and always in process of being constructed and reconstructed” on the one hand, and as something “rigidly defined and embedded within its politically mobilised” form, on the other hand (ibid.). The central theme of this work is the former conceptualization as ‘Zulu ethnicity’ as a politicised concept would over-expand the framework of this study. In the context of the South African isiZulu-speaking community in particular, ‘ethnicity’ is a topic of vast complexity and highly politicised nature. The dynamics of ‘ethnicity’ as a means to mobilise political organizations, such as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), are not under investigation here and are only mentioned in the periphery of this work.³⁴ The focus of this study clearly lies on the linguistic and sociocultural aspects of ethnicity in relation to language and cannot be expanded to include the exploration of a political identity. I am clearly dealing here with what Eriksen (1992: 3) has termed the aspects of ethnicity that include a social identity formation rather than with political aspects that involve ethnicity, hence I am not concerned with the ‘politics of Zuluness’.³⁵

Some readers may protest and argue that ethnicity cannot be discussed in a political vacuum,³⁶ and I apologise at this point for the limitations of this work. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study to discuss political aspects, if we are to decipher the intriguing relationship between language and ethnic identity comprehensively in the case of the isiZulu-speaking community. I base my

³⁴ Frequently, in South Africa political conflict was mistakenly addressed and interpreted as ‘ethnic’ conflict in the media. In particular, among the isiZulu speaking community in South Africa, a strong ethnic awareness has often been interpreted as sympathising with the IFP who claimed ownership of ethnic symbols. Conflicts between ANC and Inkatha supporters that have led to raging violence in the past have gradually been narrowed to ‘Zulu-Xhosa’ warfare in public discourse. Even if in some rare and exceptional cases there may have been ethnic elements involved in the conflict, to draw on such a simplified equation is highly inadequate, in particular with reference to KwaZulu-Natal. The violence in KwaZulu-Natal almost always involved isiZulu speakers on both sides. According to Maphai (1995: 91) “the last serious Zulu-Xhosa conflict took place 160 years ago, between Shaka and Faku”. For more detail on the mistakenly simplified labelling of the conflict in the early twentieth century, see Sithole (1998).

³⁵ For literature on the political aspects of Zuluness, see for instance Mare (1991, 1992, 1995), Kynoch (1999) or Piper (1998).

³⁶ Uchendu would undoubtedly argue in this vein as he claims “we cannot understand the dynamics of contemporary ethnicity in black Africa unless we take the political environment into consideration” (1995: 133). He further concludes that political competition in urban areas influences criteria of ethnic identification and may have social effects in rural areas. Ethnic identity, as he discussed it, is often expanded into politics and perpetuated through common political goals.

approach on the assumption that ethnic identities may be constructed through language without carrying any political consequences, as “political mobilisation is not an essential aspect of ethnicity” (Maré 1991: 2).

Barth’s (1969) work was indeed farsighted as he emphasises that cultural and ethnic differences are likely to persist, despite increasing inter-ethnic encounters, intercultural communication, and hence all-encompassing globalisation. South Africa is a country where ‘boundaries’ between different ethnic groups prevail very much, despite centuries of intercultural communication. Admittedly, the case of the post-apartheid state is an extremely difficult one, as the fostering of reconciliation in the society is largely based on a dichotomous goal. There is the maintenance of the pluralistic society, and the attempts to preserve its cultural diversity on the one hand, and the obvious and necessary effort to find unity through common and national goals on the other. Despite a public and academic attempt to refrain from categorising people in any kind of ethnic niche, one can hardly deny that ethnicity remains a daily issue in post-apartheid South Africa. Often, however, it is a “symbolic identity”, a “nostalgic allegiance to the culture”, “a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour” (Gans 1979: 9), that has saliency.

It must be noted, that whether the collective feeling people have is ‘imagined’ in Anderson’s (1983) sense, or whether it is something based on concrete evidence and action, it does need to be acknowledged as salient. In other words, even “symbolic ethnicity can be viewed as an indicator of the persistence of ethnic groups and cultures” (ibid: 12). Often the symbolic commitment to an ethnic identity is linked to a symbolic commitment to a language. The question that needs to be raised is whether a symbolic commitment to a language is equally indicative of the persistence or maintenance of the language in question.

Pascht (1999: 36), among several others, distinguishes between the ‘*formalistic*’ and the ‘*essentialistic*’ approach in ethnicity studies. The proponents of the former focus on creating a constructed, but generally accepted model that describes

ethnicity as a scientifically observable phenomenon, while the latter attempt to find the 'essence' of mutuality among ethnic groups. Another very common contrastive approach one comes across in the Anglo discourse of ethnicity research is the 'primordialist' versus the 'instrumentalist'/'constructivist' one. The former regards ethnicity as inherent to humankind, as 'given' and rather inflexible, while the proponents of the latter regard ethnicity as a historically and politically constructed, flexible, social identity which is often seen as a conflict phenomenon created by a specific ethnic group under particular historical circumstances.

Sharp (1980: 14), for instance, takes an 'instrumentalist' view by arguing that South African scholars ought to put an understanding of ethnicity as a primordial phenomena aside and pay more attention to the political economy of the region. He further argues that the unequal distribution of power is the catalyst for ethnic formations. In the context of the distinction between *primordialism* and *instrumentalism* one also comes across the criteria of the *subjective* versus the *objective* approach. According to Isajiw (1974: 115), ethnic groups are presumed to be existing, "out there" as real phenomena in objective terms, which seems to overlap with the primordial perspective. The subjective perspective suggests that ethnicity as a "process by which individuals either identify themselves as different from others, or belonging to a different group or are identified as different by others, or both identify themselves and are identified as different by others" (ibid.). What the *subjective* and *instrumentalist* position clearly have in common is the focus on the boundary that exists between ethnic groups and the fact that ethnicity is not something one is necessarily born into.

During the first two decades following Barth's 1969 publication, scholarly endeavour was dominated by the instrumental and subjective approach to ethnicity. However, more recent approaches attempt to reconcile instrumental and primordial perspectives. Wright (1991:3) distinguishes between the two approaches in the context of ethnicity research in Africa and points out that Leroy Vail (1989), for instance, amalgamated the two approaches in his work *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*. Today, the majority of respected scientists, in fact, combine the

two approaches in order to investigate ethnic phenomena in a more adequate way, but even this approach is still flawed to some extent (Perry 2004: 68). A combination of this kind is found by Wright (1991: 3): “under specific historical circumstances, specific groups seek to mobilize support, on the basis of a supposedly or actually shared origin, history and culture, from other groups, which respond to ethnic messages according to their own particular needs”.

For the purpose of this study, however, it is important to point out that, particularly with reference to language, several authors take a rather primordial stance on ethnicity. Giles et al. (1977: 326), for instance, insist that “one has no choice over one’s ethnicity in terms of heritage, but one can exert more control over which language variety one can learn or use in addition to one’s mother tongue”. The notion that ‘one has no choice’ clearly implies that one is ‘born into’ a particular ethnicity. The mere assumption that ‘ethnolinguistic groups’ exist in South Africa indicates that ‘linguistic’ aspects feature quite dominantly in ethnic symbolism. It is one of the essential aims of this study to explore critically and empirically these previously primordial notions.

The multilingual and multicultural character of the South African society provides for a multitude of ethnolinguistic ties. Generally speaking, many South Africans seem to have quite a refined sense of their own ethnicity. Ethnic identity as one kind of social identity includes the notion that individuals sometimes deliberately and sometimes unconsciously construct ethnic identity in order to be members of a group: a specific ‘in-group’. Individuals identify with a variety of in-groups in everyday life, depending on the situational context. The groups they belong to are, however, dynamic and constantly open to change. Nonetheless, the ethnic in-group is frequently perceived as rather stable, despite intercultural exchange, language contact and a changing socio-economic reality.

In the context of the South African urban situation a distinction made by Reminick (1983: 19) is relevant, as the subjects of this study are drawn from a particular urban environment – specifically a township environment. Accordingly, there is a

‘social’ as well as a ‘cultural’ ethnic identity within the lives of urban, black South Africans because there often exists a perceivable difference between the social networks³⁷ one is involved in and the belief systems that one espouses. Linked to this distinction is frequently a generation gap, where youngsters define themselves intensely with their ‘social ethnic identity’, while the older people within the society associate more strongly with the ‘cultural ethnic identity’. The latter entails a more active approach to traditional customs and practices. Research in Belize, for instance, showed that for the parents’ generation ethnic choice had to coincide more or less with language choice, whereas members of the younger generation in the community seemed to be able to establish ethnic identity separately from their linguistic identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 221). This research was conducted in times when enormous socio-political change had beset the country, and there is no doubt that this is also the case in South Africa. The profound rural/urban dichotomy, coupled with the generation gap in the country, gives rise to a multifaceted, variegated platform on which African-language speakers locate themselves regarding their values and interests.

The discussion above shows, among other things, that there are no clear-cut criteria which determine the ties that underscore the feeling of an ethnic ‘collective entity’. Despite the great variety of ethnic group formations, many scholars acknowledge that language, at least in its symbolic value, constitutes a highly likely criterion that contributes to ethnicity. Ethnic identity and ethnicity nonetheless are highly sensitive objects of study, in South Africa perhaps more so than in other parts of the world. As Kotzé (2000: 8) argues, “especially in South Africa, ethnicity has become such a sensitive concept that it has practically been tabooed as a factor of political macro-planning”. It is, however, a matter of fact that groups and communities within Africa are identified on the basis of their ethnic belonging and the language they speak. The community to be investigated, the South African Zulu community, is no exception to this. As mentioned earlier, the research on the

³⁷ The concept of ‘social network’ was first introduced by the anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown, but soon found attention by Linguists, most notably Milroy (1987). The role and influence of social networks in language use and change has been discussed in several qualitative studies. From the perspective of a quantitative framework, however, there is very little support for a direct correlation between the abovementioned variables (deBot and Stoessel 2002).

issue of language and ethnic identity has been enriched in such a way that it would be far beyond the scope of this work to treat and revise the literature on the field exhaustively. I attempt, however, to briefly refer to a few selected case-studies in the field in order to illustrate the complexity of the research into language and identity.

1.2. Language, identity and ethnicity

Language is (...) the unifying factor of a particular culture and often a prerequisite for its survival. No other factor is as powerful as language in maintaining by itself the genuine and lasting distinctiveness of an ethnic group (Giles and Saint-Jacques 1979: ix).

Scholars from many disciplines within the Human and Social Sciences have employed a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives in approaching the study of the relationship of language and ethnic identity. One only has to look at the recent *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, edited by Fishman (1999) to understand the interdisciplinary potential of the topic. While I make no distinction between Ethnolinguistics, the Sociology of Language or Sociolinguistics, I use the latter as an umbrella-term and approach the subject from a macro-sociolinguistic perspective.

It has been argued that “language is probably the most powerful symbol of ethnicity” (Holt 1996: 11) and that “ethnic identity, for the most part, is activated and regulated through the dynamics of language and communication” (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1989: 309). Similarly, Eastman states that though it may be questionable that “language is related to thought, language is a prime factor in ethnic identity” (Eastman 1981: 46). Kembo-Sure and Webb note that language not only symbolises its speaker’s social and cultural identity, they also argue that “language is the most potent of all cultural symbols, and people are often identified culturally primarily (and even solely) on the basis of the language they speak” (2000c: 122).

These comments exemplify scholarly perceptions about the inextricable link between language and ethnic identity; various more could be listed. At this point, I will, however, refer to one particular scholar, Joshua Fishman, who not only pioneered the study of *language and ethnicity*, but also remains the most influential of contemporary scholars to investigate the field. According to Fishman, language is more likely than any other cultural symbols to be a requisite constituent of ethnicity, due to the fact that “language is the recorder of paternity, the expresser of patrimony and the carrier of phenomenology” (Fishman 1989). The first factor, *paternity*, is an actor’s descent-related being, the “feeling of a common ancestry’ and a ‘sense of permanence across time” (Fishman 1989: 26). As language is perceived as a biological inheritance of some kind, its association with paternity is frequent and influential. The mother tongue of a particular ethnic group represents, therefore, a strong symbol of the collective history of that group. *Patrimony*, in contrast, is regarded as more negotiable than paternity, because it does not have the “stamp of ancestral perfection” which *paternity* carries (ibid). Furthermore,

paternity defines those who inherit a heritage. Patrimony is the bulk of that heritage (of collectivity-defining behaviours) per se, which some may put to good use and others may squander and still others may ignore entirely. (...). Language behaviours (particular mother tongue attitudes), although importantly patrimonial, often reveal the ‘pull’ of alterable paternity, (...). Language is commonly among the conscious ‘do’ and ‘don’ts’ as well as among the unconscious ones: that is, it is among the evaluated dimensions of ethnicity membership (whether conscious or not) (Fishman 1989: 28).

In this sense, language is something that marks an individual for life in a more profound way than any other element of socialisation. While a person may be able to acquire and adopt a particular ethnic custom without difficulty in life, a language is not easily learnt after a critical period of childhood. Few people have the gift to acquire native-like proficiency of a language as adolescents and adults. At least a slight accent normally reveals a non-native status of a particular ethnic or nation. Fishman (1989: 27), furthermore remarks that ‘ethnic patrimony’ and ‘culture’ are deeply interrelated, but nevertheless need to be clearly distinguished as not all of culture can be seen as descent-related. In other words, one may – for example – engage in cultural practices that have nothing to do with his/her ethnic

inheritance and ancestry. Particularly in Africa, many newly adopted 'western' values and customs may stand in contrast to those associated with an 'original' ethnic identity. Contemporary anthropological research often brings to light the discrepancies between traditional and modern life practices and the cultural innovations that take place from one generation to the next.

The third variable in Fishman's (1989: 29) conceptualisation of ethnicity is the meaning that one attaches to one's descent-related being and in other words, having *phenomenology*. Fundamentally, it has to be investigated how the members of ethnic collectivities regard 'their own' ethnicity, how they regard that of 'others' and how 'others' regard 'them'. Furthermore, the researcher him/herself has to reflect on his/her influence. Conceptions of ethnicity are for the actors as well as for the researcher "part of the total structure and organization of meaning as it relates to the nature of life" (Fishman 1989: 30).

Scholars drawing from the notions of *Symbolical Interactionism* which is based on the work of Herbert Mead, notoriously argue that language is the central medium, which creates shared meaning and forms social categories. According to this, ethnicity depends largely on language for its creation (Giles and Saint-Jacques 1979). Furthermore, it has widely been agreed upon that the relationship between these two variables is of a reciprocal nature (cf. Gudykunst 1989). In a recent article about Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa, Bosch (2000) argues that language, on the one hand, serves as a clear marker of Afrikanerness. On the other hand, however, it is also illustrated how Afrikaans ethnicity is maintained to a large extent through the use of the language. "The Afrikaans language acts as a creator and definer of ethnicity and with ethnic relations – a person's claim to 'Afrikanerness' is often based on knowledge of the Afrikaans language rather than on religion or origin" (Bosch 2000: 52).

In the African context, the link between language and ethnic group belonging may be more direct than in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, it can be very deceiving to make assumptions about someone's ethnic background judging from

the use of language. Trudgill's (1974) amusing reports about whites who had been socialised with Afro-Americans and Afro-Americans who grew up in a predominately white neighbourhood are good counter examples to linguistic stereotyping and profiling. In his experiment, the subjects had to listen to recordings and mistakenly held the former for black and the latter for white. It clearly demonstrates the deceptive nature of judging ethnic/racial background on the basis of linguistic behaviour. Baugh's (2003) recent research on "linguistic profiling", i.e. speculations about an individuals racial or ethnic background on the basis of auditory cues, demonstrates the pertinence of inadequate judgements, or racist treatment of individuals based on linguistic sources.

There is clearly no inherent or requisite link between one's language and his/her ethnic background. Nevertheless, the paradigm of having "one language and one people" has been strongly favoured by many: frequently 'dangerous', political movements. Nazi theory, for example, was – among many other atrocities – largely based on linguistic purism. Its aim was to defend 'the German people' against foreign contamination, and to secure the purity of the 'Arian race'.³⁸ Scholars, in general, have quite different views on the matter of the 'one-language-one nation' paradigm. Bamgbose (1991) argues that social integration can be facilitated without a single language as a unifying factor, and regards the 'one-language-one nation' concept as an outmoded nineteenth century project. Ager (2001), in contrast, is of the opinion that linguists and educators have demonstrated ignorance of the importance of a single language to social cohesion. While the latter may be true to some extent, it is also evident that "the joys of one's language and one's ethnicity are subsequently expressed over and over again, from every corner of Europe and in every period" (Fishman, Gertner, Lowy, Milan 1985: 8).

However, there is no doubt that one can still perceive him/herself as a member of an ethnic group without the proficiency of the language or language variety originally spoken by this group. The symbolical value of the language usually

³⁸ The word *Geographie*, for instance, was replaced by the German word *Erdkunde*, which apparently was more 'Arian' and therefore purer (Trudgill 1974: 59).

prevails, such as in the case of Irish. Furthermore, one ethnically or ethnic group may speak a variety of languages and still be considered one collective entity. In the case of Zulu ethnic identity, however, it is presumed not to be a mere symbolism that comes into play with regard to language. In a recent discussion on the concept of 'mother tongue' with first semester students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, strong opposition was voiced by isiZulu-speaking students when the provocative statement that "one may be ethnically Zulu but speak English as a mother tongue" was voiced. The sense of a corresponding relationship between language and ethnic background appears to be widespread among isiZulu-speakers but is critically explored in detail below. The underlying hypothesis would indicate that in order to regard him/herself as 'Zulu', one must be able to speak isiZulu. Failing to do so may result in questioning the person's claim to Zuluness.

Language, it has been argued, is more likely than any other human and cultural artefact to retain meaning for an ethnic group over a very long time period, and maintains to play a symbolic and/or instrumental role in ethnolinguistic identity construction, despite the constantly changing nature of ethnic collectivities (Fishman 1977).

Ethnic collectivities will exist as long as human societies exist, and, indeed, new ethnic collectivities are constantly coming into being and old ones are continuously being rediscovered and refurbished. As long as this is so, languages will continue to be both symbolic of these collectivities and instrumental for them, with respect to their self-concepts, their antagonism and their cooperative potentials (ibid.: 42).

This argument highlights the flexible and multidimensional character of ethnolinguistic identity. Other scholars evaluate the role of language from a more primordial perspective: "It seems that one's behaviour, and in particular one's verbal behaviour, is a truer reflection of one's ethnic allegiance than one's cultural heritage and is determined by the fortunes of birthright" (Giles et al. 1977: 326). This, however, would suggest that one who adopts an out-group's language as a main medium of communication, but actively engages in the cultural life of the in-group expresses his/her ethnicity less powerfully than one who refuses to speak any other language than that of his/her ethnic group. It is questionable to what extent the above argument has relevance in the South African context. One has to

remember that with reference to the African population, that proficiency in the outgroup's language (English or Afrikaans) was and still is a requisite for survival.³⁹

There is, however, no doubt that a shared mother tongue often draws people together and creates a feeling of belonging, even if there were not strong ties before. Most expatriates appreciate people with whom they are able to speak their mother tongue and with whom they share cultural similarities. However, in a multilingual society, the exposure and acquisition of languages other than the mother tongue may well influence the definition of the individual's ethnic and ethnolinguistic identity. Eastman, for instance, notes that "insofar as shared experiences comprise our perceptions and labelling of self and others, language may influence our ethnic and political identity" (1981: 48).

Specifically, in societies where diglossia⁴⁰ occurs, and an individual views the outgroup's language as having a much higher social and economic status than his/her L1, the significance of the mother tongue may fade for economic and instrumental reasons. Individuals whose mother tongue is the L-variety may not only want to acquire proficiency in the H-variety, but also adopt it as the main medium of communication in order to improve their social and economic status. The opposite, however, i.e. the maintenance of a certain language and ethnicity may also take place. Herbert (2002) offers examples of both dynamics: In the second half of the twentieth century, Thonga men in northern Zululand shifted to isiZulu and adopted Zulu ethnicity due to its economically prestigious status in the KwaZulu homeland. Thonga females, in contrast, initially held onto their mother-tongue and Thonga ethnicity in order to maintain an improved social status in their communities.

³⁹ The historical overview in Chapter 2.2 explains this situation in further detail.

⁴⁰ First introduced by Ferguson (1959) the term *diglossia* refers to a situation where nine criteria are provided for a sociolinguistic dynamic between two varieties of a language that exist side by side in a community. Each of these is used for different purposes, the one, H(igh) variety, is the language of the higher domains of life; the other, L(ow) variety has less social and economic status and is used in the lower domains of life, such as in private and domestic settings. Fishman (1972a) extended this definition in order to include a situation, where not only two varieties of one language, but two different languages co-exists. For more detail, see also Hudson (2002).

Although isiZulu has high status in comparison to other African languages in South Africa, it cannot be denied that the English language is located in yet another category. It is clear that fluency in English among African-language speakers in South Africa is used to demonstrate an educated and 'high' status. In fact, when juxtaposed with English, isiZulu was frequently positioned as "indicating ignorance and illiteracy" (Dlamini 2001: 203). The increasing use of the European language among African-language speakers in Africa is often perceived to be linked to the adoption of other aspects of the European culture. In other words, English language proficiency in South Africa is frequently associated with a 'western' identity of some kind. In contrast, people with low or no proficiency in English are more attached to an 'indigenous African lifestyle'.

As mentioned already, the distinct language of an ethnic group does not necessarily have to be used actively in order to remain a constituent of the ethnic identity of the group.

Language is often cited as a major component in the maintenance of a separate ethnic identity, and language undoubtedly constitutes the single most characteristic feature of ethnic identity. But ethnicity is frequently related more to the symbolism of a separate language than to its actual use by all members of a group (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1975: 15 and De Vos 1995: 23).

Hence, language shift may take place without a shift of the construction of ethnicity linked to a particular language community. In light of this argument, Edwards (1985) refers to the Irish language and argues that despite the fact that the language [Irish] is only spoken by a tiny percentage of the population, many more perceive themselves as 'Irish'. Therefore, one can deduce that the symbolic value of the language remains to be of great significance. "Public support for Irish has been overwhelmingly positive, and it is often cited as a defining element of Irish national identity" (Williams 1999: 271).

Accordingly, ethnic identities clearly survive without the maintenance or the active use of the ethnic mother tongue. For this reason, ethnicity does not always have to be linked to some kind of linguistic unity. Trudgill and Tzavaras (1977), for example, point out that a simple equation of ethnic and language group

membership is far from adequate, as there are cases where a separate ethnic identity is maintained even though a distinctive language has been lost.⁴¹

The South African Indian population is a further example of such a case. Language is not a prerequisite for the existence of ethnicity within this community. The vast majority of South African Indians, in particular those belonging to the younger generation, do not have an Indian language (i.e. Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati) as a mother tongue, but rather speak English. Nevertheless, most South African Indians identify themselves as belonging to the Indian ethnic group by other media, such as religion, dress, food, traditions and lifestyle (cf. Kamwangamalu 2001a: 78). Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that a number of the Indian languages are still used for religious purposes and consequently still carry a particular symbolic value.⁴²

In contrast to the cases mentioned above, Harrell (1995) observes, in the context of Southwest China, that the one ethnic group that presents the clearest case of an exclusive ethnic identity is the one that has maintained its ethnic mother tongue. I argue that language is hardly ever a sufficient symbol for ethnic identity as there are various other factors that contribute to the formation of such an identity. Previously, it has been mentioned that ethnicity in the context of this study excludes the analysis of a politicised, mobilised ethnic identity. The reasons for this are in fact two-fold: on the one hand, investigating Zuluness as a Zulu 'political identity' would overextend the scope of this study; on the other hand, it also needs to be mentioned that the political mobilisation of 'Zuluness' was explicitly based on symbols linked to a glorified Zulu past and focused little on isiZulu as one of the symbols.

⁴¹ Cf. Trudgill and Tzavaras (1977) demonstrate in their study that modern Albanian-Greeks perceive themselves as both Greeks and Arvanites, and not only as Albanians. However, they don't attach importance to their language as a symbol of ethnic identity. Older Arvanites are keen to maintain a separate ethnic identity as they know that the younger generation does not speak much Arvanitika anymore. To claim that Arvanitika is an essential component of an Arvanites' identity would, therefore, suggest that their children and grandchildren are not really Arvanites. The younger people, however, identify themselves increasingly as Greek rather than Arvanite, because of economic reasons. This research shows that ethnic identity and language are bound together as the dying of the language Arvanitika is linked to the dying of an identity as an Arvanite.

⁴² For further reading on the survival of ethnic groups without the maintenance of their mother tongue, cf. Edwards (1985) or Ross (1979).

Ross (1979: 10) argues that particularly in Africa there exists a common pattern of mobilising through the mother tongue of the dominant group. The case of South Africa clearly exemplifies this. During the apartheid era many African-language speakers, essentially the entire African intelligentsia, chose to speak English. They did this first to have a 'neutral', hence non-ethnic *lingua franca* and, second, to be heard internationally so that apartheid could be fought from beyond the borders of the country. This is the one important reason why English plays an exceptional role in South Africa and needs to be assessed further (see Chapter 2.3.).

The important role the English language plays in the construction of modern African identities has received much attention among several scholars. Breitborde (1998), for instance, investigates the role of English in the lives of urban Africans. The monograph *Speaking and Social Identity* is an anthropological study, which gives account of typical African, urban language behaviour, and shows clear links and similarities to the South African urban context. Breitborde provides a descriptive case study, which aims to construct a distinctly anthropological understanding of the role of English in the context of Kru people in Monrovia.

Various scholars have stressed the inextricable link between language and ethnicity in the African context. Dirven (1995: 42) argues that "the first feature in the African cultural scene is that language, culture and ethnicity tend to coincide. That means that the reality of a linguistic and cultural community in Africa tends to comprise an ethnic component as well". Similarly, Adegbija (1999: 366) asserts that:

there is a considerable close connection between language and ethnicity. The sense of ethnic self is created and perpetuated by language. Ethnic and linguistic identification were at the forefront of the socio-political and cultural lives of sub-Saharan Africans before and immediately after the ethnic revival.

In the light of the above, it appears that there are similarities with regard to the 'bond of ethnicity' in relation to language in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite apparent commonalities with other previously colonised states in Africa, South Africa has a unique history which is characterised, first of all, by a much more recent liberation

and democratisation process. Furthermore, South African sociolinguistic dynamics cannot easily be compared to other African countries. As De Klerk (2002: 31) notes, “under apartheid, language was perceived and promoted as a core element of culture and ethnicity. Language, culture and ethnicity became virtually coterminous”. The ‘perception’ and ‘promotion’ mentioned above was on behalf of an oppressive government and its officials who scrutinised the correlation between a people’s language and their ethnicity. The South African situation is, hence, significantly different. Unlike the colonisers in other African countries who promoted the use of the European languages, the architects of Bantu Education promoted the use of the African languages. They, hence, corrupted the language-ethnicity link to encourage more entrenched discrimination. Consequently, ethnicities were ‘other ascribed’ to a large extent, which is discussed in detail below.

1.3. The South African perspective

In any multilingual and multicultural country the interplay between language and ethnicity can function as a divisive mechanism and can be mobilised for political purposes and conflicts. In few countries, however, this interplay was corrupted to the same extent as was the case in South Africa. The fact that the term *ethnolinguistic* groups still finds little critical discussion in South Africa presupposes how inextricable the link between language and ethnic belonging has been pursued.

During apartheid, language and ethnic belonging were the two crucial factors employed in order to segregate people from one another. In fact, the concept of ethnicity was the underlying framework of many of the brutal laws of apartheid, which essentially outlawed inter-ethnic interaction (Kamwangamalu 2001a: 79).⁴³ The entire society was divided into different ethnic groups according to two main

⁴³ There was, for instance the Population Registration Act (1950), according to which the entire population was divided into distinct groups, the Immorality Amendment Act (1950), which outlawed interethnic sex or the Group Areas Act (1950), which determined separate residential areas for the various different ethnic groups (cf. Hahne 2002: 70).

factors: skin colour and language (Kamwangamalu 2000c: 1). After physical appearance, language was thus politically the only legitimate factor in determining a person's ethnic groups. It is not surprising then, as various authors have noted, that in South Africa language serves as the crucial characteristic in ascribing people's ethnic identity (Malan and Walker 1995; Webb 1996; Kamwangamalu 2001a, b). The system of *homelands* or *bantustans* was based on the clear-cut ethnolinguistic distinction of the African people.

The relationship between language, culture and identity is therefore extremely stigmatised in the South African context. Herbert suggests a simplified equation in this context, which has been referred to quite extensively in South African sociolinguistics: *language = culture = homeland* (Herbert 1992: 4). The creation of the so-called *bantustans* separated the black people on the basis of their apparent language differences. As previously mentioned, these differences were more imagined than linguistically sound, as there exists mutual intelligibility between several varieties. Elsewhere it is described most aptly how ethnicity and race are principle classification criteria in the construction of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983).

Since the transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994, however, the state-imposed focus on the coterminous relationship between individuals and communities' languages and ethnicities has virtually dissolved. With the birth of democracy and the death of statutory apartheid, the former ethnic homelands have been reintegrated into South Africa (Kamwangamalu 2001a: 81) and, among other things, people are free to choose where to live. The government has further given official recognition to eleven languages, including English, Afrikaans and the nine African languages. Although the previously existing ethnolinguistic boundaries are now open for change and redefinition, the weight of history rests heavily on the South African society, as De Klerk (2002) shows in reference to the mother-tongue education stigma. Linguistic, cultural or ethnic criteria did and often still do coincide in the make-up of South African communities and the variables are often interchangeable. Due to the fact that language and ethnicity presented the main

pillars of apartheid politics, the interrelationship between these two variables remains a controversial issue. Niedrig (1999: 255), for instance, notes that in post-apartheid South Africa there still exists the tendency to avoid using the term 'language' in relation to terms such as 'culture' or 'ethnic identity', as the correlation between these variables is associated with the philosophy of apartheid. Similarly, Kotzé (2000: 7) writes that "an understanding of the role that ethnicity in conjunction with language played in the shaping of South African society is often obfuscated by the stigmatisation of concepts as a result of the country's political history". The conceptualisation of language and ethnicity in South Africa is thus not neutral and must be considered an extremely sensitive and emotional issue. The rather recent focus issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* entitled *Language and Ethnicity in the New South Africa* and edited by Kamwangamalu (2000a, b) presents a milestone of sociolinguistic research in the field.

Without a doubt, post-modern and post-structuralist scholars would criticise and oppose the static view of language and ethnicity that apartheid politics had cultivated. The dynamic, context-dependent, constructed and re-constructed nature of ethnic identities found no place during Apartheid. In fact, the rigid structure of the society during the Apartheid perpetuated the myth of language as a strictly bounded phenomenon and ethnic groups as culturally homogenous (Herbert 1992: 2). This view, however, has proven illusionary in a post-modern and post-structuralist sense, and several scholars (Auer 1998; Bhaba 1990; Edwards 1997; Gal 1989; Gordon 1978; Heller 1988; 1992; 1995) have, in recent years, discussed the flexible, context-bound and negotiable nature of particular identities. In a similar vein, Filatova (1996: 13) argues that in the South African context:

Colonial society as a stage of social development through which all African countries, including South Africa, have gone has created a complicated system of intertwined identities, not only ethnic but also social, political, gender, cultural, linguistic etc. These identities coexist and intermingle in intricate ways, showing a trace of this or a side of that identity in various circumstances. The new political and social realities add new identities to this intricate web and slowly but surely change the existing identity system.

The intellectual critique of viewing language and ethnicity as phenomena cast in stone is of little empirical value, however, if people at a grass-roots level do not perceive it in this way. Whether this holds here or not will be answered in the analysis of the empirical part of this thesis (Chapter 4).

The work by Louw-Potgieter and Giles (1988) represents one of the first detailed studies that conceptualised South African ethnolinguistic identity, i.e. Afrikaner ethnicity, in the context of a social-psychological paradigm. They predicted that in communities where language is central to identity, which is undoubtedly the case in the Afrikaner community, strategies to impose, affirm or deny this identity would culminate in linguistic strategies.⁴⁴ Afrikaans is doubtless the language that has received the greatest attention with reference to sociolinguistic studies that involve the complex relationship between language and ethnic identity; a fact that reflects the socio-political history of the country. Recently, Webb and Kriel (2000)⁴⁵, Bosch (2000)⁴⁶ and Giliomee (2003) have investigated the position of Afrikaans in post-apartheid South Africa in more depth. Several South African scholars have in recent years been concerned with the emerging of new ethnolinguistic identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

Barkhuizen and De Klerk (2000), for instance, first investigated ethnolinguistic dynamics in an Eastern Cape army camp. They argue, *inter alia*, on the basis of their empirical evidence, that English is widely perceived as the neutral language, which however, does not imply that people give up speaking their mother tongues. In contrast, respondents of the studies formed groups based on a shared

⁴⁴ According to Louw-Potgieter and Giles (1988: 126) there are two main propositions linked to language: First, when language forms a very important attribute of ethnolinguistic group membership, strategies of identity management might centre on the group's language. And second, language is not a-contextual, and might therefore be combined with other important membership attributes in these strategies of identity management.

⁴⁵ Discussing Afrikaans as a basic constituent of Afrikaner nationalism, Webb and Kriel (2000) shed light on the functions of the language in a new political environment.

⁴⁶ Bosch (2000) discusses Ethnicity markers in the Afrikaans language with a focus on the ethnic consciousness surrounding the history and standardisation of Afrikaans and its varieties. She identifies distinct ethnicity markers in Afrikaans lexical items, naming practices, jokes, and politeness strategies and basically examines the role of the language in creating an ethnic identity for the Afrikaners within a post-apartheid South African state.

ethnolinguistic background, but use English with members of the out-group in order to improve communication.⁴⁷

Slabbert and Finlayson (2000) studied urban communities and investigated ethnolinguistic identity construction against the background of the theoretical framework of linguistic acts as 'acts of identity' (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985). Essentially, the investigation indicates that a static perception of ethnolinguistic identities in the new South Africa is indeed not timely, as urban Africans tend to cross apartheid-erected ethnolinguistic boundaries on a regular basis. They describe urban identity in post-apartheid South Africa as an "an emerging new hybrid ethnic identity that is marked by a specific relationship to the nine ethnic categories that the policies and practices of apartheid have drawn for African people" (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000: 132).

There is an evident paucity of qualitative ethnolinguistics examining African-language speakers, in particular with regard to urban and township environments. This thesis aims, among other things, at filling this gap. IsiZulu speakers are often regarded as carrying a distinctive, well-defined and exclusionist ethnolinguistic identity, as Mngadi (2000) simply argues, "Zulu people are proud and conservative people". One of the main concerns in this study is to find out whether the abovementioned simplistic view of Zulu ethnolinguistic identity has any empirical sociolinguistic foundation.

⁴⁷ The article further takes into account situational variables, such as the specific environment of an Eastern Cape army camp. In this context it is revealed that the army is seen as the common group. The members of this group, therefore, also have a shared identity, a feeling of unity, which creates loyalty among its members and gives each member a sense of belonging (Barhuizen and de Klerk 2000).

1.4. Relevant theoretical approaches

1.4.1. Language as an ethnic boundary

In a country like South Africa, which is essentially built on the acknowledgement of pluralism, the existence of boundaries is inevitable and perhaps even desirable. Boundaries are constituted in multidimensional ways and bear a variety of facets. In academic discourse, boundaries have – for many years – increasingly been perceived as resources rather than as problems. Wherever a boundary is established there is space for exchange and crossing. Barth (1969), who has already been referred to as the pioneer in the research of the ‘ethnic boundary’ phenomena, perceives ethnic boundaries as loci for the exchange of goods, services and information, rather than of conflict.

However the potential for conflict remains, since many people – and this is especially pertinent in South African society – frequently regard intercultural contact and communication as a problem rather than an enrichment of their society. Language, among other things, features as a crucial factor in the creation and maintenance of boundaries, as it is one of the most obvious and powerful tools in intercultural communication. Fishman (1989: 35), drawing from the theories of Barth notes that the recognition, the interpretation and the manipulation of language boundaries are all ethnically encumbered behaviours. As a result it can be said that linguistic and ethnic boundaries frequently act upon each other, overlap or affect each other. Khleif (1979) approaches the study of the ethnic boundary from a social-psychological perspective, and points out the importance of ethnic terminology in marking off group boundary:

Regardless of what is said in any given language or languages for in-groups or out-groups, language itself - in the sense of being claimed as a precious possession particular to a given group - has often served as the chief indicator of ethnicity, as a major boundary marker akin to religion or skin colour.

Accordingly, language can be used as a weapon to distinguish external boundaries as well as internal lines: for instance, it can be used to worship the in-group while

isolating the out-group. In this context renegades can be singled out very quickly. The employed linguistic labels for the out-group and renegades express a disavowal of those who betray the in-group (Khleif 1979: 161). According to King, this boundary can be both real and imaginary. "Real, because it limits comprehension between cultures that do not share the same language; imaginary, because it is not fixed either in time or in space, for languages change when they come into contact with other more 'powerful' ones..." (King 1994: 135).

The existence of boundaries within one ethnic group is of major importance to this investigation. That which creates a boundary and is regarded as a betrayal of the in-group, can take various different shapes, ranging from neglecting traditions and customs, to the denial to speak the mother tongue, or even the excessive use of English. While concentrating on language as an ethnic boundary, the variety spoken, accent and extent of code-switching may all be factors contributing to the construction and establishment of a boundary. Furthermore, the boundary marking functions are diversified as the concept of the boundary itself is not a static construct, but is composed of many different factors. The permanent contact between isiZulu speakers, English, Afrikaans or other indigenous African-language speakers obviously provides room for frequent boundary crossing.

Conversely, it has been observed that there are many instances in which isiZulu-speakers are reluctant to linguistically accommodate non-isiZulu speakers (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000: 132). In contrast, many Sotho-speakers in South Africa have some knowledge of isiZulu and use the language when they speak to isiZulu L1-speakers. Most whites in South Africa, however, who are able to speak some isiZulu seem to find that isiZulu-speakers, in general, are positively surprised and appreciative if a white person speaks to them in isiZulu. Even poor proficiency in the language is highly appreciated. Webb (2001) describes an incident in which he apparently was spared, by an isiZulu-speaking policeman, from paying a traffic fine because he spoke isiZulu with him. Hence, interethnic and racial boundaries may break down due to a particular linguistic behaviour.

In spite of this, there also exists a contrasting dynamic, which is based on the dominant role of English in Africa and the unequal linguistic power relationships that prevail in the society. It may happen that an isiZulu-speaker may not react appreciatively when addressed in his/her mother tongue and responds in English. Assumingly, those who do so behave that way in order to demonstrate their 'educated status'. The distressed reaction generally signals "I am educated and speak English well, you do not have to speak to me in my African mother tongue".

1.4.2. Are language attitudes ethnic attitudes?

Language attitudes generally reveal a multitude of information about individuals' perceptions towards themselves and towards languages, and are thus inextricably linked to perceptions of identity. Although this is not a language-attitude study *per se*, the concept of language attitude is by no means peripheral to the concerns of this work as a significant part of the research data is based on eliciting language attitudes and opinions about language. The concept of *attitude* is in itself a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, and searching for a general definition of the term goes beyond the scope of this work and would be a futile exercise in this study as it is specifically *language attitudes* that are of interest here. I merely aim to examine the term 'attitude' with regard to its commonly referred two-fold meaning; the *mentalist* versus the *behaviourist* one. The approach here is sociolinguistic by nature and I take a *mentalist* perspective, which according to Fasold (1984: 147) is most common among scholars interested in language. It approaches attitude as a 'state of readiness' aroused by a stimulus, whereas behaviourists and most social-psychologists⁴⁸ consider attitudes to be a behaviourist response.

The *mentalist* perspective is not without its problems and poses specific obstacles, because attitude as a state of readiness is compared to an observable state and the researcher has to rely on what his/her participants indicate (Fasold 1984: 127). The

⁴⁸ Scholars working within the framework of the social-psychology of language have influenced language attitude research to a large extent. A milestone in this field of enquiry was the 1982 publication *Attitudes towards Language variation* by Ryan and Giles, which presented a wide collection of articles of well-known scholars in the field.

validity of such data, which is self-reported information, remains questionable. The researcher cannot claim to be able to make predictions about a person's language behaviour merely due to the elicitation of his/her language attitude. As will be seen below, this problem was overcome by the particular methodological framework employed in this thesis.

Numerous researchers have investigated language attitudes in the context of motives for group identification and ethnicity (Fishman 1983; Panther 1994; Ehret 1997). References to several of these studies can be found in various sections and footnotes throughout this work, but are not discussed in further detail at this point. I intend to provide a working definition of the term *language attitude* and a brief theoretical foundation of research related to the topic at hand, without a further investigation into the enormous complexity of language attitude research in general. This field of enquiry has been systematically approached by various disciplines since the 1960s, but received particular attention from sociolinguists and social psychologists. The applications of research in this field are diverse and offer a variety of findings and theories.

According to Fishman (1972b: 142), language attitudes are particularly adhered to in a multilingual setting where the knowledge of particular languages is associated with a particular 'social type'. This, indeed, is salient in South Africa, because English proficiency is widely associated with a certain social environment and a specific educated status among African language-speakers. To be more precise in fact, within South Africa, one is also a particular 'economic type' if one is articulate in English. Although this notion is increasingly the case worldwide, proficiency in English is not a prerequisite for high salary professions in Europe, for instance. In contrast, the high economic value of English in South Africa cannot be contested and influences attitudes towards the language from a variety of perspectives.

Fasold (1984: 158) illustrates how language is employed as a symbol of a particular group membership and how language attitudes provide helpful information for identifying diglossic potentials, for example. In terms of (economic) power dynamics, South Africa shows diglossic features with English as the H- and African languages as L-varieties. One may be surprised that a linguistic symbol of contrastive self-identification, i.e. English for isiZulu-speakers, is valued more than the language the person identifies with, essentially from a cultural and social perspective. The symbolism and the functions of language(s) are seldom straightforward and clear-cut. It is pertinent to this study to acknowledge that individuals do not necessarily identify with a language they hold in high regard or that they have a positive opinion about. Language attitudes of this kind may well be based on purely instrumental reasons, which may give rise to contradictory and paradoxical sociolinguistic behaviour, as will be proved below.

Fasold (1984: 148) further argued that the “attitudes toward language are often the reflection of attitudes towards members of various ethnic groups”. At first glance, this statement makes sense but, of course, human behaviour is rarely straightforward. An argument that claims a direct correlation between a people and their language is both simplistic and dangerous. There are many languages spoken on this planet that are shared by people who belong to very different ethnic groups. English remains the best example in this context, as one can find people of various different cultural backgrounds speaking it as a mother tongue. The contemporary world is far too hybrid and dislocated to accept the abovementioned suggested correlation without criticism. South Africans certainly do not learn English and have positive attitudes about the language because they particularly favour the British, US Americans, or English L1-speakers of their country, but rather because the language is a prerequisite for a successful life.

There are also multiple factors that influence language attitudes: the environment in which an individual is socialised plays a crucial role for the motivation on which a particular language attitude is based. A common distinction is that of *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation. Instrumental motivation is linked to economic

success and employment opportunities, whereas integrative motivation is of a more interpersonal and social nature. Because English proficiency is linked to economic and political benefits, African-language speakers ally themselves with the language for instrumental reasons. However, an integrative motivation may additionally be at work when African learners attend school with predominantly English L1-speaking children.

Although language behaviour is linked to language attitudes, the two concepts must be clearly distinguished. The empirical findings presented in *Chapter 4* provide clear evidence supporting this. Qualitative researchers have increasingly become cautious about explaining complex sociolinguistic dynamics on the basis of language attitudes only, because the information subjects give in questionnaires or in interviews often contradicts the actual behaviour of the individuals. In South Africa, for instance, “teachers who express negative attitudes towards English could equally be found sending their children to English medium schools where English domination is perpetuated” (Ngcobo 2000: 17). The frequent inconsistency between assessed individual attitudes and their actual behaviour of these individuals requires a more critical approach to data collection and elicitation. One cannot immediately assume that an individual who acquires a particular language, and uses this language extensively, necessarily ‘likes’ the language (Fishman 1977: 308).

Language behaviour in a multilingual setting is also related to language choices. The choice of an individual to behave negatively towards his/her mother tongue, i.e. to refuse to use it, is a matter of choice and potentially represents an act of identity. Certainly, the same holds equally true for languages other than the mother tongue. The last decade in South African sociolinguistic inquiry has seen prodigious research into language attitude studies (De Klerk 2000a, 2000b, 2002; De Klerk and Barkhuizen 1998, 2002; Mhlanga 1995; Ngcobo 2000; Kamwangamalu 2003, Smit 1996). The official ‘deracialisation’ of the country has instigated an improved access to multiracial schooling for learners, which resulted

in an increasing number of African children being exposed to an English environment for most of the day.

Thus far, researchers have predominantly been interested in the impact of English economic and instrumental supremacy, but there are also attempts to elicit data on the attitudes towards the indigenous African languages. Despite the work already done, large-scale language attitude studies, which focus on township and rural communities, remain scarce in South Africa. From the perspective of language-in-education research, there exists an evident gap. I would like to argue that it is imperative that future sociolinguistic studies focus on the abovementioned rather than on urban communities, as still the vast majority of South African children attend these largely under-resourced institutions⁴⁹.

The quality of schooling and exposure to English is largely dependent on the financial standing of the school and hence, class status, which is a phenomenon South Africa shares with other countries. For this reason I chose to collect a large part of my data in township (former Department of Education and Training – DET) schools. Although some additional Umlazi residents who attend multiracial schools outside the township were interviewed, the bulk of the data stems from township school learners.

First-year University courses provide a clear picture that there exists a great discrepancy between English language proficiency of learners educated in township or rural (former DET) schools and learners educated in multiracial schools (ex-Model C⁵⁰) schools. Consequently, language attitudes also differ significantly, not only if one compares individual members, but also with reference to urban/township/rural background. Speech communities in general are not

⁴⁹ The schools lack numerous resources: there are not enough benches for all the learners, windows are broken, and the state of the bathrooms, if existent, is appalling. Students are rarely given reading homework, as there are not enough books available for each student. If learning material is available, teachers are reluctant to distribute the books, due to theft.

⁵⁰ Until the end of 1990, Model C schools were government schools, completely funded and for the use of whites only. In 1991, these schools were converted into state-aided schools that admitted black students (for more details on the South African school system before and after the transition, see Pampallis (1998)). Although the schools are open to all students who pass the entry exam, only the minority of isiZulu-speaking parents have sufficient financial funds to pay fees for such an institution.

homogenous entities, and there exist a multitude of factors, *inter alia* linguistic ones that create boundaries among members of a group, which is considered to be one homogenous language community. Incidentally, the members of the isiZulu speaking community of Umlazi are no exception. The educational issues discussed above that play a role in this regard shall be discussed in more detail below.

1.4.3. Language and identities in education

The majority of recent language attitude studies – in fact, sociolinguistic studies in South Africa in general – have been conducted in educational institutions. Researchers seem to agree that the language attitudes and behaviour of learners and teachers give a good indication of sociolinguistic developments such as language shift and language maintenance to name a few. Undoubtedly, teachers have a great effect on the minds of the younger generation and often the teachers' perceptions are reflected in the opinions of the learners. Several scholars (Clarence-Fincham 1998, Coetzee Van Rooy 2000, de Kadt 2004, McKenna 2004, Ndimande 2004, Niedrig 1999) have recently investigated 'identities' in educational environments. In the context of these studies the process of negotiating identities on the basis of different languages is increasingly being focused on and is further seen to play a crucial role for academic development and achievement.

South Africa has a very progressive official Language policy in Education in place.

Accordingly (Constitution 29, 2):

Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account -

- (a) equity;
- (b) practicability; and
- (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Practically, however, English is virtually the only medium of instruction from secondary school level onwards. There is clearly a mismatch between the official language policy in education, which promotes multilingualism, and the language practices at schools and higher institutions of learning (see, Kamwangamalu 2000a). With regard to the dominance of English in the educational system, various scholars have commented on the apparent lack of change. Waddington (1999), for instance, notes that despite the official promotion of multilingualism most school authorities in South Africa have no intention to challenge the hegemonic position of English as 'the' medium of instruction in education. Similarly, most students are writing their exams in a language they are not sufficiently fluent in and in many cases teachers are highly under-qualified, as was the case before the transition (Waddington 1999: 61). An investigation conducted specifically in KwaZulu-Natal suggests that very little progress has been made in the development of the multilingual *language-in-education policy* (Chick and McKay 2000). It does indeed appear as if the official approach to multilingualism backfired and left most parents with an even stronger desire to have their children instructed in English.⁵¹

In South Africa, the issue of *language in education* has been a sensitive and controversial issue for the last century. Despite the fact that English and Afrikaans were the only two languages of economic success, mother-tongue instruction was compulsory for African children and this contributed fundamentally to the oppression of the black population.⁵² English has, for a very long time, been the preferred medium of instruction at African schools and many Africans still bitterly resent the denial of an early access to English (Mawasha 1978: 235, Leith 1983: 203).

⁵¹ For further research that describes the hegemonic position of the English language in education see, for instance, Webb (2002) and Reed (2002) or PRAESA Occasional Papers: Alexander (2000), Heugh (2000a; 2002).

⁵² The anthropologist, W.W.M. Eiselen, who graduated with a PhD under the fascist German anthropologist Meinhof in 1924, was in charge of the education system for the Black population from 1949 (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 68). On the pretext of granting more value and importance to the African cultures and languages he developed an education system (Bantu Education) that kept the Black population on the bottom part of the economic ladder, for more detail on this issue, see for instance Hartshorne (1987, 1992, 1995).

Any past educational language policy, and one that is by default multilingual, not only influences learners' language behaviour and their attitudes towards languages, but also the way they perceive themselves with regard to languages in their life.

According to Edwards (1985: 118), "education has often been perceived as the central pillar in group-identity maintenance, providing an essential support for linguistic nationalism and ethnic revival". Nevertheless, he argues that schools alone do not have the potential to significantly affect language maintenance and remarks that the power of the education system has been far overrated (1985: 130).⁵³

If this holds true in the case of South Africa, we have to ask ourselves why the Indian community experienced a complete language shift from the respective Indian languages to English, whereas the African-language speakers have largely maintained their distinct ethnic mother tongues. Although generalisations about the educational system as the sole agent to decide about language maintenance, shift or even death would be inadequate, the South African case seems to present clear evidence that language education policies do play a crucial and deciding role. I strongly argue, for instance, that without Bantu Education there would be significantly more Black English mother tongue-speakers in the country.

The meaning of 'identity maintenance' is in itself problematic from the theoretical approach this thesis takes because of the multifaceted and flexible nature of identities. Even so, one has to acknowledge – as mentioned earlier – that the Indian Community maintains separate identities as South African Indians. The Indian ancestral languages, for instance Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu, play merely symbolic roles in the construction of these identities. Interestingly enough, Indian students frequently refer to the ancestral Indian language variety as the 'mother tongue',

⁵³ Edwards (1977) discusses the relationship between ethnic identity and educational bilingual programmes designed for minority ethnic groups and the retention and maintenance of ethnic identity in the larger society. He particularly distinguishes between the internal and external pressures of the maintenance of language and ethnic identity, although the line between those is sometimes hard to distinguish. Generally, if the need for maintenance arises from within the group there is a greater success rate of preserving ethnic identity through language. External efforts (e.g. language policies) are frequently seen as a symbolic or artificial undertaking and may not always follow the needs of the particular group, and may even in some cases be counterproductive.

despite the fact that English is their L1. This could be an indication of linguistic vitality independent of the use of the languages in the community.

The fact that the African students are educated in English, despite the shared mother tongue of teachers and learners, undoubtedly has an effect on ethnolinguistic identity construction. As English is the only 'official' medium in the classroom, it fosters the perception that the African languages have no 'academic value'. Since the new democratic constitution the number of African students in multiracial schools has increased enormously. Parents who have the financial means generally choose to send their children to these schools, as ex-DET-schools and those in township and rural areas remain poorly equipped, understaffed and frequently lack competent teaching staff. The latter, however, is not surprising, as one has to remember that most practising teachers today are still victims of Bantu Education.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000a: 7) argue that the use of English as opposed to the African languages had a negative effect in South Africa because it depicts an impediment of the advancement of the African population in general. "The decision of school authorities and parents to use English as the medium of learning in schools (especially primary schools) has definitely contributed to the underdevelopment of the South African people" (ibid). This also raises the question over whether this under-development affected people's self-esteem and ultimately their notions of themselves and their identities. Dlamini (2003: 54) comments on the paradox of writing an article on the promotion of the African languages in English by referring to Steve Biko's words in the post script: "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed". She seems to concur with Ngugi (1986, 2003) that the use of an ex-colonial language does not have the full potential to adequately convey African thought.

There are currently a number of active organisations that support South Africa's educational multilingualism and, consequently, the construction of multilingual identities in education. At the tertiary level, the University of Port Elizabeth started

to teach some subjects in isiXhosa a few years ago in an attempt to promote African Languages (University of Port Elizabeth 2000). Academics in the isiZulu Programme of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville campus, have created a strong lobby group for the promotion of isiZulu. Furthermore, a number of academics at the University of Zululand are currently involved in the isiZulu Dictionary Project. In addition to this, at the University of Cape Town, Neville Alexander and his associates are working, unremittingly, on the further promotion, development and 'intellectualisation' of the autochthonous languages (for more detail, see Alexander 2003). In short, there are a range of efforts underway to academically develop the African languages in order to equip them with a technologically advanced and scientific lexicon, so that they may eventually be employed as a medium of instruction at tertiary educational level.

In spite of the lack of language policy implementation in education and the fact that recent investigations suggest that language shift occurs in urban environments, the African languages seem to have a noteworthy vitality in rural and township communities. Unfortunately, sociolinguistic research data in this field remains scarce. As mentioned earlier, the large majority of language in education research, for instance, has been conducted in (urban) multiracial (ex-Model C) schools, which conveys an inadequate picture of the situation because only a fraction of South African learners attend these types of schools.

1.4.4. Language shift and shifting identities

A large part of recent sociolinguistic discussion in the South African context has focused on the phenomenon of language shift and its consequences for South African society and the indigenous languages. The complex dynamics involved in language shift include language-embedded identity negotiations and alterations. It is clear that a language is only maintained if the speakers of this language attach sufficient and significant value to it. The language must feature as an important factor in the way the language community perceives itself in the world. South Africa provides several examples of language shift and death. The total loss of the Khoisan languages is the most striking example in South African history. More

recent examples are those of the Indian language communities that shifted to English (see Mesthrie 1995c, 1995d).

Fishman (1981: 237), among others, argues that language shift is to some extent related to changes and alterations of social roles and relationships. Hence:

language shift of any kind (...) is an indicator of dislocation. It implies the breakdown of a previously established societal allocation of functions: *the alteration of previously recognized role-relationships*, situations and domains, so that these no longer imply or demand the language with which they were previously associated (ibid.).

If in one society language presents a symbol of ethnic loyalty, one would logically conclude that a shift away from that language would lead to a shift of ethnic loyalty. However, this may not always be the case, as the motives to use a language other than the ethnic tongue, may be based on purely instrumental reasons and does not necessarily provide a platform on which a 'new' identity is constructed. However, young African-language speakers who adopted English as their main medium of communication are not likely to communicate with their children in their mother tongue. As a matter of fact, language shift often results ultimately in language death⁵⁴. It is widely agreed upon that the transmission of a language to children is the most crucial factor in maintaining a language, and if this transmission cannot be assured, language shift is likely to occur. Therefore, declining languages often have a predominance of older speakers (Edwards 1985: 163).

If language shift occurs from the African languages to English in South Africa, does this imply a change of identity among Africans? Do isiZulu mother-tongue speakers give up their 'Zuluness' and/or 'Africanness' when they shift to English as their main medium of communication? Is one still perceived to be 'Zulu' if s/he does not know or use isiZulu? These and similar questions are central to this study

⁵⁴ *Language death* occurs when the entire original speech community, thus all speakers of the language, have completely shifted their language behaviour and there is no one left who speaks the original mother tongue as a first or primary language (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000a: 13). The phenomenon has also been referred to as *Language suicide* (Denison 1977) and *linguistic genocide* (Day 1985) to mention only two, which demonstrate a good example of how much the issue of language has been subject to emotions.

and it shall be critically explored to what degree, if at all, language shift is perceived as an identity shift by the language community investigated here. Kembo-Sure and Webb (2000a: 13) argue that language shift only becomes complete when the other language becomes a symbol of the socio-cultural identity of the speaker. From a post-structuralist perspective, one may argue that identities may indeed shift, but they cannot die. The notion of an 'identity alteration' or an 'identity growth' may be much more adequate.

The socio-cultural identity – just as any other identity – is constructed, flexible and dependent on context. Indeed, bilingual and multilingual individuals may identify with more than one language. An educated isiZulu speaker may choose to speak English in a variety of situations in his/her daily life as a symbol for his/her socio-cultural identity as an educated African. This, however, does not necessarily imply that English is the strongest symbol of his/her ethnolinguistic identity. On the contrary, this person may identify at a much more intimate level with his/her mother tongue and thus regards isiZulu as a crucial symbol of his/her identity. An essential characteristic of language shift remains the use of the language in the most intimate context, as highlighted by Webb and Kembo-Sure (*ibid.*).

The South African elite clearly uses the English language as a main medium of communication, despite the fact that many speak an indigenous African language as a mother tongue. Although it is widely assumed that the African mother tongues are still predominantly used in domestic settings, many recent sociolinguistic studies (De Klerk 2002; Kamwangamalu 2003) indicate ongoing language shift from the African languages to English. It is assumed that the English language slowly intrudes the private domain. Language shift or at least attrition is observed, particularly among African speakers who attend ex-Model C schools. Clearly, it is no coincidence that children who spend most of their day in an English dominated literacy environment, and do not even learn isiZulu as a subject, have weaker literacy skills in isiZulu than in English.

A few decades ago social psychologists of language, most notably Howard Giles and his associates, explored the question of when and why speakers of one

language variety shift to another in particular situations. It is argued that under particular circumstances the use of the L1 (or a particular accent) is a sign of distinction in order to demonstrate that language is a salient dimension of the individual's identity (Giles 1977 et al.). This linguistic strategy has come to be known as *speech divergence*. Contrastive behaviour, *speech convergence*, takes place when a speaker modifies his speech in the direction of another in order to accommodate his/her conversation partner in order to improve the communication. These linguistic strategies have long-term saliency with reference to language shift. Interestingly, isiZulu-speakers have been found to *diverge* with other African language speakers as isiZulu is used as an African *lingua franca* (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000).

Edward regards speech accommodation in general (either a divergent or convergent mode) as a kind of 'identity adjustment' employed in order to increase or decrease group status (Edwards 1985: 152). Indeed, this is salient in a situation where, for instance, an indigenous African language speaker chooses to speak his African mother tongue to an audience in public, although he/she speaks fluent English and there are English monolinguals in the audience. In this case, speech convergence is clearly an expression of identity, and often a political statement. Under these circumstances the speaker displays his ethnolinguistic distinctiveness and risks that part of the audience may not understand him/her. The mere fact that he/she uses the indigenous African language in the given situation is not only an expression of his cultural and linguistic identity, but also a political statement.

However, a group that shifts from the L1 to another language does not necessarily lose cultural continuity. Drawing on the work of Barth (1969), Edwards (1985: 96) notes that ultimately a sense of identity depends more on the continuation of group boundaries than it does upon specific elements within them (ibid.). Despite a possible language shift, the identity previously linked to the language a person shifts from may very well be retained. However, working in a paradigm where languages are regarded as distinct cultural resources, the loss of a language is obviously seen as a cultural loss.

Webb and Kembo-Sure argue in a similar vein:

Since language and culture are closely connected, the occurrence of linguistic shift may lead to cultural shift: the alienation of people from their cultural identity, and, eventually, perhaps even the 'death' of a particular way of life. When this happens, a society seems to lose direction, often becoming victim to the twin evils of poverty and crime (2000a: 13).

In fact, Webb and Kembo-Sure take the argument a step further here and suggest that "the alienation of people from their cultural identity" may ultimately have an effect on the moral behaviour of people: in other words, the development of crime. The significance of language in such a process is questionable. However, the dislocation of people from their roots, of which language may be one, is cause for concern in a linguistically and culturally complex society such as South Africa.

The multidimensional and multifaceted character of identification processes in any plural society does not take place in a socio-political vacuum. It is in fact very much dependent on factors such as power and status. In the next section I discuss the position of isiZulu, in order to provide all the necessary background knowledge from which the empirical study of language and ethnic identity can be embarked on. The *ethnolinguistic vitality* framework, originally developed by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) is – despite some problems⁵⁵ – a useful tool of analysis in the South African context and is employed below. The analysis makes particular reference to KwaZulu-Natal and applies the theoretical framework to isiZulu and the isiZulu-speaking community of Umlazi, in particular.

⁵⁵ Williams (1992) is among those scholars who provide useful critical analysis of the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality. One of his concerns is the contradiction that appears in the work of Giles et al. that collective behaviour is understood as an objective concept, while ethnic identity is a feature of culturally conditioned subjectivity. Another point of criticism is the failure to distinguish between ethnicity and ethnic group, which includes neglecting a major problem addressed in sociological and anthropological ethnicity research.

1.4.5. IsiZulu ethnolinguistic vitality⁵⁶

As previously mentioned, the understanding of how ethnic identity is related to language has been enriched during the past few decades by a prodigious amount of research and scholarship from several disciplines. In particular, within the social psychology of language, valuable research was undertaken in the 1970s and 80s, which had a lasting influence on the Sociology of Language and Sociolinguistics. The framework used below exemplifies a social-psychological approach to the study of language and ethnic identity.⁵⁷

This theoretical model is employed with the argument that in combination with a post-structural understanding, descriptive frameworks can enhance and deepen our understanding of the role of language in society. As an introductory remark I will point out that isiZulu-English bilingualism is currently only common among the members of the isiZulu-speaking group, as the vast majority of English L1-speakers in KwaZulu-Natal speak Afrikaans as a second language.⁵⁸ For the purpose of this analysis, I will treat the isiZulu L1-speaking group as a collective.

The concept of *ethnolinguistic vitality* has received, despite some criticism, (Husband and Khan 1982, Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003, Williams 1992) widespread recognition among scholars investigating specific aspects of sociolinguistic behaviour among ethnolinguistic groups in multilingual settings (cf. Currie and Hogg 1994; Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982; Giles and Johnson 1981, 1987; Landry and Allard 1994; Pierson 1994). In the South African context, Louw-Potgieter and Giles (1987), and more recently Barkhuizen and De Klerk (2000) and Bowerman (2000) employed the theory. One of the crucial assumptions underlying the framework is that language is an ethnic symbol and plays an integral role in the construction of the in-group behaviour of the ethnic group. Giles, who is one of the

⁵⁶ A modified account of this chapter entitled *Ethnolinguistic Vitality in KwaZulu-Natal* has already been published (Rudwick 2004b).

⁵⁷ The theory has not remained uncriticised (see for instance, Williams (1992) and Pavlenko and Blackledge (2003)).

⁵⁸ This is mostly, but not solely due to the history of apartheid, where the white minority had little opportunity to learn the indigenous African languages. Even today, however, there exists a general lack of motivation to learn isiZulu among most whites.

pioneers in research on the social-psychological aspects of language and ethnic identity, attempted *inter alia* to evaluate and systematise the factors that contribute to language contact phenomena such as language shift, language maintenance and ethnolinguistic group behaviour in multilingual settings. McConnell (1997: 353) suggests that Giles' theoretical framework also presented a milestone in narrowing the disparate schools in the sociology of language and sociolinguistics, which is mainly due to the juxtaposition of group and language within the theory.

Essentially, it is argued that ethnolinguistic in-group/out-group strength has an effect on group cohesion and this strength, which is called *ethnolinguistic vitality*, has been defined as "...that what makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (Giles et al. 1977). The operational definition of 'objective ethnolinguistic vitality data' used in this study is, "information which excludes the subjective perceptions of individuals who are members of the ethnolinguistic groups on focus here". Essentially, there are three socio-structural variables pertinent to *ethnolinguistic vitality* (Giles et al. 1977). First, there is the *status factor* (including economic, social, prestige and socio-historical aspects); second, *demography* (such as absolute numbers, birth rate, geographical concentration); and third, *institutional support* (such as recognition of the group's language in the media, education and government) (Giles et al. 1977). According to the theory, the more status, institutional support and the more favourable demographic factors occur, the more vitality an ethnolinguistic group has and the more likely individuals are to behave as a member of a distinctive collective entity in intergroup situations. Accordingly, the more vitality is embedded in the language, the more indications there are for language maintenance strategies, short and long termed, among the members of the group (ibid.).

The Subjective Vitality Questionnaire (SVQ) was introduced in order to measure a group's perception of the vitality of its language. Although widely employed, the SVQ has received vehement criticism (Williams 1992) and I regard it of little use in answering the main questions underlying this study. It needs to be pointed out,

however, that there are also severe limitations involved in the analysis of *ethnolinguistic vitality* exclusively on the basis of so-called ‘objective’ criteria. An operational definition for ‘objective ethnolinguistic vitality data’ employed here is information that excludes the subjective perceptions of the ethnolinguistic groups and focuses on sociolinguistic facts, such as the number of mother-tongue isiZulu-speakers. Information on the status of a language is, however, not readily available through ‘objective’ data and depends on subjective factors. The majority of research in the framework of ethnolinguistic vitality thus provides a combined analysis of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ data by means of an empirical investigation. In this section I do not intend to make any major claims about the constitutive elements of ethnolinguistic identities, language shift or maintenance and ethnicity. The analysis, however, points to some, albeit preliminary, findings with regard to the general sociolinguistic nature of isiZulu *ethnolinguistic vitality* in KwaZulu-Natal.

a) Status

If a language carries a low status socially as well as economically, its own speakers are likely to abandon it for another ‘high’ status variety. The African languages in South Africa are often said to have a low status, but it appears that this low status is usually economically, not emotionally grounded. Adegbija (2001: 285), for instance, argues that an ‘inferiority syndrome’ is attached to indigenous languages, which triggers language shift in African communities to ex-colonial languages. Despite this, I want to argue that the indigenous African languages, in particular isiZulu, carry a wide range of functions in the social and private domains, which may counteract language shift towards English.

The status of isiZulu in South Africa, and in KwaZulu-Natal in particular, is significantly different to that of the other official African languages. Considering the complex South African linguistic landscape, isiZulu may indeed be regarded as a ‘prestige’ language in the context that minority language groups, such as Mpondo, Bhaca, Cele or Phuti-speakers are likely to specify isiZulu as home

language in an official language census (Donnelly 2003: 35).⁵⁹ IsiZulu furthermore serves as a *lingua franca* for a large section of the African population (Wood 1995: 188). In fact, a PanSALB document (1998: 4), states that “isiZulu functions as a *lingua franca* for 70% of the country’s population” whereas, “English can, at present, only be used efficiently by 20% of the population”. Approximately three quarters of isiZulu L1-speakers in South Africa live in KwaZulu-Natal, and my own research suggests that a large number of Africans whose L1 is one of the other eight official African languages and who reside in the province, have some proficiency in isiZulu. In addition to this, several of my Umlazi respondents explained that isiZulu speakers in KwaZulu-Natal expect and encourage African immigrants from other African countries who live in the province to learn isiZulu. This clearly indicates that the sociolinguistic situation in KwaZulu-Natal is significantly different from that in other provinces such as, Gauteng, for instance, where all of the official languages are spoken.

Measured against the other eight official African languages, isiZulu features dominantly. When measured against English, however, isiZulu status appears low. It is evident that isiZulu has never been awarded any economic value in the past. In South Africa one needs to be proficient in English in order to succeed professionally. The exclusive knowledge of isiZulu neither gets one admission to any higher institution of learning, nor provides anyone with a job. Although certain job advertisements today call for proficiency in isiZulu, English proficiency nevertheless remains a prerequisite. Furthermore, isiZulu has only very little international projection, examples of which are the few universities in the United States and Europe where isiZulu is taught as a subject. Evidently, status is inextricably linked to prestige and power, and a language that offers no economic benefits has little societal or global power.

The low sociohistorical status of isiZulu has determined up until now what Giles and his associated describe as a ‘sense of pride or shame’ (1977: 312).

⁵⁹ For more detail on the Phuti language see Donnelly (1999).

In the past isiZulu speakers had an inferior status in society and only very few had access to any of the higher domains of life. Nevertheless, isiZulu was “extensively used for the high domains in their tribal communities”, (Bowerman 2000: 36) and the history of the isiZulu-speaking community has been glorified around a pre-European ‘Shakan’ past. The sociohistorical use of isiZulu is also significantly different from that of the other indigenous African languages in South Africa. While in most places African children were taught in English before the imposition of the Bantu Education Act, isiZulu-speaking children in Natal were taught in their L1 since 1885 (Hartshorne 1995: 308). Notwithstanding this, many isiZulu speakers have ambivalent feelings when it comes to the status and the value of their mother tongue (Ngcobo, 2000). It remains questionable that the overall status factors of isiZulu are potent enough to counteract the slow language shift that has been taking place in urban environments. Nevertheless, as will be shown below, isiZulu enjoys a considerable social status because the vast majority of Africans in KwaZulu-Natal use isiZulu as the dominant medium of the home and culture. This situation provides, to some extent, social status that contributes significantly to isiZulu ethnolinguistic vitality.

b) Demography

The second domain of the ethnolinguistic vitality concept includes demographic factors and, as such, is generally self-explanatory. What needs to be considered, however, is that Giles et al. (1977) did not take into account that a minority group, in terms of numbers, can be a majority group in terms of power, with the consequence that its vitality is low and the ‘strength’ measurement would be turned upside-down. This creates the “danger of confusing the demographic concept of minority with the conceptualisation of minority in terms of power and dominance” (Williams 1992: 210). When investigating the South African sociolinguistic landscape, the ambiguity of the concept becomes even clearer.

IsiZulu mother-tongue speakers obviously outnumber every other language community in KwaZulu-Natal to an astronomical extent. The table below clearly testifies to this (Census 2001).

Language	Number of speakers
Afrikaans	140 833
English	1 285 011
IsiNdebele	18 570
IsiXhosa	219 826
IsiZulu	7 624 284
Sepedi	10 844
Sesotho	66 925
Setswana	5 195
SiSwati	12 792
Tshivenda	1 215
Xitsonga	3 289
Other	37 232

Source: Census Database 2001: <http://www.statssa.gov.za>

As shown above, the recent census data suggests that nearly 80% of the KwaZulu-Natal population speaks isiZulu as a 'home language'. Despite this fact, the language was in the past a minority language in terms of power. This is not to say, however, that the demographic factors do not contribute to the ethnolinguistic vitality of the group. I merely intend to outline the ambiguity of the concept as originally developed by Giles et al. (1977). Together with other scholars (e.g. Liebkind 1999), I argue that numerical strength and geographical distribution may indeed play a crucial role with regard to ethnolinguistic vitality.

KwaZulu-Natal has traditionally been the territory of the ethnolinguistic group of isiZulu L1-speakers in South Africa and is thus a reasonably homogenous province from a linguistic perspective. During apartheid, Zululand was an independent homeland in which isiZulu was the official language besides English. If one is inclined to believe the 2001 census data, isiZulu L1-speakers not only represent the

largest language community in South Africa, but also one that has continuously increased its numerical strength over the past few years. Thus, with respect to the second structural variable of ethnolinguistic vitality, isiZulu appears to be securely positioned and may carry solid potential.

c) Institutional support

The third factor, *institutional support*, is a very multifaceted one in the context of this analysis. The factors linked to this variable are supposed to circumscribe what contributes to the public exposure and support one group's language receives in comparison to the dominant language. Giles et al. (1977) refer to domains such as the media, the government, the education system, the religious and cultural domains and the industry. The language use in these spheres of life certainly has a major influence on the ethnolinguistic vitality of a language, but one has to keep in mind that the institutional support factors do not adequately take the link between language and ideology into consideration (Williams 1992: 210). Referring back to the particular case investigated here, it needs to be noted that the official institutional support isiZulu receives is often at odds with the unofficial language practices. The original conceptualisation would suggest that a language that has official status, should provide high ethnolinguistic vitality for the ethnic group that speaks this language as a mother tongue. This, however, paints a rather simplistic picture of how state institutions influence language use and behaviour, as will be seen below.

IsiZulu has been accorded *official* status in South Africa for nearly ten years now. For many individuals who live in South Africa, however, the fact that the country has an eleven-official language policy is hardly noticeable. The South African corporate world seems to have dismissed the policy as utterly impractical, and interpreted it as a call for English-only, as opposed to the previous Afrikaans-English bilingualism. Not only does the South African industry lack a commitment to multilingualism, English clearly holds a hegemonic position in the mass media, the educational system and even government services such as Metro Water for example. With reference to multilingualism, little practical implementation has

been achieved. As several scholars in South Africa (Maartens 1998; Bowerman 2000; Kamwangamalu 2000a, 2001a) have pointed out: there exists a great mismatch between language policy and language practices. The latter indicate the exclusive use of English in all higher domains of life, and advocate a merely symbolic value of isiZulu and the other indigenous African languages as the language of the home, culture and belonging.

Furthermore, the overall institutional support for isiZulu remains limited. The language of parliament in the new South Africa is English, as opposed to the Afrikaans-English bilingualism that was common during apartheid. For practical reasons, very few speeches are held in one of the indigenous African languages.⁶⁰ With regard to the media, similar observations can be made. Although isiZulu has for a long time been catered for in radio broadcasting (e.g. *Ukhozi FM*) and the print media (e.g. *Ilanga* and *Isolezwe*), it is only very marginally represented in television. Kamwangamalu (2000a: 43) suggests that English takes up over 90% of airtime on the three national South African TV channels.

In the domain of education, isiZulu is only used as an official medium of instruction in some primary schools, but has not yet been able to make its mark as the official medium of instruction in any secondary educational institution. There are various projects at work that support bilingual and multilingual schooling and promote the use of the indigenous African languages in school (cf. *PRAESA*). With regard to the institutional support given to isiZulu at this point of South African history, it remains to be seen whether the current symbolism has any influence on the ethnolinguistic vitality of the language. The linguistic watchdog PanSALB seems to take South Africa's commitment to multilingualism seriously and is currently pressuring all kinds of higher domain institutions to engage in an approach that promotes multilingualism.

⁶⁰ A budget, however, provides for the translation of important governmental publications into the other official languages. Hansard, for instance, which is the Parliament's historical record of proceedings, was published in both English and Afrikaans before the transition, and is now published in English and additionally in one of the other ten official languages on a rotational basis (Kamwangamalu 2000: 56). For more details on the language of government documents, see Phaswana (2003).

The above analysis points to some interesting, albeit preliminary, findings with reference to the general position of isiZulu in KwaZulu-Natal. IsiZulu ethnolinguistic vitality is maintained mainly due to demographic factors, and is consequently based on the high numeric concentration of its speakers in the province. But it still receives little formal institutional support. The status of isiZulu is clearly an ambiguous one. On the one hand, the language is widely used in domestic settings and has, as such, apparent significant cultural value in the community. On the other hand isiZulu has, despite its official status, little economic power attached to it. This makes it difficult and indeed dangerous to predict any future linguistic developments. To summarise, isiZulu is used extensively in all lower domains of life, whereas English is the language of the higher domains. It does not follow from this, however, that isiZulu is not used at all in higher domains such as tertiary education because isiZulu-speaking academics would certainly employ the language for micro-level and private conversation.

Although Giles et al. (1977) did not specify the relative significance of the three domains with regard to ethnolinguistic group survival, the framework remains a useful tool of preliminary analysis in a sociolinguistic situation. It provides a solid basis on which further empirical research should be conducted, as is the case in this work. I do argue at this point, however, that despite the prevailing hegemony of the English language⁶¹, isiZulu ethnolinguistic vitality – as analysed above – appears robust and carries significantly more potential than the mismatch between language policy and practices may suggest. This is mostly due to the stable demography of the language and the fact that isiZulu has important functions for a large portion of the KwaZulu-Natal population.

Notwithstanding the potential of isiZulu as outlined above, there are historical and economically motivated constraints in South Africa's sociolinguistic landscape that prevent the fostering of isiZulu ethnolinguistic vitality, if it is measured against

⁶¹ See Chapter 2.3.

English. An example of this is the prevailing stigma resting on mother-tongue instruction as outlined by Kamwangamalu (1997).⁶² In terms of decision-making, parents choose what is 'best' for their children and at this time in South African history it is clearly a choice of English as the medium of instruction. It remains to be seen whether isiZulu ethnolinguistic vitality will be sufficiently strong enough for the language to make its mark in South Africa's higher domains of life.

A further extension of the ethnolinguistic vitality framework is *Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory* as outlined by Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987). Accordingly, high levels of perceived *ethnolinguistic vitality* increase the salience of group identity. Group members, therefore, are more inclined to accentuate their language or their group speech-markers through various linguistic strategies in order to establish favourable linguistic distinctiveness.

Ethnolinguistic vitality is thus one of the pillars on which *Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory* is based and has been explored from a variety of angles. Essentially, the theory was formulated to address the issue of language strategies and ethnolinguistic group behaviour in situations of multilingual and multicultural contact. It has been argued that the framework of *ethnolinguistic identity theory* fosters understanding of social-psychological processes that are at play when individuals maintain or sacrifice their ethnolinguistic identity (Giles and Johnson 1987: 70).

⁶² Kamwangamalu (1997) further suggests strategies that could be employed in order to find ways to *cleanse* mother-tongue education of its negative associations.

The theory draws mainly on premises of intergroup behaviour, in particular that of Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979).⁶³ I intend to provide a brief critical examination of the framework later, in order to give some indication as to why the model may prove faulty in the South African context. Ethnolinguistic identity theory essentially implies that, “although a person’s membership groups are each part of his or her social identity, they will not *all* be equally salient at any one time” (Giles and Johnson 1987: 71).

Accordingly, three variables are suggested as relevant in terms of the accentuation of in-group speech markers: (a) perceived vitality (b) perceived group boundaries and (c) multiple group membership. An individual’s sense of ethnic belonging and identification is dependent on the nature of these factors. According to Giles and Johnson (1987), the level of a person’s sense of ethnic belonging increases or decreases respectively when the importance of these factors increases or decreases. It is further hypothesized (*ibid.*) that individuals are more likely to define encounters with out-group members in ethnic terms, and will try to maintain positive linguistic distinctiveness (maintain identity) when they:

1. identify themselves subjectively and strongly as members of a group that considers language an important symbol of their identity;
2. make insecure social comparisons with the out-group (for example, regard their group’s status as potentially changeable);
3. perceive their own group’s vitality to be high;
4. perceive their in-group boundaries to be hard and closed; and
5. identify strongly with few other social categories.

⁶³ In simple terms, SIT includes the premise that we categorise the social world we live in and perceive ourselves as members of diverse groups, which lead us to define our social identity, which may be either positive or negative. According to the theory, we further strive to achieve a positive identity by comparing ourselves favourably with members of an out-group in order to gain what Tajfel calls a ‘positive psychological distinctiveness’ (Giles et al. 1982). Accordingly, the theory covers a broad range of intergroup situations and clearly has important implications for language and ethnicity. SIT specifically related to language and identity assumes that a group considers its own language or speech variety as a valid dimension of comparison with out-groups. Investigating the role of language within the framework of Tajfel’s social identity theory suggests that in certain group situations, members of a particular ethnic group may search for a positive distinctiveness from the out-group on linguistic dimensions they value highly (Tajfel 1982).

Giles and Johnson (1987: 72) further suggest that if the five abovementioned factors are at play, individuals are:

- likely to maintain their ethnolinguistic identity and diverge from an out-group speaker;
- less disposed to acquiring native-like proficiency in the dominant group's tongue;
- extremely keen to maintain use of the ethnic tongue within the family context and beyond; and
- behave accordingly.

The opposite of the above characteristics may occur when individuals carry a neutral or even negative ethnic or ethnolinguistic identity and strive to identify with the dominant group. To do this they employ linguistic strategies in that direction, for example, acquiring native-like proficiency in the outgroup's language. The theory is more specifically with the predisposition and conditions under which individual ethnic group members will be more or less likely to define interethnic contact situations in terms of ethnicity, and be resolute in their language maintenance strategies (1987: 84).⁶⁴

However, the South African sociolinguistic context is far too hybrid and multi-dimensional to analyse any particular community based solely on the above criteria. Although the framework points out relevant factors on the issue of ethnolinguistic contact situations, it provides a rather uni-dimensional picture that fails to acknowledge the complex, flexible and often paradoxical aspects involved in socio- and ethnolinguistic identification processes. Furthermore, the saliency of the situational context is largely neglected in the theory, which makes its overall saliency highly problematic. In other words, individuals may think of themselves as 'belonging' to a particular ethnolinguistic group in one particular situation, and at other times they may consciously choose to be members of another group.

⁶⁴ Needless to say, most individuals belong to various linguistic in-groups, which sometimes overlap and sometimes stand in contrast to each other. Evidently individuals may have various linguistically defined identities at the same time. As one speaks numerous languages he/she also possesses a more diffuse and complex linguistic identity.

First, because individuals speak numerous languages and live in multilingual and multicultural environments, they also possess more diffuse, hybrid and complex ethnolinguistic identities. Second, in a country like South Africa, where mastering the out-group's language was, and essentially still is a prerequisite for survival, individuals may refrain or engage in particular language behaviour on the basis of instrumental motives only. Although this framework may be useful to position some of the empirical data collected in this study on a theoretical template, ethnolinguistic identity theory used as an exclusive tool of analysis would be insufficient with the qualitative and hermeneutic approach of this study. Nevertheless, the theory suggests some interesting sociolinguistic scenarios for a multilingual contact situation as will be discussed below.

While drawing from Tajfel's (1974) theory of intergroup relations, Giles et al. (1977) suggest four group strategies that are salient for social change and hence the construction of new identities. One of these strategies, or in other words, behaviour patterns, may indeed be applicable to the South African context. First, *assimilation* is regarded as a universal phenomenon whereby the subordinate group linguistically and culturally integrates itself into the dominant group's life (Giles et al. 1977). Generally, assimilation is desired because the members of the subordinate group want to benefit socially and economically. The second strategy suggested is the *redefinition of negative characteristics*, where, "pride is suddenly evidenced in the maintenance of the ethnic tongue and dialect, and the in-group language variety is no longer a feature of group membership of which to feel ashamed" (1977: 338). Moreover, the "old humiliating attempts at converging towards the speech patterns of the dominant group are rejected" (ibid.). The third group strategy is termed *social creativity*. This entails not only a redefinition, but also a search for new dimensions on which group members can compare themselves favourably with the out-group, and includes language as a resource. Finally, the last strategy is *group competition* in which members attempt to compete, for instance in terms of language rights, with the dominant group (Giles et al. 1977: 340).

Whether or not there exists potential for the application of these strategies to the South African context will be examined in the analysis later. It may be argued that some evidence for the *redefinition of negative characteristics* exists among the members of the isiZulu-speaking community investigated. However, as previously argued, the level of homogeneity with regard to human collectivities is always and under all circumstances limited. As mentioned earlier, ethnolinguistic groups are not homogenous collectivities, and members within one group erect individual boundaries and show idiosyncratic behaviour. Hence, they may adopt a linguistic or social strategy that other members do not practise. Furthermore, the strategies as mentioned above are by themselves not exclusive, and the same individual may adopt one strategy at a particular point of time and another strategy at a different one.

This chapter integrated a literature review and selected theoretical models salient to this study. What it suggests, then, is that the prominence of language with regard to the construction of identity and ethnicity is not clear-cut or universal. It is because of the considerations mentioned above that specific case studies are necessary in order to obtain a detailed sociolinguistic picture of particular language communities in the world. In this context, I argue that a holistic view, both from a sociohistorical and a methodological perspective, is desirable and hence these two concerns will be addressed in the next two chapters.

2. Socio-historical background

2.1. Introduction

In this thesis I have already referred to some historical events relevant to this research. This chapter now presents a cohesive overview of ‘language and ethnicity’ related issues. It traces the link between isiZulu and ethnic consciousness, hence Zuluness, by first discussing how the status of the indigenous African languages in general – and of isiZulu in particular – was undermined during the colonial and apartheid era. This chapter represents an integral part of the study as the reader requires a substantial amount of general background knowledge on South Africa in order to understand this particular case study. I begin with a brief sketch of the historical treatment of languages in order to acquaint the reader with the language policies of the South African past. Second, I provide a brief historical account of the emergence of the English language hegemony by discussing how the political climate in South Africa has promoted English as the ‘language of liberation’. Third, I will explore how the isiZulu-speaking community of present-day KwaZulu-Natal has a long and eventful history, which largely influences ethnolinguistic identity construction today.

2.2. Language treatment and language policy in South Africa

Language must be allowed to be a tool by which people communicate in given situations without feeling superior or inferior in relation to other languages, and without being put at a disadvantage by it. South Africa’s history testifies to the tragic consequences of such unequal relationships (Maake 1994: 118).

The historical language treatment mentioned above, testifies to the unequal power relations that existed in the country from the early days of colonial settlement. A consideration of it provides the necessary background for properly understanding the place of languages in the minds of the African population today. The

oppression of the indigenous African population has had enormous consequences for people's perceptions of themselves and their languages. In fact, language attitudes and language behaviour today still largely reflect the language policies of the past. It is for this reason that this section outlines important historic linguistic problems that stand in relation to how language and identity are constructed in contemporary South African society. A detailed investigation into the historical language treatment and the multifaceted language contact situation in South Africa, however, would make up a PhD thesis on its own. This section is rather an attempt to provide cohesive information on how historical language treatment had an effect on the African population in general and the isiZulu-speaking community in particular.

As indicated earlier, language policy presented an issue dealt with exclusively by the white minority ruling the country until the early 1990s. Language laws of any nature were designed and developed without any participation of the speakers of the indigenous African languages. The racial inequalities and the deplorable political state of the country, up until the end of statutory apartheid, manifested itself clearly in the societal treatment of languages. The white Afrikaans- and English-speaking minority held political power, while the African population was entirely excluded from any kind of linguistically relevant decision-making process. It is argued, among other things, that the weight of this imposed 'passiveness' still impacts on the attitudes of many African language speakers today and influences the way people perceive themselves with regard to languages.

2.2.1. The early years of colonisation

When the first European settlers arrived in the Cape in 1657, the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) founded a port along the coastline with the intention of trading and merchandising. Two indigenous groups inhabited the Cape at that time: the Khoikhoi and the San⁶⁵, who lived as hunters and gatherers. The farmers required

⁶⁵ The San have also been referred to as 'Bushman' and the Khoikhoi as 'Hottentots' in various earlier works. I will refrain, for obvious reasons, from the use of such terminology in this dissertation.

labourers and a year after the arrival of the 'Vryburgers', the first slaves were brought to the Cape, first from present-day Angola, Madagascar, Bengal and Guinea, later mainly from south-east Asia (Maartens 1998: 25). In 1658, it was decided by the DEIC that the 'natives' must learn Dutch and the first mission schools were built, which focused on educating the native population in religion and Dutch. According to Alexander (1989: 13), this development can be seen as the first intervention on language issues concerning the indigenous African population.

...these half-hearted missionary attempts represented the first modern experiments in formal schooling in South Africa and were the first conscious, intervention in the sphere of language policy in a multilingual South African polity... (ibid.).

British involvement in the region dates only from 1795, but already in the early 19th century the English settlers gained immensely in territory and certain Dutch areas were transferred into the hand of the British (Christie 1985: 33). During this period the British initiated a strong 'Anglicisation' policy, which enforced the learning of the English language. There existed a competitive hegemony between English and Dutch [Afrikaans], while the indigenous African languages were completely ignored and only received attention from missionaries.⁶⁶ "The language-centred British nationalism held that the colonised peoples were 'privileged' to sacrifice their languages and gain English" (Maartens 1998: 26).

In 1822, Lord Charles Somerset declared English as the only official language of South Africa, and inaugurated the law that only English could be used as a medium of instruction in schools (Hartshorne 1992: 190). Half a century later, in 1875, the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (GRA) [Union of 'true' Afrikaners] was formed in Paarl, which represents the main pillar on which Afrikaner nationalism was built. The members of this union, the 'True Afrikaners', aimed to push Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in school (Kloss 1978: 17) and fought for the recognition of Afrikaans, rather than Dutch, as the mother tongue of the

⁶⁶ It has been argued that there existed a rivalry between the missionaries working in the Zulu and those working in the Xhosa society, which further led to the language varieties (isiZulu and isiXhosa) as being conceptualised as two entirely different languages (Makoni 2003: 135).

Afrikaner. At first, the influence of the Afrikaners was limited and in most mission schools the media of instruction remained Dutch and English. The indigenous languages were 'tolerated' in the domain of basic schooling, but there were only a small percentage of black children who, in fact, attended schools. However, a small English speaking elite emerged, which has been referred to as the 'Black Englishmen' in the literature (see Dunjwa-Blajberg 1980). This marginal group of Africans had learnt to speak immaculate English, adopted a western lifestyle and later represented the 'African intelligentsia' that included many political leaders in the ANC (Alexander 1989: 19). The sociolinguistic significance of these so-called 'Black Englishmen' resurfaces in the last chapter of this thesis.

The prior English-only politics of Lord Millner in the early 20th century triggered and perpetuated great resistance among the Afrikaners who saw a threat to their language inextricably linked to a threat to their ethnic identity. In 1908, a 'Union Convention' was held that aimed to reconcile the conflicting linguistic interests of the two white dominant groups. While in 1910 it was decided that English and Dutch should become official languages of the Union of South Africa, the 1925 legislation enshrined Afrikaans along with English as an official language (Van Wyk 1978: 47). It could be argued that this was the beginning of the end of *Anglicisation* politics. However, it only effectively ended in 1948 when the "Afrikaner came into power and replaced *Anglicisation* with *Afrikanerization*" (Kamwangamalu 2002a: 3).

It is important to stress at this point that the vast majority of the population in South Africa could speak neither English nor Afrikaans. The colonial government entirely ignored the natural linguistic make-up and demography of the South African society. Consequently, the speakers of the indigenous African languages were discriminated against and were excluded from most societal privileges. The education system at the time introduced English medium instruction, but most children speaking an African language severely struggled to become literate in the language. Mother-tongue education was, at first, not regarded as an option for the indigenous African child, as the English language was believed to be one of the

tools by which the African population could become 'civilised'. Some schools in the area of KwaZulu-Natal, however, have used isiZulu as medium of instruction since 1885, and the language was also taught as a compulsory subject (Hartshorne 1992:193). Hence, from a sociolinguistic perspective, isiZulu-speakers have a significantly different history than the speakers of the other African languages.

Afrikaans, officially introduced as a medium of instruction in schools in 1914, was made an official language in parliament only a decade later, but received little attention in the African schools. As the political power of the Afrikaner community grew, however, an authorised committee in the education department decided that not only English, but also Afrikaans had to be introduced as a compulsory subject (Hartshorne 1992: 194).

2.2.2. 1948 – 1975

When the National Party came to power in 1948 a *volkskongres* was held at which a policy of *Christian National Education (CNE)* was adopted, which introduced the principle of mother-tongue education for every child. This change in paradigm in the historical language treatment became "a bone of contention in the apartheid area" (Maartens 1998: 39). Originally, missionaries and politicians had been of the opinion that the indigenous African population needed to become 'civilised' as quickly as possible and this could only be achieved through the medium of a European language. This opinion, however, changed and it was declared that schooling needed to pay more attention to the cultural and linguistic background of the indigenous African population. This new conceptualisation was based on the apprehension that after a certain period of time, the majority of the black population could be as educated as the 'Black Englishmen' and this could result in the loss of the manual work force (Alexander and Helbig 1988: 12).

The anthropologist W.W.M. Eiselen, head of the Department of Native Affairs, lead a specific committee (the *Eiselen commission*) that introduced the new oppressive dispensation into the education system of the black population (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 68). In 1949, he declared that in African schools, mother-

tongue education should be extended to the full eight years of primary school and only thereafter should there be a change of the medium of instruction from English and Afrikaans. The passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 further strengthened the law that English and Afrikaans were both compulsory subjects from the first year of schooling and equally used as the medium of instruction at senior level. Hlatshwayo (2000: 65) aptly asserts that essentially the Act sought to “miseducate the Africans so that their academic certificates became irrelevant for the labour market” (also quoted in Perry 2004: 110). Linked to the Bantu Education Act was also a policy of ‘retribalization’ led by H.F. Verwoerd who ardently supported the separate development of the diverse ethnolinguistic groups in the country (for more detail, see, Davenport 1991 and Chidester 1992).

The decision to make mother-tongue education compulsory during the apartheid years has had an immense effect on perceptions with regard to the language-in-education issue in South Africa. Mother-tongue instruction remains extremely stigmatised even today. The language-in-education policies of the apartheid era were “part of the larger social-engineering project that would ensure the segregation of different racial groups and the hierarchical organisation of South African society, with Black South Africans in the lowest rung of an exploited workforce” (De Klerk 2002b: 33). As the state only empowered people who were proficient in either English or Afrikaans, mother-tongue instruction was regarded as an additional oppressive tool of the apartheid agents.⁶⁷ It is indeed an ironic twist that the principle of mother-tongue education, which has strong pedagogical merits⁶⁸, was employed in order to oppress particular language communities.

English and Afrikaans were promoted on equal footing in the apartheid years, but many schools, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and the Cape Province ignored the law of bilingual education and promoted only English as medium of instruction (Cluver 1992: 118). In 1961, South Africa became a Republic under the leadership of Dr H.F. Verwoerd and the Department of Bantu Education was put in charge of

⁶⁷ Gugushe (1978: 215) further argues that Black learners lacked motivation to study their mother tongue because English and Afrikaans were the “bread-and-butter” languages.

⁶⁸ See for instance Cummins (1984), Cummins and Swain (1986), Cummins and Danesi (1990).

controlling the English/Afrikaans language maintenance in the homelands. Despite resistance from diverse organisations such as the Cape African Teachers Association, the SA Institute of Race Relations and the SA Council of Churches, the discriminatory language policy in education could not be challenged.

However in 1963, the Transkei became an independent homeland and Xhosa was made the medium of instruction only for the first four years of schooling, while English became the only medium of instruction starting from Grade 5. All the other independent homelands, except Qwa-Qwa and Venda, followed and slowly phased out Afrikaans as the medium of instruction (Maartens 1998: 32). In 1972, the Bantu Education Advisory Board recommended that only the initial six years of schooling should entail mother-tongue education, and thereafter instruction should be in either Afrikaans or English, but preferably not both languages (ibid). Despite the recommendation, the government decided to maintain the dual-medium policy, which caused tremendous upheaval in the schools and finally resulted in the tragic event of the Soweto uprising in 1976.

2.2.3. 1975 - 1990

When the African people realised that the government was not going to change the 50:50 language policy that enforced Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, heavy protests erupted. By 1975 teachers' associations, principals and students had lost their patience with the department, and boycotts, strikes and violence erupted. Starting in primary schools, but quickly spreading to secondary schools in May 1976, the protest and violence led to the tragic Soweto uprising on June 16. Within less than a week, because of the ruthless police interventions, 176 young people lost their lives (Hartshorne 1992: 203).

The conflict, however, was not limited to Soweto. It also affected several other areas in South Africa and it is believed that between 700 and 1260 people died (Perry 2004: 113). The events of '76 are manifestations of how intensely and even dangerously the issue of language is tied to South Africa's past. Seeing that hundreds of South Africans lost their lives in a struggle against oppression, the

significance of the dynamic between the languages involved needs highlighting. Soweto learners did not protest because they were not allowed to write matric exams in their mother tongue; they were protesting against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. As public pressure increased, the Ministry had no choice but to capitulate to the demands of a single medium instruction in English. By 1978, almost all African-language speaking learners received their secondary education through the medium of English only. In 1982, the Department of Education and Training published the *De Lange Report*, which gave parents the following options (Maartens 1998: 33):

- (a) The vernacular as medium of instruction during an introductory stage, to be followed by either English or Afrikaans; or
- (b) English or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction from the very beginning of schooling; or
- (c) mother-tongue instruction during the entire school career.

Most parents chose, and still choose, either (a) and (b) with English as the medium of instruction, or a combination of the two. In fact, in KwaZulu-Natal, Afrikaans plays a very marginal role today and is only taught as a subject to very few students in the African, so-called 'Black' schools. In contrast, English is the 'official' medium of virtually all secondary and tertiary schools. It was only in the late 1970s that Black South Africans were able to influence language-related matters. Before that, language policies in education were in place to support the ideology of separate development and the power struggle of the white minority. The past dispensation plays a crucial role in the positioning of the indigenous African languages in education and academic media today, which ultimately also affects the way people define and identify themselves.

2.2.4. 1990 - today

In February 1990 President F.W. De Klerk announced the end of apartheid and, therefore, the end of institutionalised racism and discrimination. The tremendous amount of debates and negotiations in the subsequent years focused, *inter alia*, on the language issue (Hartshorne 1992: 207). For the first time in history, black

South Africans had the right to participate in the discussion and were given the chance to influence the official recognition of their mother tongues.

In South Africa language has now become a terrain of struggle, a struggle over the basic human right to express oneself in one's mother tongue. It is all about self-worth and belonging and is underpinned by power: economic interest, political muscle and cultural concerns (De Klerk 1996:8).

Although the ANC regards all languages as being equal, it was English that acquired the label of the 'language of liberation' during the struggle. Indirectly, this implied that English would function as the dominant, as well as the official language of government. By contrast, the National Party had a different agenda that supported multilingualism, "as a last-ditch compromise to retain the status of Afrikaans, and not out of a commitment to linguistic rights" (Ricento 2002: 5).⁶⁹ On the other hand, there was also some level of consensus that the indigenous African languages, which had not been given official status in the past, needed particular attention and demanded empowerment.

Evidently, in any multilingual and multicultural state such as South Africa, decisions are often based on a compromise between the different interest groups. The decision supporting the 11-official language policy is easily understood against this backdrop. The South African constitution not only grants official status to eleven languages, but also officially promotes the development of multilingualism. The responsibility of the language issue was given to the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST), which then commissioned a Language Plan Task Group (LANGTAG), to consult on the language policy between January and June 1996.⁷⁰ Essentially, the LANGTAG Report promotes the concepts of functional multilingualism, emphasises the

⁶⁹ Furthermore, "the fear of losing political power was exacerbated by the fear that the identity of the Afrikaner people would be lost if the status of their language was diminished" (Alexander and Heugh 2001: 28). The Afrikaans language was and still is regarded widely as the backbone of Afrikanerdom.

⁷⁰ The aim of the commission was to outline a language plan that covered a wide spectrum of domains. In August 1996 the *LANGTAG Report* was submitted and its significance is indisputable (Alexander and Heugh 2001: 31). However, some hold the view that only language experts who voted for a diminution of the English language were allowed to join the LANGTAG group (Hamischfeger 1999: 90).

perspective of language as a resource in the maintenance of policy and planning in South Africa, and outlines strategies to counter English language hegemony.

Below I present the constitutional principles (Clause 6) and the recent census (2001) data on South African languages:

- 6.(1) The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu;
- (2) recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages;
- (3) (a) national and provincial government may use particular official languages for the purpose of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances, and the balance of the needs of the population as a whole or in respective provinces; provided that no national or provincial government may use only one official language;
(b) municipalities must take into consideration the language usage and preferences of their residents;
- (4) national and provincial government, by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor the use by those governments of official languages. Without detracting from the provision of subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably;
- (5) The Pan South African Language Board must -
 - (a) promote and create conditions for the development and use of:
 - (i) all official languages;
 - (ii) the Khoi, Nama and San languages;
 - (iii) sign languages; and
 - (b) promote and ensure respect for -
 - (i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu; and
 - (ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

The table below clearly demonstrates the multilingual nature of the South African society and explains the motives behind a language policy such as the one described above. Despite the apparent language shift among the youths in urban environments, a comparison with previous census data testifies that the African languages have not decreased in terms of the number of speakers. The demography is displayed on the next page:

Language	Number of speakers
Afrikaans	5 983 426
English	3 673 203
IsiNdebele	711 821
IsiXhosa	7 907 153
IsiZulu	10 677 305
Sepedi	4 208 980
Sesotho	3 555 186
Setswana	3 677 016
SiSwati	1 194 430
Tshivenda	1 021 757
Xitsonga	1 992 207
Other	217 293

Source: Census Database 2001: <http://www.statssa.gov.za>

The most significant contemporary organisation to promote multilingualism and further the development of African languages remains the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), which was first established in September 1995 and plays the role of a ‘watchdog’ over language issues (PanSALB 1998). Although the significance of the institution [PanSALB] is widely acknowledged, its instrumental and legislative power is rather questionable (Alexander and Heugh 2001: 32, Perry 2004). Additionally, a National Language Service is established in order to promote and protect the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities. However, the institutional power of these bodies with regard to implementation remains to be seen and scholars who champion the promotion of the African languages remain sceptical (see Alexander and Heugh 2001: 31).

With regard to isiZulu, in particular, the responsibility for the development of the language has been given primarily to the University of Zululand where academics are currently writing a new isiZulu dictionary. In comparison to the other African languages, isiZulu is in quite a fortunate position. In fact, it has been argued that the language is strengthening and that the “speech community in KwaZulu-Natal [...] is getting stronger because the language is now (post-apartheid era) used as an official language in government” (Mngadi 2000). The empirical evidence of such a

claim may be disputable. Nevertheless, there are a number of language activists who are currently promoting the development of isiZulu on all levels in the province. Furthermore, if one pays attention to job advertisements, for example, it is clear that administrative posts not only call for the obvious proficiency in English, but also isiZulu. There is no doubt that from a sociolinguistic perspective, the public role of isiZulu seems to be changing slowly.

There is wide use of isiZulu on the radio, most notably Ukhozi FM, but also in TV programmes, particularly on SABC 1. The isiZulu newspaper *Ilanga LaseNatali* is one of the leading newspapers in KwaZulu-Natal to date, but *Isolezwe* is increasingly expanding its readership. Although isiZulu has a literary tradition that started in the late nineteenth century, it has, admittedly, no sizeable literary output in comparison to Afrikaans in South Africa. One must, however, acknowledge that Zulu literature has developed for over a century, thanks to the pioneering work of J.L. Dube, B.W. Vilakazi and R.R.R. Dhlomo. Other prominent writers who published in the mid-twentieth century were, among others, K. Bhengu, S. Nyembezi, O. Nxumalo, J.J. Gwayi and, from the 1980s, most notably C.T. Msimang and C.G.Z. Ntuli (Mngadi: 2000). Compared to other indigenous African languages, isiZulu offers quite a substantial amount of books and writings, in particular short stories, as well as lyric and praise poems.

On the one hand, it is generally acknowledged that isiZulu speakers have a positive attitude towards their language (Mngadi 2000), but, on the other hand, studies have shown that English is the preferred medium of instruction (MOI) in schools (e.g. Ngcobo 2000). The pertinence and weight of history must not be underestimated in this regard. Bantu Education and the forceful maintenance of the indigenous African languages as MOI - in a South African sociolinguistic reality in which only English and/or Afrikaans meant survival - has obviously influenced the social and political status of these language. In other words:

Colonial and apartheid language policy, in concert with the socio-economic and socio-political policy, gave rise to a hierarchy of unequal languages which reflected the structures of racial and class inequalities that characterise South African society. The dominance of English - and later Afrikaans - was sustained systematically in order to reinforce other structures of domination (LANGTAG 1996: 14).

English, therefore, is “not an innocent language” as Ndebele (1994) has argued. Its hegemonic position in South Africa today is believed to hamper the promotion of the indigenous African languages (see LANGTAG 1996). This situation shall be outlined in more detail below.

2.3. The hegemony of English

In order to understand language behaviour, language attitudes and sociolinguistic identification processes adequately within any particular community in South Africa, one inevitably has to examine the position of the English language in more detail. One could argue that in light of globalisation, the English language plays some sort of role in any community today. The exceptional and extraordinary role, however, that the language enjoys in South Africa, in particular in the struggle against an oppressive system, influences the sociolinguistic dynamics to a much greater degree than in other countries. I start the discussion by examining the role of English in the African continent in general.

According to *Linguasphere* (www.linguasphere.net) the total number of mother-tongue English speakers in the world is approximately 375 million, whereas the estimated number of mother tongue L2 and L3 speakers exceeds 1200 million. Although it is the official language of over 160 million Africans (perhaps close to 200 million now), it is important to acknowledge that it is mostly spoken as a second and third language, and that the majority of African people still have little knowledge of it (Leith 1983: 212). Even so, the language is widely perceived as a useful *lingua franca* and medium to create unity within one country. The many indigenous African varieties are often strongly associated with a particular ethnic allegiance, and “by giving official status to an outside language, such as English, all internal languages are placed on the same footing” (Crystal 1988: 3).

In recent years and with the emergence of the *Organisation of African Unity* (OAU) more and more governments in Africa have chosen a language policy that

acknowledges their country's sociolinguistic profile. It has been argued that inter-ethnic conflict may also be avoided when governments choose bilingual or multilingual language policies, rather than an English-only approach (Crystal 1997: 116).⁷¹ Nevertheless, 'official' multilingualism is certainly not the norm in African politics yet, and certain countries (ie Namibia) recently opted for an English-only approach, despite the fact that less than 4% of the country's population speak the language as a mother tongue. (For more detail see Geingop 1995.)

This consolidating role of English in terms of ethnicities is not the only association politicians have with the language. The position of English is, in fact, a paradoxical one as it was not only the language of many independence movements, but it was also the language of the colonists. While English has enriched many indigenous African languages by being a source of loan words it has also stultified and marginalised them (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 79). The role of English is thus a very complex one. It was not only a ticket for success in the colonial education system (Phillipson 1992: 128), but also remains equally symbolic for prosperity today. In many African societies the dominance of the English language has resulted in what Myers-Scotton (1993b) has termed *elite closure*. The term describes an undemocratic language situation, which occurs when a tiny 'elite' successfully employs an official language policy that advances one particular language in order to limit advancement of the speakers of other languages. "Elite closure is accomplished when the elite successfully employ official language policies and their own non-formalised language usage patterns to limit access of non-elite group to political positions and socio-economic advancement" (Myers-Scotton 1993b: 149). The former refers to the European colonisers, the latter to the African population. The result of *elite closure* is the dominance or hegemony of the respective European language as a power and prestige symbol in the society and the weakening of the value and status of other - in most cases - African languages.

⁷¹ Of course, multilingual language policies are difficult to implement and to successfully maintain. The central problem of reconciling language planning with economic, educational, cultural, social, political and scientific development goals are discussed by Bokamba (1995: 23).

Several African-language speaking writers, for instance, who are proficient in English find themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand they have the option to publish in English and make their books accessible to a world-wide audience, on the other hand, however, writing in English is often perceived as an ethnic betrayal, as discussed by Achebe (1975). Ironically, even if the writer himself does not perceive this issue as a conflict due to the knowledge that English simply is the *lingua franca* of the world, there will always be nationalistic countrymen who will criticise her/him for choosing English (Crystal 1997: 115).

In South Africa it seems ironic that since the new dispensation and the official recognition of the indigenous African languages, several scholars (Heugh 2000b; Kamwangamalu 2000a, b; Webb 1996; Waddington 1999) have noted that the dominance of the English language has strengthened further. McLean and McCormick (1996: 329) explain that “this policy thrust towards multilingualism is often intended and perceived as a symbolic statement, and that for instrumental purposes English remains the dominant language in South African public life”. Although post-apartheid South Africa has adopted the multilingual language policy stated above, English is practically the only language that enjoys the economic, political and educational status that an official language should have. English is dominant in all higher domains of life such as industry, trade, banking, commerce, and government and in recent years also in the administrative domains and the military⁷². Despite the fact that English is not well known among the African working class, it represents a symbol of Black consciousness and unity. Since the beginning of the establishment of the ANC, English was the language used for political protest and has been the carrier of the messages of black aspirations, freedom and democracy (Mesthrie 1995b: 171).⁷³

⁷² The military, in which Afrikaans previously held a dominant position, has only recently undergone a rapid language shift to English (de Klerk and Barkhuizen 1998).

⁷³ In terms of colonial history, one has to remember that English became the ‘only’ official language in the eastern Cape as early as 1822, only three decades after the British invaded South Africa (Lanham 1978: 21). The British colonisers intended not only to anglicise the indigenous African population, but also the large Dutch, and later Afrikaans-speaking community. It was already at that time, that English became the language of education, law and most other domains of public life (Crystal 1997: 39).

The apparent positive attitudes towards English must, however, be understood from the perspective that the African population became conscious of the fact that proficiency in the language was the key to economic advancement and success, while the use of the mother tongue kept people at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder (Dunjwa-Blajberg 1980: 31). It was not the instrumental benefit alone that put English on the high pedestal on which it is today, but also its complex role as an international medium in which those who struggled against apartheid could make themselves internationally heard. Many freedom fighters lived in English-speaking exile and adopted English as their main medium of communication. The reason why the ANC also adopted English for internal communication was to further and improve understanding across the different ethnolinguistic groups (Sothos, Vendas, Zulus, etc) and to unite the African population as a whole.

Of course, English has also acquired some negative connotations as a symbol of British domination, but its international and national stature quickly transformed the language into the most favoured one to learn among Blacks in South Africa. The Soweto uprising previously discussed clearly showed African students' preference for English. The event brought about the rebellion against the enforcement of Afrikaans and, simultaneously, the identification with English as the 'language of liberation'. Another factor that contributed to the enhancement of the English language was the fact that the Indian population promptly adopted the language as the dominant medium of communication.⁷⁴

Currently English is used nearly exclusively in all higher domains of life (administration, law, military and parliament) which, indeed, is remarkable from the perspective that English has numerically never been a majority language and is

⁷⁴ Most Indians who settled in South Africa as indentured workers in the years from 1860 to 1911 had absolutely no knowledge of English and only after 1930 proficiency in the language became widespread (Mesthrie 1995a: 134, Brain 1989: 265). Although English was by then still very much the L2 for the Indian population, by 1960 many Indian children had acquired some knowledge of the language prior to arriving at school. According to Mesthrie, this set the scene for a shift to English (ibid.). According to the 1980 census, 698 940 Indian South Africans indicated English as their L1 in contrast to only 93 020 who claimed an Indian language to be their L1 twenty years earlier. For a more detailed discussion, see Prabakaran (1998).

spoken as a mother tongue by less than 10% of the South African population.⁷⁵ Hegemony of English in South Africa is so striking that one could assume that the South African government chose only English as an official language in the post-apartheid state. More than 90% of political speeches made by politicians in recent years have been made in English, although the vast majority of politicians today speak an indigenous African language as a mother tongue (Kamwangamalu 2000a: 56).

In the military domain, in which Afrikaans previously held a dominant position, a rapid language shift from Afrikaans to English has been observed (De Klerk and Barkhuizen 1998: 231). English also dominates the South African media. In 1998 English was taking up over 90% of airtime on the three national South African TV channels (Kamwangamalu 2000a: 54). Furthermore, the language is clearly the dominant language in the South African press (Branford 1996: 42). English has remained virtually unchallenged as *the* medium of instruction at almost all secondary and clearly all tertiary institutions in the country. English in South Africa has been labelled the ‘language of liberation’, the ‘language of unification’, ‘the language of colonisation’ and the ‘language of upward mobility’. Additionally, in a recent article by Rosenthal in the *Mail & Guardian* (3/10, 2003), Antje Krog is quoted to have called English the “language of creativity in the new South Africa”.

It is, however, not only local benefits that are associated with the English language. There is another aspect that gives English an exceptionally high status and that is the fact that English is the world’s *lingua franca*. It is *the* medium of global and international communication, *the* language of academic scholarship and *the* language with the greatest literary production. Kamwangamalu (2000a: 50) notes that contrary to the constitutional principle of language equity, the eleven official languages are unofficially ranked hierarchically and constitute a “three-

⁷⁵ As mentioned previously, the concepts *majority* and *minority* with regard to language are ambiguous in Africa, as a majority language group in terms of number can well be a minority group in terms of power. IsiZulu, for instance has over 8 million speakers in South Africa and is used by at least 16 million as an L2, nevertheless it was considered a minority language during the apartheid era. This was due to the fact that it had neither the functional value nor the general social status that majority languages have (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000d).

tier, triglossic system, one in which English is at the top, Afrikaans is in the middle and the African languages are at the bottom”.⁷⁶ The South African society is well aware of the economic strength and power that the English language carries. Of course, “assimilation towards English is becoming increasingly evident, albeit unofficially, in current language practices in most of the country’s institutions” (Kamwangamalu 2000a: 51).

Kuo (1985) describes the social dilemma stemming from the functional incompatibility between English and ethnic languages in the Singaporean context. English, he writes “is promoted for its utilitarian functions and for its role in the development of a supra-ethnic Singapore identity, the ethnic languages are encouraged for cultural foundation and for the retention of traditional values” (Kuo 1985: 350). Despite the official status the African languages have in South Africa, the statement above is largely applicable to South Africa. As this situation is seen as a threat to the indigenous African languages and cultures, some scholars (cf. Wright 1996; Kamwangamalu 2002b; Webb 1996) have expressed concern over the fostering of the hegemony of the English language. Maarten’s (1998: 35) sentiments also exemplify this view:

The dominant position of English is rapidly becoming entrenched. The unfortunate result is that the majority of people (approximately 80%) do not have the command of English needed to succeed in higher education or to compete on an equal footing for the prestigious and higher paid jobs.

The quoted lack of English proficiency among 80% of the South African population may be questionable, but the fact of the matter is that a large number of the population still cannot conduct daily business, such as opening up a bank account, without difficulty or without the help of an interpreter. Wright (1996: 149) refers to English as an effective communication medium *only* for “the Western-oriented and educated elite”. Gough (1996:58) agrees with the prognosis

⁷⁶ The 11-official language policy has been widely interpreted as an opportunity to ban Afrikaans from product labels and advertisements by the industry, which was done, for instance, by Coca-Cola South Africa. Thus, the multilingual language policy has not been employed as a call to find new and creative ways to cater for a multilingual South Africa (Niedrig 1999: 5), but rather as a licence for *English-only*.

that the English language does not represent an effective means of communication for the majority of the South African population.⁷⁷

He argues that English is not an ideal medium of communication in South Africa because it does not have the capacity to carry the African culture (ibid.). McLean (1999: 21) opposes an *English-only* policy on the basis of a deterministic approach, arguing that English and the African languages do not process information in the same way, and that discursive differences are deeply rooted in culture. Furthermore, Tollefson (1991: 203) points out that perceiving English as the gateway to success has proven illusory, in particular on the African continent, where it often serves as an exclusionary device rather than an integration mechanism.

Despite the warnings from academic circles, ironically made up largely of scholars of European stock, it often appears as if the South African population is fairly reconciled with an English-oriented language policy. Indeed, the African language speakers aptly remark that it is predominantly Afrikaners who object to the views of the *English-only* lobby. The white Afrikaans-speaking population has recognised the dominance of English as a threat to their own ethnolinguistic identity. In fact, the complaints about language issues to governmental bodies such as PanSALB, have chiefly been made by Afrikaans-speaking individuals (see Perry 2004). Scholars who aim to promote the African languages continue to criticise the imperialism linked to the hegemonic role of South African English, and refer to the potential of the multilingual preamble of the current South African Constitution. Their concern is that the hegemony of English could lead to what has been termed an *exponential language shift* (Webb 1996:180), which essentially entails a language loss on the side of the African languages. With respect to the absence of African languages in many multiracial schools, these concerns are fitting and timely. If English remains the only language of upward mobility in South Africa,

⁷⁷ Similarly, Phillipson (1992) points out negative consequences of the dominance of English in the African states in general. He coined the term 'Linguistic imperialism' in relation to English hegemony. Accordingly, the speakers of the dominant language in Africa, i.e. English, who are ex-imperialists, will be the ones in power as long as their language is in power. Therefore, the empowerment of the African masses must be linked to the empowerment of the African languages.

people who speak languages other than English may well shift their linguistic disposition because of economic reasons. In view of the above, one should not be surprised that South African indigenous language speakers may choose to identify themselves with the English language, even if it is merely for instrumental reasons. English, however, and it is important to be clear on this, is only spoken as a first language by 8.2% of the entire South African population, and 12% of KwaZulu-Natal residents (Census 2001). Estimates of English language proficiency in the country range between 32 – 61% (Gough 1996). In most cases the level of English proficiency directly correlates with the amount and quality of education.

Recent research in South Africa (De Klerk 2000a; Kamwangamalu, 2001b, 2003; Reagan 2001) indicates that there has been a continuous language shift from the indigenous African languages to English in urban environments. It is evident that more and more parents who have the necessary financial means choose to send their children to multiracial schools. In these schools the vast majority of teachers are English L1-speakers and sufficient resources are provided in order to facilitate a proper learning environment. This is a position most 'African', so-called Black (ex-DET) schools cannot claim for themselves. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that the vast majority of African children do not have a chance to attend multiracial schools and, consequently, it is difficult to estimate how deep-rooted the influence of multiracial schooling is in terms of the spread of English.

The discussion above has illustrated how English power and dominance became further entrenched in the post-apartheid state. In seeking an understanding of ethnolinguistic identity construction in any South African community today, one has to be conscious of the ambiguous role of English. I argue that the apparent superiority of the language influenced the speakers of the indigenous African languages in the way they perceive themselves and their languages. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998: 79) argue in this vein:

The huge imperial prestige enjoyed by the English language distorted educational opportunities, diverted resources from indigenous cultures towards giving pre-eminence, and diluted the esteem in which indigenous African languages were held. The psychological damage to the colonised African was immense.

While a large number of African intellectuals vehemently oppose the hegemonic position of the English language, they nonetheless sent their children to English medium schools (Harnischfeger 1999). A sociolinguistic paradox perpetuates itself and linguistic choices and decision-making is then based on a dichotomy between the instrumental versus the cultural and social value of languages.

The account of the role and functions of English in South Africa would not be complete without at least referring, in brief, to the 'New Englishes', which have, in recent years, created interesting discussion forums among sociolinguists all over the world. Considering the fact that most South Africans speak English as a second or third language, however, the question of whose English (dialect) should be the norm in the country, seems appropriate. South African scholars (cf. Alexander 1992a; 1995, Ndebele 1994) have increasingly become aware that the construction of 'African identities' may well be built on the knowledge of English.⁷⁸ This and related issues will receive further attention towards the end of this thesis.

2.4. The isiZulu-speaking community in KwaZulu-Natal

South African scholars have increasingly argued for the recognition of the integral part that history plays in the discussion of ethnicity (see, for instance, Maré 1995, Wright 1991; Wright and Hamilton 1996). Post-structuralist writers, similarly, have argued for the acknowledgement of socio-economic and historical processes when studying identity negotiations. Hence, any investigation of how language and ethnic identity relate in a particular community today should take into account the history of the language community on focus. Accordingly, I argue that the sociolinguistic situation of the isiZulu-speaking people cannot be understood adequately in isolation from the historical account of isiZulu and Zuluness.

⁷⁸ In South Africa, as in most other African countries, the language variety has become 'indigenised' in the sense that it developed distinctive structural and lexical features (for more detail, see De Klerk and Gough (2002)).

The first concern in this section is to refer back to the origins of ethnic consciousness among the isiZulu-speaking people, and to explore the role language played in the construction of this consciousness. The history and politics of the isiZulu-speaking population of KwaZulu-Natal at present is, however, far too complex and multifaceted to include it as detailed and comprehensive part of this thesis. It suffices for the purpose of this study to present a brief outline of the general history and to highlight significant events with regard to language related issues. Some historical accounts may be dealt with in more detail due to the centrality of language. Certain events had a major influence with regard to processes of identity construction through language, and remain an important point of reference among isiZulu-speakers today.

2.4.1. The ‘Shakan past’

In general, sources of information are scant when investigating Zulu history before the 19th century, and for the purpose of this thesis I am merely relying on secondary sources.⁷⁹ According to Wright and Hamilton (1996: 17), there is some evidence of Zulu identity formation in KwaZulu-Natal from the late 18th and early 19th century, which was based on ethnic ties. Nevertheless, the same authors are opposed to the widespread assumption that the origin of a proper ‘Zuluness’ dates back to the emergence of the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s: “While certain identities were actively propagated in the kingdom during this period, a specifically Zulu ethnicity was not one of them. The conditions for its emergence did not then exist” (Wright and Hamilton 1996: 15). Furthermore:

... it seems safe to conclude that, even if ethnic differentiation was becoming established in some parts of the Natal region in the late 18th century, it was neither widespread nor deep-rooted. It did not become so until the politics of the region were brought under a single political authority, that of the Zulu, in the late 1810s and 1820s (Wright and Hamilton 1996: 24)

⁷⁹ According to Guy (1987: 18ff), who provides prodigious research on Zulu history, the isiZulu-speaking people of present-day KwaZulu Natal lived in small villages, which included extended family groupings, the *umuzi* [homestead]. The society was regulated through an elaborate kinship system, as are other indigenous agricultural societies in the world.

Following the above argument it can be assumed that during the lifetime of the great Zulu chief, *Shaka kaZenzangakhona*⁸⁰, the kingdom did not present a cohesive and united body, as widely believed among isiZulu-speakers today. The people of the kingdom presented an amalgamation of recently independent chiefdoms with their own established ruling house, its own body of traditions and its own identity (ibid.).⁸¹ Accordingly, there was no motive for the construction of a common Zuluness among the people who recognised Zulu ruling power at this time.

There is no doubt, however, that many who identify themselves as 'Zulu' today would oppose the above view, as Shaka's heroism is widely based on the perception that it was him who united the Zulu people and created a bound Zuluness between the people who spoke the same language. The glorified warrior remains a frequent point of reference today. How the name 'Zulu' came into being, however, is not quite clear. It is in fact questionable whether people of the Zulu kingdom did refer to themselves as 'Zulu' during the time of Shaka and his successor Dingane. Wright and Hamilton (1996: 30) suggest that people to the north and west knew what we know as the Zulu nation today as *abenguni* or *bakoni*. Zulu is, in its strictest sense, a clan name referring to the descendants of Zulu; a person who lived 300 years ago in the area of the White Mfolozi (Guy 1979: xvii).⁸²

⁸⁰ Shaka kaSenzangakhona, widely regarded as the founder of the Zulu nation, is portrayed in a variety of ways in the literature. Megalomania, ethnocentricity, sensationalism and diverse mythological interpretations are often part of his story. Statements such as: "I think it was unfortunate that King Shaka was killed, because I believe he was a great man, a genius. If he had lived, perhaps we Zulus would have not suffered as much as we suffered over the years up to now," (Buthelezi 1972: 1) exemplify this view.

⁸¹ Clearly, some men who had been placed in power by Shaka had a basis for identifying, at least to some extent, with the political projects of the Zulu ruling house. But the majority of the people and in particular women didn't have a platform on which to construct 'Zuluness', as their major source of identification was the immediate family, the homestead of the father or husband (Wright and Hamilton 1996: 26). There is, however, evidence of group identities that did emerge, such as those of the *amantungwa* chiefdoms, which were seen as 'insider' chiefdoms in the state's heartland and were incorporated into the emerging Zulu kingdom in the earliest phase of its expansion.

⁸² The people who lived in the area between the Phongolo and the Mzimkhulu river, essentially what today is known as KwaZulu-Natal, lived in various small-scale political units, which were diverse in population, size of land and political structure. The importance of cattle as a source of wealth was a main characteristic for the pre-colonial societies in south-eastern Africa. The ruling chief acted as the ritual authority and anyone who recognised his rule had to pay physical, emotional and material tribute. The Zulu organisation was characterised by a patrilineal, segmentary, lineage system and featured polygamy (for more detail see Guy 1979).

When Shaka became king of Zululand in 1816, he extended his power substantially by forcefully assimilating many other clans into his kingdom who spoke the same or similar languages.⁸³ By 1819 Shaka was in control of the mightiest kingdom in south-east Africa, and isiZulu became the dominant language among the indigenous African tribes in the area (Maartens 1998: 28).

According to Zungu (1998:37), Shaka was very conscious of the 'purity' of the isiZulu spoken by his people and did not entertain people who spoke non-standard dialects of the language. Clearly, linguistic issues were salient criteria for identifying with the Zulu nation, but dialectal differences, nonetheless, seem to have played a role in demarcating 'insider' and 'outsider' positions. It cannot be assumed, however, that the isiZulu-speaking people of that time constituted a linguistically homogenous society. The concept of a 'homogenous society', in the true sense of the term, is in itself a paradox because men and women are idiosyncratic individuals, and homogeneity can only be confined to a certain degree or with regard to specific criteria, such as religion or language. It cannot be assumed that the isiZulu-speaking people in South Africa represented a homogenous society at any time in history, although the apartheid government mistakenly promoted the notion of homogenous ethnic and ethnolinguistic groups.

Wright's (1991:4) latter assertion, "the common notion that Zulu ethnic consciousness can be traced back to the time of Shaka in the 1820s is quite wrong," is based on the understanding that individuals in the kingdom had more immediate categories to choose from than a common 'Zuluness'. Despite Shaka's extension of the kingdom, and the promotion of a feeling of unity by identifying with the monarchy, members of the isiZulu-speaking population in the area distinguished themselves by various, more immediate means, i.e. the homestead, and there existed substantial levels of boundary creation, of which language was only one.

⁸³ Shaka was trained in Dingiswayo's army, who, as chief of the Mthethwa, built up a remarkable army to confront Zwede, chief of the Ndwandwe (Maartens 1998: 28).

According to Zungu (1998), it was a necessity to speak the 'pure' Zulu of the kingdom in order to be a 'proper' member of it. The people who spoke this apparent 'pure' isiZulu, the *amantungwa* people, were deeply separated from those who spoke with their tongue *lala* (asleep or lying flat), which evidently was a different dialect of isiZulu. Hence, language was a unifying factor among the people of the kingdom on the one hand, as everyone spoke a variety of isiZulu, and a dividing force on the other, as the varieties were different and groups such as the *amalala* (menials) were excluded from the kingdom. However, the saliency of the processes of linguistically based identity construction at this time remains disputable, and it is difficult to determine whether the two groups mentioned above should be regarded as different ethnolinguistic entities. Obviously, the exclusion was not entirely based on dialectal differences, but on other criteria as well. *Amantungwa* and *amalala* assumingly differentiated themselves in terms of various criteria, some of them more, and some less influential than the linguistic ones.

The *amantungwa* were opposed to the *amalala* "relatively privileged insiders" (Wright and Hamilton 1996: 28). *Amalala*, in contrast, were regarded as "despised outsiders" as the term carries a heavy stigma of social inferiority (ibid.). The latter lived in the southern peripheries of the Zulu kingdom, while the *amantungwa* benefited from the redistribution of accumulated surplus of the kingdom as they stood under its supervision. Additionally, the *amantungwa* were in a position to participate in decision-making processes in return for their tribute and service to the Zulu king (ibid.). Wright and Hamilton consider these two groups as 'budding ethnic groups', but claim that the "absence of any broad 'Zulu' identity in this period is testified to in a number of recorded traditions, which apparently reflect contemporary opinions about the assassination of Shaka by some of his brothers in 1828" (ibid.).

Zulu society of the early nineteenth century can be understood as being composed of three layers: at the top was the king and the aristocracy, below them those who could regard themselves of *amatungwa* descent, and at the bottom were the

amalala and everyone else who lived in the periphery of the kingdom. These groups carried other derogatory names such as *amanhfwenga* (destitutes) or *iziyendane* (those with a strange hairstyle) (Wright and Hamilton 1989: 72). This structure suggests that in the early Zulu kingdom, divisions within the society were common, and a 'broad' and 'unified' 'Zulu' identity did not exist. However:

...they [the people in the kingdom] were encouraged by their Zulu rulers to regard themselves as all being of *amatungwa* descent. In time, they did in fact come to think of themselves as sharing a common origin and culture. *Ntungwa*-ness thus constituted an ethnic identity which, like all ethnic identities, developed in specific political circumstances (Wright and Hamilton 1989: 72).

This line of argument implies that *Ntungwa*-ness was at least one of the expressions of Zuluness in this particular period of time, which was, however, based more on a political ethnic formation rather than a general ethnic identity. As ethnolinguistic identities are investigated from a sociolinguistic and rather apolitical perspective here, it suffices to say that *Ntungwa*-ness, as some kind of mobilised version of Zuluness, already existed in the Zulu kingdom.

2.4.2. Colonisation

When the colonisers built the first settlement (Port Natal) in the area that is now KwaZulu-Natal, they opened communication with Shaka and recognised overlordship of the Zulu king in order to gain permission to occupy land and to trade (Ballard 1989: 118). Due to the fact that both Shaka and his successor, Dingane, prohibited people in the kingdom from entering into direct trade with whites, the influence of the colonisers was still fairly limited in the Zulu kingdom at this time (ibid: 119). The linguistic and geographical divisions within the isiZulu-speaking population that existed in the early years of the kingdom became even further entrenched towards the end of the century.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Many people in the south, particularly in urban areas, became the *amakholwa* or Black Englishmen and there was continuous friction between *amakholwa* and more traditionally orientated Africans (Lambert 1989: 379).

It has to be assumed that in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Black population in the region of KwaZulu-Natal was a divided group without a notion of a uniform ethnic, or politically constructed identity. North of the Thukela the existence of the *amabutho*, an organised regiment of young men, created more of a corporate identity than an ethnic one, as the members stood under the ritual authority of the ruling chief and considered themselves exclusively of *amatungwa*, and thus royal descent. The *amabutho* stood in service of the chiefs, either as an army or as a police force, which made them, among other things, responsible for the maintenance of the political subordination of certain communities (Wright and Hamilton 1989: 63).⁸⁵

Shaka was murdered in 1828 by two of his half-brothers, Mhlangana and Dingane. The latter then became king and reigned for over a decade (for more detail, see Colenbrander 1989, Guy 1979, Laband 1992, etc). In 1837 the first Voortrekkers under the leadership of Retief and Maritz arrived in KwaZulu-Natal and although Dingane initially engaged in trade with the Voortrekkers, he treated them brutally. After his warriors initially inflicted severe defeats on both the Boer and the British settlers, they suffered a brutal rout in 1838 at Blood River when the Voortrekkers killed 3 000 Zulus. Consequently, Dingane's power was damaged, the opposition among his people increased and the kingdom slowly split apart. Most of the inhabitants of the south allied themselves with Mpande, his brother, who with the help of the Voortrekkers, drove Dingane out off the country to the Lobombo mountains where he later died.

When referring to oral traditions, Colenbrander (1989: 85) notes that this event is described as “the breaking of the rope that held the nation together”. Although it is unclear whether one could speak of any clear existing ‘Zuluness’ at this point,

⁸⁵ Much has been written about the so-called *mfecane* (or *difaqane*), which took place in the first half of the nineteenth century and anthropologists spent a good deal of time researching this field. The abovementioned terms (*mfecane* or *difaqane*) stand for the dramatic and powerful political changes that took place in the second and third decade of the nineteenth century due to the persecution of African people who fled the Zulu kingdom towards the north, the south and the interior of southern Africa.

some kind of ethnic identity formation must have existed among the residents of the area north of the Thukela River and among those who considered themselves of either royal or *amatungwa* blood. Although Natal became a British colony in 1843, the residents in the area north of the Thukela in the Zulu kingdom maintained their independence of white rule until 1879 (Marks 2004: 185).

The particular role the missionaries played with regard to language issues deserves mention here. At the time, missionaries did remarkable and invaluable work with reference to the indigenous African languages. The orthographies, the development of literacy, and the collection of oral literature and traditions were entirely pioneered by them. Sanneh (1989) discusses in great detail how missionaries acted as ‘vernacular agents’ and, in fact, promoted the development of the indigenous African languages (often without realising it). In the case of isiZulu it has been argued that Zulu consciousness was stimulated and coincided with an interest in isiZulu, which was lead, ironically, by western missionaries (Nyembezi 1961). The work of Bishop Colenso, Hans Schreuder, Lewis Grout and Charles Roberts contributed tremendously to isiZulu literacy.⁸⁶

All this translation activity concentrated attention on the vernacular, leading missionaries to a critical comparative perspective on the West while thrusting Africans into the world of literacy and the wider opportunities that it represents (Sanneh 1989: 172).

Hence, it deserves mention that the spread of western religious concepts such as Christianity, were, despite their inextricable link to the introduction of a more western lifestyle, not immediately linked with the spread of the European languages. In contrast, the influence of the vernaculars in religious life had ramifications for ethnic identity constructions as the orthographies provided the African language speakers with “potent literary sources for the imagining of ethnic history and culture” (Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004: 5). The significant role of African languages in 19th century religious life still influences African Christian life today.

⁸⁶ Bishop Colenso, in particular, not only translated the Bible into isiZulu, but also reread the scriptures in the Zulu context, which ultimately resulted in his exoneration of the Church of England (Chidester 1996: 140).

In the middle of the nineteenth century the British forces founded the Colony of Natal, whereas in Zululand, the area north of the Thukela and east of the Mzinyathi, Mpande was recognised as an independent ruler (Guy 1979: 13). During Mpande's 30-year long reign - the longest of all the Zulu kings- he established a firm rule over the original kingdom, which due to the help of the Voortrekkers had increased dramatically in terms of territorial size. Unlike most other African societies in southern Africa at the time, the colonialists had no major influence on the people residing in Zululand and the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the kingdom remained established.⁸⁷ In Natal, however, the British and hence the English language started to leave its mark on the indigenous African population.

In 1859 Bishop Colenso visited Mpande with a teacher and two Zulu boys from school. Subsequent to the meeting with Mpande, the teacher and the two isiZulu-speaking schoolboys, William Magma and Ndiyane, wrote accounts of this meeting, which represent the first Zulu texts published by Zulus (Nyembezi 1961: 3). With regard to the isiZulu-speaking population in general, this was a period of great inner- and inter-tribal conflict and an eventual allegiance with the colonial forces, most notably, Theophilus Shepstone (Secretary of Native Affairs in Natal), who recognised Cetshwayo as Mpande's successor in 1861 (Guy 1979: 14). Shepstone was the main architect involved in the design of the South African version of the 'indirect rule' system and he successfully implemented it in Natal around the 1850s, partly because the colony needed cheap administration. 'Shepstonism' provided 'locations' or reserves for Africans in which the chieftainship was ultimately controlled by British judicial and administrative machinery (Etherington 1989b: 172). Surplus from African homesteads was extracted, first and foremost in the form of hut tax, which provided a crucial source of revenue for the colony (Cope 1993: 2).⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Mpande, for the most part, appears as a lethargic, but peaceful leader in the literature and has no special reputation among isiZulu-speakers today, despite the fact that he kept the kingdom intact for the term of his reign.

⁸⁸ Shepstone's system of 'indirect rule' evidently created problems within the Zulu society as people in the chieftainship realised that the *amakhosi* (chiefs) often played the role of mere puppets for colonial politics and major opposition arose among the people. The isiZulu speaking people residing in the area, many of whom had previously fled the Zulu kingdom, became dependent on the colonial state, which severely damaged their social and economic situation.

In Zululand, Cetshwayo came to the Zulu throne in 1872 and ruled over approximately 300 000 people, most of them residing between the Thukela and the Mzinyathi rivers and the valley of the Phongolo (Guy 1979: 21). It is argued that in these crucial years of colonisation, the isiZulu-speaking population was increasingly exposed to western influence. This also affected the way people drew from various categories to identify themselves in terms of ethnolinguistic identity negotiations. Hence:

... the presence of colonisers offered an alternative source of identification, alliance and protection for Africans who had long lived within the orbit of Zulu power. It was possible, for example, to take up arms against rival chiefdoms in the name of the British monarch. Or one could become a migrant labourer or trader, using new market opportunities to establish independent means of accumulation: These choices invariably involved adopting aspects of colonial life and could lead to the formation of new identities shaped by the language of modernism which was inscribed within the colonial policy and expressed in the world which settlers were creating. (Morrell, Wright and Meintjes 1996: 37).

Accordingly, there were various categories on the basis of which Africans, i.e. isiZulu-speakers, could identify themselves. With regard to language it must be assumed that English started to gain significance in the lives of isiZulu-speakers around this time. The contact between English and isiZulu further created interesting communication patterns between whites and Africans. The linguistic make-up of the African population in the area of present-day KwaZulu-Natal was reasonably homogenous. The vast majority of manual workers employed on farms spoke isiZulu, although dialectical variation undoubtedly existed. Unsurprisingly, among Africans, isiZulu was the predominant medium of communication in the agricultural workplace, in homes and in social settings while English was the official language in the colony (Lambert and Morrell 1996: 64).

IsiZulu had widespread influence in KwaZulu-Natal, which is exemplified, for example, by the spread of isiZulu nicknames among white men and the retention of isiZulu place names at the turn of the century.⁸⁹ As mentioned previously, English was, however, the official language and “no Black person could get the vote

⁸⁹ For an excellent recent exploration of isiZulu names, see Koopman (2002).

without the limited written competence in it” (Lambert and Morrell 1996: 64). IsiZulu, of course, was the only medium of communication in African private and domestic settings. “Its currency and tenacity meant that the language idiom and symbolism survived, conveying a world view which was the basis for the development of subaltern, ethnic identities” (ibid.).

The Zulu kingdom remained economically independent nearly until the turn of the century, and one must assume that the inhabitants of Zululand looked down upon those who lived behind the border to Natal and sold their labour to whites. Zululand Africans ascribed the derogatory term *'amakhafula'*, to their Natal neighbours, which literally means when translated “those who have been spat out” (Guy 1979: 18). Clearly, this is testimony to the sharp divisions that existed among the isiZulu-speaking community of the time and shows the contempt felt by the residents of Zululand. Zululand Africans were proud people and their unwillingness to work for the applicable wages and conditions of the sugar cane plantations ultimately resulted in the arrival of indentured workers from India (Maré 1995: 102).

The end of Zulu power and independence, however, must not be equated with the British military victory at Ulundi in 1879, which is a commonly held belief. Although the Zulu military system was destroyed after the war and Cetshwayo was exiled, the British dismissed an annexation of Zululand. Guy (1979) discussed in great detail how the destruction of the material strength and the political independence of the Zulu people in the late nineteenth century was not based on the Anglo-Zulu war itself, but on that which followed after: the forceful integration into a dependent and, in many ways, destructive colonial system.⁹⁰

The chaotic system of ‘indirect rule’ and the empowerment of thirteen chiefs as ‘agents of British rule’ further resulted in the complete destruction of the independence of the isiZulu speaking population (Laband and Thompson 1989).

⁹⁰ More recently, John Laband (1992) has followed Guy’s approach with a comprehensive reassessment on the Anglo-Zulu war.

By the turn of the century, Zulu society was no longer what it had been during the time of the old Zulu kingdom, and it seemed that the Zulu royal family might gradually fade into insignificance, having been transformed into little more than an ideological remnant of past Zulu independence (Cope 1993: 4).

Despite the short existence of the Zulu kingdom, which spanned about six decades, the saliency of its existence - in particular the ruling of Shaka - remains an omnipresent factor of 'Zulu thinking' today. The nostalgia attached and associated with the Zulu kingdom prevails among isiZulu-speakers, and still presents a "potent element of African thinking" based on the fact that "the house of Shaka has had an emotional appeal" (Guy 1979: 245). In reality, it appears that the kingdom of Shaka and his successors plays a greater role in the life of many isiZulu speakers today than does the contemporary King Goodwill Zwelithini. But, before we turn to the current situation, I will briefly discuss how racism became institutionalised and what sociolinguistic consequences these laws had for the African language speakers.

2.4.3. The rise of institutionalised racism

By the end of the nineteenth century racism had essentially become institutionalised in the colony, and between the years of 1893 to 1910 nearly 50 laws based on segregation and discriminatory practices were passed (Morrell et al. 1996: 69). Clearly this influenced the general African population and isiZulu-speakers, in particular, with reference to the way they perceived themselves within the new order. The ones who had tried to identify themselves with the colonial system and adopted the Christian faith within the borders of Natal, so-called 'Black Englishmen' or *amakholwa*, realised that the government undermined their efforts. From 1903 government officials systematically impaired *amakholwa* activity, refused indigenous preachers to live and work beyond the borders of the reserves allocated for Africans, and reserved skilled positions for white workers only (Houle 2001).

From a linguistic point of view it is important to note that there was no 'elite closure' in Myers-Scotton (1993b) sense, as referred to earlier in this work. The reasons for this were mainly based on the fact that the exclusion from the higher domains of life, i.e. well-paid jobs, was not based on linguistic issues, but was in fact determined along racial lines. The so-called 'Black Englishmen' spoke immaculate English and had adopted a European style of clothing and a western lifestyle, yet their linguistic repertoire was not sufficient to climb the economic ladder. This resulted in great frustrations among *amakholwa*, which resulted, among other things, in the emergence of independent churches.⁹¹

There existed a wide gap between Africans who lived in a 'traditional' order on their Zululand homesteads⁹² and the 'colonised African' who was selling his labour to European masters in Natal. In terms of linguistic differences the divisions in the language community were characterised by isiZulu monolingualism in rural Zululand and isiZulu/English bilingualism among *amakholwa*. The discrepancy of the rural-urban divide still prevails today, and despite the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools, isiZulu monolingualism still characterises a large portion of the rural population in KwaZulu-Natal.

Although the Zulu kingdom had been able to hold out longer than most against the demands of capitalism for labour and land, the final impact on the economic, social and political life of Africans was as devastating as anywhere else (Maré 1995: 101). The prevailing injustices and inequality in the colonial system damaged African pride and tradition severely although, ironically, the discriminatory laws were enforced in the name of a supreme chief. The oppression and degradation of

⁹¹As restrictions on landownership and economic activity even inside the churches increased, dissatisfaction rose among the *amakholwa*, and black preachers started to lead their fellow Christians into independent churches; a movement that became known as 'Ethiopianism' (Etherington 1989a: 297).

⁹²According to Laband and Thompson (1989: 221), "To outward appearances, the way of life of the Zulu people did not seem to have been radically transformed by the loss of political independence. At the turn of the century, most Zulus continued to wear traditional dress and to live in scattered homesteads. Production proceeded as before, the kinship system and customary law and practices persisted, and polygyny was practised. Cattle remained central to the economy, testifying as before to the wealth and power of men and rank, and were still used in *lobola* payment for wives who were effectively the agricultural producers in the homesteads. Homestead heads, under the authority of chiefs, continued to regulate this pattern of life".

the Zulu Royal House and the people in the kingdom culminated in a rebellion under the leadership of the Zondi chief, Bambatha in 1906.

The rebellion presented another turning point in the lives of the Africans in the region. A massacre occurred in which the British troops used machine guns to kill 3000 to 4000 of Bambatha's warriors. Tragically, the rebellion did not only bring about the death of numerous warriors, but also had devastating consequences for those Zulu-speakers who had remained loyal to the colonial authorities. Confiscation of cattle, the burning of *imizi* [homesteads] and destruction of agricultural sites destroyed life in rural areas, and most people had to move either to town or became labour tenants on farms (Morrell et al. 1996: 87).

Nevertheless, the early years of the twentieth century represent a period in which a large number of the isiZulu-speaking population started to construct a broader, more unified identity by reviving symbols of the Zulu kingdom. The Bambatha rebellion is widely seen by historians as a symbol of a revived Zulu unity.

The pervasiveness of African social distress had the effect of promoting a sense of unity among a population, where previously there had been none. In casting about for a rallying point, these pan-Natal sentiments of an early African nationalist character came to focus on the Zulu royal family (Cope 1993: 7).

Cetshwayo ka Dinuzulu, who had been seen by many Zulus as the embodiment of Zulu national pride and sentiment, was taken into custody in the aftermath of the rebellion, although there was no proof of his involvement. The *usutho* had, therefore, lost its leader and was 'abolished' by the Natal government (Duminy and Guest 1989: 428). This gave the colonists confidence to consolidate their position in Zululand, and they divided the chieftdom into four provinces in order to prevent the restoration of royal power. At the time, the white population in Durban had risen to nearly thirty thousand in 1910, while the African residents in this area made up only about 16 500 (ibid.). Although Dinuzulu was released from jail in 1910, he was not allowed to return to Zululand. Instead, he was sent into exile where he died three years later. Even though Natal officials pretended that the Zulu kinship was dysfunctional, the funeral party attracted seven thousand guests (Cope

1993: 12), which is symbolic of the strong sense of community among the isiZulu-speakers at the time.

The last defeat of the Zulus during this rebellion was linked to the imposition of a new order based on inequality between white and Black people, which created a platform for the emergence of a new Pan-KwaZulu-Natal identity (Lambert and Morrell 1996: 90). What emerged was a new Zulu identity, which transcended previous divisions between those who lived north and south of the Thukela, and between traditionalists and *amakholwa*. Symbols of a glorified Zulu past inspired the people and laid the foundation for a boundary between isiZulu-speakers and 'others'. According to Shula Marks (1989:218), the Zulu ethnic movement can be understood as a response to the enormous social dislocations that were the end products of capitalist development. In the early twentieth century, many men and women moved closer to the cities in order to find work. Certain values, particularly traditional gender roles, were buried under the attempts to assimilate the western culture, and women generally started to grow more independent. It is not surprising therefore, that patriarchal fears intensified among isiZulu-speaking men who wanted to re-adopt a 'Zulu' way of life and promoted increased control over women and youths (Marks 1989: 221).

The Zulu intelligentsia and educated elite appear in an ambiguous light during this period because, paradoxically, those who made the call of 'Back to the roots' were in fact those who had already assimilated a western lifestyle.⁹³ Despite the fact that only a few of them had graduated at universities in the United States or Great Britain, most of them spoke immaculate English. And, although many of them had fled the Zulu kingdom in the nineteenth century, they reconciled themselves with the symbolism of the old kingdom as it offered a new platform on which to grow selfhood (Marks 1989: 217).

⁹³ The ambiguous and partly contradictory attitude of those who grow up in a western lifestyle with a western language as their mother tongue and European values remains a characteristic even in modern Zulu life. Paradoxically, those who often pledge for the African Renaissance in South Africa are those who have been educated in great Britain or the United States and live a lifestyle that is very remote from traditional values.

The 1913 Natives Land Act established territorial segregation, while simultaneously reducing the ability of Africans to maintain rural economic independence and forced them to become wage labourers (Cope 1993: 18). Shortly thereafter, in 1916, the Union government decided to co-opt the Royal House as an agent of control and restored the position that Dinuzulu had held before 1908 with his successor King Solomon kaDinuzulu. Although this step impaired Solomon's prestige as he had to carry out government policy, which was criticised internally by many chiefs, an ideology of Zulu ethnicity based on royal leadership arose. From 1920 onwards, Solomon's main objective became the creation of a feeling of Zulu unity and he launched a campaign to reconcile previous traitors to the Royal Zulu House (Cope 1993: 125). Despite prevailing discrepancies between *amakholwa* and the traditionalists and between rural and urban isiZulu-speakers, Solomon managed to find symbols of the Zulu past that everyone could identify with in order to 'bind the Zulu nation' (ibid).⁹⁴

Yet, against all logic, this movement was led by the *amakholwa* who had been among the strongest opponents of Zulu power in the 1900s (Lambert and Morrell 1996: 91). At this time *kholwa* intellectuals, most of them products of mission schools, called on the common heritage of all Africans in KwaZulu-Natal. The idea that all residents in the region belonged to the same ethnolinguistic group was employed by the *kholwa* in order to conceptualise "a united Zulu nation" and in order to highlight the "centrality of the Zulu royal house", which created a common sense of ethnicity (ibid.).

This is in line with Maré's (1995: 108) notion that "a fairly strong ethnic homogeneity, a 'Zulu identity', had been created in the region, particularly in the twentieth century with increased urbanization and improved communication". Migration supported the need for a common identity and the receptiveness among the people to the Zulu ethnic message increased. Maré (1995: 108) stresses that this new identity was built on the glorified Zulu past, examples of which were the

⁹⁴ For further detail on the life of the Zulu King, Solomon ka Dinuzulu, and the first Inkatha see Cope 1993, who focuses on Solomon as a cornerstone of the foundation of twentieth century Zulu nationalism.

political consolidation under Shaka and other 19th century Zulu kings, and on the long successful resistance to political domination from colonial authorities. Wright (1991: 4) argues that ethnic consciousness among the isiZulu-speaking population arose out of their confrontation with western values and capitalism.

In a climate that was a breeding ground for frustration and anger among the African population, the colonial authorities stirred Zulu ethnic nationalism further by shifting towards a “policy of ‘retribalisation’, which resuscitated ‘Zulu tribal’ authorities as instruments of state control” over Africans (Maylam 1996: 97). The motives behind the support of Zulu ethnic nationalism were based on the hope that ‘Zulu tribalism’ would function in opposition to the protest movements, such as the national Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). King Solomon was seen as an instrument by which the colonial state could enforce political and administrative control over the Zulu population. Consequently, Zuluness was, to some extent, not only ‘self’-ascribed within the community, but also ‘other’-ascribed by those who contributed to the establishment of apartheid.

In the years after 1920, a stratified society emerged in which capitalist farmers stood on one side and impoverished subsistence farmers on the other. This development further agitated a feeling of Zuluness among people and gave rise to opposition and resistance (Maylam 1996: 101). Drawing from Leroy Vail’s analysis (1989), Maylam (1996) argues that Zulu ethnic nationalism in this period can only be adequately examined, if one takes into account that ethnic identities tend to strengthen in times of socio-economic disruption and political change.⁹⁵

However, it cannot be assumed that the rise and stabilisation of Zulu ethnicity was due to the promotion of the ethnic message on behalf of the colonisers, or as

⁹⁵ From about 1916 one can clearly observe a certain kind of paradigm shift in the politics of colonial officials. The Chief Native Commissioner Wheelwright saw the influence of Solomon who had been appointed Dinuzulu’s processor as the ‘pinnacle of the ‘Zulu nation’ (Maylam 1996: 108), but only because he was convinced that he was able to use it to his own benefits. In 1927 the *Administration Act* enforced the notion generally acclaimed by anthropological research of the time: that all Africans lived in self-contained, functional, tribal units. The Act gave recognition to African customary law and instituted the employment of chiefs as administrative and judicial officials, and basically represents a forerunner of the later Bantustan policy (ibid.).

something that was imposed on the passive masses (Maylam 1996: 109). The isiZulu-speaking people themselves undoubtedly constructed and nurtured this identity which was then the ground on which the political movement of the early Inkatha was created. In fact, the first Inkatha meeting in 1924 addressed the entire 'Zulu nation', which was defined as including all isiZulu-speaking people in the province (Cope 1993: 113). This clearly demonstrates, among other things, the centrality of language and its importance as a role player in establishing a unified identity among the Africans living in the region. This construction of ethnicity was then used in order to mobilise people for political purposes. IsiZulu as the mother tongue of the nation was the most immediate category individuals could be identified by and on which they could claim Zuluness.

There are three organisations worth mentioning that targeted the reconstruction of Zulu ethnic identity in the first half of the twentieth century, by drawing from symbols of the Zulu monarchy and history (Marks 1989: 216). First, there was a sub-group of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, second, the first Inkatha⁹⁶ movement founded by Solomon kaDinuzulu in alliance with the Natal intelligentsia; and, finally, the Zulu Cultural Society, which was an offshoot of the Natal Bantu Teacher's Organization as founded by Albert Luthuli in 1937. Important members of the Zulu intelligentsia during this time were the poets Vilakazi and Dhlomo as well as Zulu political leaders such as John Dube (Maylam 1996: 111).

In 1939, the government recognised the regent as the Acting Paramount Chief of the Zulus, although there was no legislative power attached to the position. Consequently, Regent Mshiyeni was a key political figure in both Zululand and Natal and together with the fellow members of the Zulu royal house he set the standard of Zulu 'custom' and 'etiquette' (Marks 1989: 225).

⁹⁶ One of the main principles of the Inkatha movement was to preserve the separate culture of the isiZulu-speaking people by underpinning 'traditional' patriarchal authority and tribal discipline. The *amakhohwa* and tribal authorities were entrenched as the leaders of a fundamental socio-economic and political reform within the tribal system. The most important aim was to press the South African state to confer autonomy upon the 'Zulu nation' (Cope 1993: 217).

Behind the talk of etiquette and tradition, however, was a very real concern with the disintegration of the fabric of Zulu life under the impact of proletarianization and urbanisation during the 1930s. In particular, as the Charter of the Zulu Society makes clear, there was the fear that the 'departure from wholesome Zulu traditions' meant a lack of discipline in the home (ibid.).

Implicit in this argument is the assumption that despite the fact that Zuluness was mobilised for political purposes, a Zulu consciousness independent of a political identity existed among people. IsiZulu-speakers at the grass-roots level assumingly found it difficult to identify themselves with any of the political agendas. However, they had strong sentiments regarding their ethnic affiliation. The literature provides a large amount of references to xenophobia among isiZulu-speakers. Commonly employed derogatory terms, such as *izilwane* [animals] describe strangers and foreigners.

2.4.4. Apartheid era and beyond

In 1950 a Zulu chief, Cyprian Bhekuzulu, was officially recognised as the paramount Chief of the 'Zulu nation', however, his power was merely representational. The state wished to create a territory that could become an "independent' homeland for an ethnically defined Zulu people" (Freud 1996: 132). The white minority hoped to control the political aspirations of isiZulu-speakers in the region by restoring the name of the Zulu monarchy (ibid).

Nevertheless, this ethnic ideology remained contradictory and paradoxical if one considers that on the one hand, the 'new Zulu' was proclaiming the virtues of past and tradition, and on the other hand he was clearly a product of a mission school - in some cases, individuals were more articulate in English than in isiZulu. It was thus impossible to "give unreserved approval to an unconditional return to 'tribal' life" (Marks 1989: 221).

It is important to mention that the vast majority of people involved in the Zulu ethnic movement were already proficient in English. It can further be assumed that

the issue of mother-tongue education became a controversial topic around this time. Marks notes that “there were differences, too, over the Society’s readiness to accept the education of African children in the vernacular” (1989: 223). While distinguishing the traditional Zulu educational system from that of the European settlers, Vilakazi argued that “a child learned about its culture in the home by the methods of observation, imitation and play. Language played a very important role in this respect as it taught much of the value systems and symbols of the culture” (Vilakazi 1958: 299).

Although isiZulu was the predominant and often only medium of communication in domestic settings and all other areas where Zulu people had no contact with whites, the first half of the 20th century was a time of drastic sociolinguistic change among the Zulu people. The missionary schools and the teaching of the English language and Christian faith represented a great contrast to the previous traditional Zulu social order. Vilakazi (1958: 311) argues that there existed a decrease in the respect for elders due to the fact that children who went to mission schools possessed knowledge that their parents and older family members did not have. The young Africans who were suddenly confronted with a variety of ‘identity options’ negotiated a new lifestyle based on western values for themselves. The clashing of traditional Zulu customs and European (Christian) values created a substantial level of fusion and syncretism, but also lead to disputes about Christian faith and traditional value systems based on the belief in ancestors.

With regard to language, many westernised Africans in the late 1950s rejected to “worship at the shrine of the mother tongue” and used any language that served them best in their work and in their struggle for liberation (Vilakazi 1958: 351).⁹⁷ It was also in the late 1950s that Mangosutho Gatsha Buthelezi started to - at first unsuccessfully - promote ‘Zuluness’, the Zulu kinship as a ‘constitutional monarchy’ and Zulu national pride. Buthelezi was the driving force behind the political mobilisation of Zulu ethnicity. The ‘politics of Zuluness’ has been discussed elsewhere (Maré 1991, 1992, 1995; Marks 1989, 2004, Piper 1998) and

⁹⁷ Needless to say, the chosen medium was English.

it is not the purpose here to discuss Buthelezi's political role with regard to a Zulu ethnicity. What is important in the context of this study is merely to acknowledge that "Zuluness" as a socially constructed ethnic identity existed alongside political identities based on Zulu ethnicity. It is imperative to remember that:

There is no monolithic and universal perception of what it means to be a Zulu. There exists a tension and a conflict between members of this linguistically homogenous community who espouse different variants of Zulu ethnicity and who attach different political significance to it (Forsyth 1991: 4).

Investigating 'Zuluness' from an apolitical perspective, as done in this thesis, demands a focus on the social and linguistic factors that constitute this ethnicity. Forsyth (1991: 6) argues that two streams of Zulu ethnicity emerged, where one was attached to the KwaZulu *bantustan* and its leader, and the other acknowledged Zuluness, but did not affiliate with the *bantustan* and its leaders. What this argument implicitly implies is that 'Zuluness' has always existed as an ethnic identity construct, which is independent from a political identity and, draws from social, linguistic and cultural sources. Recently, Dlamini argues that the isiZulu-speaking youth participating in her empirical study were proud of their Zulu heritage and the use of the Zulu language, without attaching a political identity to it (2001: 204). Language, i.e. isiZulu, however, has not always been a neutral factor of this 'Zuluness' as will be explained below.

From the early 1970s Inkatha claimed a monopoly over 'Zuluness', first, because it arose as a 'Zulu movement' representing a sub-formation under the approval of the ANC and, second, because there simply existed no other Zulu national organisation. "Inkatha effectively used a range of symbols and discourses to consolidate its role as a key regional actor and sole representative of the Zulus" (Bonnin, Hamilton, Morrell and Sitas 1996: 170). In 1976, KwaZulu was granted autonomy and while the province became self-governed, Zulu ethnic influence in the region rose because areas such as Thongaland were controlled more decisively (Webster 1991: 248). When juxtaposing Thonga with Zulu ethnicity, it is clear that the latter was clearly the more desirable choice at the time. Particularly among men, isiZulu was the prestige language (Herbert 2002). The adoption of isiZulu in

conjunction with Zulu ethnicity was not only immediate, but also the safest step for people who resided in the KwaZulu rural area. This process contributed to the linguistic homogenisation of the province, and stirred the perception that KwaZulu-Natal residents are Zulu people, a notion that is essentially based on the symbolic construction of ethnicity.

Buthelezi continuously stirred Zulu ethnic nationalism from the mid-1970s and revived 'traditional' symbols and customs.⁹⁸ The issue of language, i.e. the significance of isiZulu was, however, hardly mentioned in his speeches. This is not surprising in light of the fact that "this was the one thing that his constituency had in common" (Marks 2004: 192). Nonetheless, it is known that in the 1990s Inkatha warriors identified their enemies by the less 'pure' isiZulu that they spoke and, hence, the *amaqabane* [ANC comrades] often spoke a more urban variety of isiZulu (ibid.). From a more general perspective, however, it needs to be noted that isiZulu as a language cluster that consolidates various different dialects was fairly neglected as a symbol of Zuluness in the political mobilisation process. One could argue that isiZulu was perceived as too obvious of a cultural artefact and too immediate in order to employ it as a mobilisation tool. Ironically, however, it was more or less the only 'natural' and authentic facet of a Zulu ethnic identity at the time. Therefore, isiZulu as a mere symbol of Zuluness, was not only employed to construct ethnicity as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, but also used on the ground as a means by which to identify Inkatha membership and hence a political identity. This gave rise to a substantial amount of political tension in the 1980s and 1990s as detailed below.

The association of Zulu language with a history of bravery was highly controversial in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This controversy was due to the fact that Inkatha had claimed ownership of Zulu symbolic resources, including language, which then made it difficult for other organisations to use the symbols in pursuing their aims. The use of Zulu language (and history), therefore, in particular situations, was conflated with Inkatha politics, resulting in those who used Zulu in particular public spaces being labelled Inkatha members (Dlamini 2001: 201).

⁹⁸ Unsurprisingly, the authenticity of Buthelezi's ethnic revival has been widely questioned. The Zulu king himself, for instance, had never worn traditional royal costumes, such as leopard skin, feathers, and beads until Buthelezi motivated for it in the event of the annual 'Shaka Day' celebration (Chidester 1992: 211).

There was undoubtedly a period during which it was dangerous for an isiZulu-speaker to commit him or herself to Zuluness without being associated with the political party that promoted the Zulu ethnic message, i.e. Inkatha. Meanwhile, however, it has been argued that Zuluness transcends a political affiliation (Piper 1998). It has further been stated that it was merely an *attempt* by the KwaZulu government to equate Zuluness with Inkatha (Nzimande and Thusi 1998). Even during the IFP/ANC tension, people spoke isiZulu and identified themselves as Zulu without wanting to be affiliated with Inkatha. I, however, will show that ever since the political conflict of the 1980s and 1990s has quietened down, the use of isiZulu has further increased in significance. Although the ANC has persistently promoted 'many cultures one nation' strategies that focus on the use of English, one can very well affiliate him/herself with the ANC and yet be conscious about his/her Zuluness and proud of isiZulu. It is crucial to differentiate clearly between political identities and ethnic, or ethnolinguistic ones, as they are negotiated on fundamentally different grounds in the post-apartheid state.

In a recent study, the links that underscore Zulu ethnic identity in KwaZulu-Natal have been examined within the social and political context of a changing South Africa (Dlamini 2001). Ethnicity, and thus Zuluness, is regarded as "a boundary phenomenon constructed within specific and competing discursive sites and with competing and conflicting practices" (ibid.: 197). Four criteria are identified as essential categories: history, language, culture and birthplace. What becomes evident throughout Dlamini's study is the fact that identities - as they are constructed in everyday life, in relation to various factors be it language, culture or other variables - are not only flexible and changeable, but often characterised through discontinuities and contradictions.

Hence, "it is clear, for instance, that while isiZulu-speaking people were considered by the state and political organisations as a well-defined homogenous group, the cultures of those who made up this group pointed otherwise" (Dlamini 2001: 219). The paper rightly questions the uniformity of 'cultures' and practices that constitute the ethnic boundary. Accordingly, individuals within one group, i.e.

the isiZulu speech community of Umlazi, hold different views with regard to sociolinguistic issues, for instance. What is important, however, is to identify these different perceptions and to analyse them in a holistic approach, which takes into account sociohistorical and socio-economic factors.

Although there has been a strong emphasis on and a drive for some kind of 'common South African identity' among individuals in the country, especially since the new dispensation, the case of the isiZulu-speaking community is 'somewhat' different. 'Zulus' appear to be particularly proud of their specific ethnic identity and their language: the status of isiZulu as a *lingua franca* in South Africa is a manifestation of this fact. The contemporary significance of language in the construction of this Zulu pride has not been adequately explored because of the sensitivity of the matter. Zuluness is frequently understated in public as leaders in the ANC-dominated post-apartheid South Africa deliberately refrain from giving recognition to the division of the Black population into ethnic or cultural groups.

In the early 1990s Zuluness was reinvented publicly as an ethnic identity that was not to be linked to any particular party, such as Inkatha, for example. Since 1994 the Arts and Culture Council in KwaZulu-Natal has promoted the revival of Zulu culture, and the ANC has recently drafted a discussion paper that outlined the significant role of 'traditional leadership' (Marks 2004). Although ethnicity, i.e. Zuluness, undoubtedly already existed in some way or another in the past, the democratisation of South Africa has provided a less loaded political attachment to the phenomenon. As Maré (2004) recently argued, the 'rainbow nation' conceptualisation has revalorised ethnicity as a more politically secular social identity. The Renaissance in Zulu culture is all too obvious in KwaZulu-Natal cultural events, heritage sites and the new tourist industry.

To sum up the above, I argue that from a sociohistorical perspective isiZulu has played a crucial role in the construction of Zuluness as an ethnic identity throughout the past two centuries. Although the promotion of isiZulu played no

overt significant part in Zulu political mobilisation, I maintain that it has featured covertly as the most 'natural' constituent. Although English was and is the language medium in which most KwaZulu-Natal leaders express their political agendas, a commitment to isiZulu as an essential constituent of Zuluness needs not be questioned. Fairly recently, Campell, Maré and Walker (1995) investigated a commitment to Zuluness from a sociological perspective in the same area investigated in this thesis, namely the Umlazi Township. The authors conclude that:

Everyone expressed a great personal commitment to language as the cornerstone of Zuluness. This feature was consistently associated with Zulu identity across interviews. Informants made a pragmatic English-Zulu division in their lives. They stressed that it was vital that their children learned English in order to get ahead in life but they did not perceive any threat to their identity from this selective preference. (Campell et al. 1995: 295).

Thus, the mother tongue is a marker of the ethnic belonging and 'Zuluness', whereas English is a symbol of success. Campell *et al.* (1995) made another crucial observation about isiZulu and its significance in constructing Zulu ethnic identity. Language, along with other factors, is identified as a highly valued marker of Zuluness among the informants of this study. Even though the general agreement was that isiZulu was not of economic value, there was no sense of it being under threat and confidence in its vitality appeared secure (Campell et al. 1995: 295). Whether or not this confidence in the resilience of isiZulu still prevails, will be examined next.

3. Data collection

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader about the data collection procedures that were used in order to answer the central questions informing this research. Due to my additional training background in anthropology, the methods used in this work differ to some extent from those commonly used as techniques of data collection in linguistics. Nevertheless, most sociolinguists today would be familiar with the qualitative approach this thesis offers, as researchers in the field have increasingly become aware of the need for methods based on a more 'emic' approach in order to collect sociolinguistic data (see Johnstone 2000).

In the first section of this chapter I describe the environment in which the investigation was conducted in order to explain the wider circumstances and hence the specific South African 'space' in which this research was done. A South African township is a very particular environment and despite the diversity it offers, it also has specific characteristics that distinguish it from life in the cities or rural areas. Townships are neither rural nor entirely urban; they constitute a lifestyle that may only be adequately understood by those who have experienced it. The description of the Umlazi township here is two-fold. First, I attempt to highlight crucial differences that characterise life in Umlazi as compared to suburbia and, second, I will explain why KwaZulu-Natal townships differ sociolinguistically from townships in other parts of South Africa.

After a presentation of relevant demographic data, including a brief sociolinguistic profile of the area, I will give detailed information about those who made this research possible; the participants and informants of my study. They reside in different areas and sections of the Umlazi township and differed greatly with regard to financial and class status. Some interviews were conducted in private homes, others in staff rooms on the premises of high schools and several in public places.

The rationale behind the complex methodological approach employed here is based on the belief that social aspects of language can only be adequately understood, if the researcher is able to gain an authentic and holistic understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics at work. Hence, the functions of language(s), i.e. isiZulu and English, in reference to identity constructions can only be unravelled by studying the people themselves. To study language from this perspective also means studying the culture and examining the deeper meanings of the ethnolinguistic life experience of the informants. In order to attain an adequate and authentic understanding of the intrinsic correlation between language and ethnic identity in this particular case study, a multi-method approach was necessary. The third section of this chapter discusses the different methods on which the triangulation approach of this study is based and explains the rationale for choosing them. A brief summary will conclude the chapter.

3.2. Environment and participants

All the data collected in this study was elicited within the proximity of the Umlazi township, and all participants and informants of this study were residents of the township, or had lived there until recently. The schools in which some of the research was conducted were located in different sections of the township, but all resemble one another with regard to the lack of educational resources.⁹⁹ The student body of these schools is mixed in terms of class: some of the learners come from informal settlements, while others live in working and middle-class homes. The vast majority of the students, however, come from poor, dysfunctional homes.

Since this study investigates the language-identity-ethnicity link within the context of a township community in KwaZulu-Natal, the conclusions that are reached cannot be generalised to all South African township communities. Furthermore, any claims that are made are not necessarily representative of isiZulu-speaking

⁹⁹ Student tuition for these schools varies between R120 and R300 a year. The teaching conditions in these schools are, from a western perspective, accordingly appalling. Frequently, more than 50 learners are squashed into small venues with insufficient and inappropriate learning materials (frequently up to three learners have to share a textbook).

residents of the central city, suburb or rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal residents. One may expect the composition of township identities to be based on an 'urban' identity construction with regard to the urban-rural dichotomy explained by Appalraju and deKadt (2002) or Dlamini (2001). It has been argued, that

The association of industrialisation with the urban sectors of the community, and with modernity and economic progress, resulted in Zulu cultural practices being associated with the rural areas, poverty and backwardness, creating a rural-urban or modern-backwards dichotomy, which added complexity to an already diverse setting (Dlamini 2001: 198).

However, the term 'urban' is not without complexity and ambiguity in the context of township environments. It cannot uncritically be assumed that ethnolinguistic identification processes among Umlazi township residents are representative of an 'urban' identity construction, as exposure to the English language stands in sharp contrast to residents in central Durban areas. Despite the fact that the Umlazi township is part of the Durban municipality, enormous lifestyle differences exist between most township residents and residents in the city, which has socio-economic and cultural, as well as ethnolinguistic implications. South African townships are located merely in the periphery of cities and tend to have unique characteristics that demand adequate differentiation from those of an actual city environment.

3.2.1. The Umlazi township

Due to South Africa's history of segregation and forced separate development, African people were denied the right to settle in white neighbourhoods unless they stayed on their employers' premises. The 'pass-law-system' controlled the movement of Black South Africans from rural to urban areas and from one urban area of jurisdiction to another (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000: 121). Consequently, Black people all over South Africa who had found work in the cities started to settle in urban areas that were undeveloped. These surrounding areas of the city that were occupied by the Black working class, became known as 'townships' or 'locations' and were based on apartheid-based town planning. Due to the enormous

influx of previously rural residents to urban areas, most townships' populations have substantially increased over the past few decades. Umlazi is only one among many other examples of such a development.

Although a South African tourist webpage¹⁰⁰ suggests that Umlazi “originated in 1845 when the British occupied Natal in force and established a number of native locations for the Zulus,” the settlement proper only dates back to the mid-twentieth century. During the era of the Group Areas Act, a large number of Africans were evicted in the 1960s from Cato Manor (*Umkhumbane*) and forced to resettle elsewhere. The Umlazi township developed during these times. Apparently, the original plans for the township included businesses and entertainment facilities. These, however, never materialised for at least two reasons. First the township and many other areas in KwaZulu-Natal, were heavily affected by political violence during the 1980s and 1990s. This forced several businesses, such as the grocery chain *Checkers*, to withdraw from the township premises. Second, the continuous influx of settlers and the large number of informal settlements¹⁰¹ on undeveloped land within and around the township contributed to an unstable and unsafe environment (Tshabalala 1998).¹⁰²

3.2.1.1. Demographic and sociolinguistic data

Umlazi is the second biggest township in South Africa¹⁰³ and clearly the largest township in KwaZulu-Natal. According to the language statistics of the 2001 census, however, it only has a population of about 400 000 people. Elsewhere it has been argued that more than one and a half million people live in Umlazi, (Tshabalala 1998: 37) which shows that different sets of data heavily conflict with

¹⁰⁰ (<http://durban.kzn.org.za/durban/about/40.html>, accessed 10.10.2004)

¹⁰¹ These places are also known as squatter areas and are to a large extent without electricity and running water.

¹⁰² The heterogeneous nature of township residents in terms of class and politics cannot be discussed in detail here. Suffice it to say, however, that the township is still demarcated into predominately ANC or IFP areas, as well as into wealthy and poor areas. It is important to note, nonetheless, that violence in the township today is more often than not criminally rather than politically motivated.

¹⁰³ South Africa's largest township, Soweto, is located in the Gauteng province close to Johannesburg and is estimated to have approximately three million residents.

each other. It can be assumed that the present number of inhabitants far exceeds the number given in the recent census, as there exists a steady increase of informal settlements. The table below reveals the linguistic background with regard to the mother tongue languages spoken by Umlazi residents.

Language	Number of speakers
Afrikaans	1030
English	4881
IsiNdebele	430
IsiXhosa	297
IsiZulu	213583
Sepedi	297
Sesotho	57
Setswana	79
SiSwati	147
Tshivenda	6
Xitsonga	52
Other	219

Source: Census Database 2001: <http://www.statssa.gov.za>

According to the table, the Umlazi township is inhabited by a majority of isiZulu-speakers, with a few Coloured, Indian, and Whites, who married interculturally. It is safe to assume that those who reside in the township, but speak a language other than isiZulu as a mother tongue, have acquired at least some knowledge of isiZulu. Admittedly, it is impossible to provide a complete sociolinguistic profile of Umlazi as no reliable census data is yet available on the area. It should, however, be pointed out that bilingualism (if not multilingualism) characterises a large number of Umlazi residents. It is extremely difficult to estimate the level of English proficiency among the population, since, people frequently claim proficiency in languages they barely know. The differences in English proficiency are, like in most other places all over Africa, directly correlated with the level and quality of education.

Although there exists a high level of bilingualism, there is also a significant number of isiZulu monolingual speakers in the area, in particular among the older generation. This is not to say that all young people speak English. IsiZulu monolinguals are also found among the young members of families who live in abject poverty and cannot afford to pay school fees. Despite the fact that isiZulu monolinguals have barely attended school, one has to acknowledge that within the borders of the township, English may not be a prerequisite for making a living. It is, for instance, quite common for a taxi driver or conductor to have little command of English.

However, the influence of the English language is all-encompassing and manifests itself, for example, in huge advertisement billboards along the M40 highway, which is one of the main roads connecting different units/sections in the township. Although some primary schools in Umlazi employ isiZulu as the main medium of instruction, virtually all secondary and clearly all tertiary institutions use English as the 'official' medium of instruction. This is by no means surprising. Recent studies (Bowerman 2000, Chick and McKay 2000, Mhlanga 1995, Murray 2002, Ngcobo 2000) dealing with the issue of language in education have revealed that English remains unchallenged as a medium of instruction all over South Africa, even though the Constitution stipulates that "every person shall be entitled to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable." (The Constitution 1996, Section 32 [c]). Unlike multilingual townships in South Africa, Umlazi's linguistic homogeneity may lead to the assumption that isiZulu is a reasonably practicable medium in school. This, however, is only unofficially the case, as teachers and school management staff persistently claim that English is the only 'official' medium of instruction.

Generally, the influence of English in the township is, from a general sociolinguistic perspective, not straightforward. One would find it difficult, to buy vegetables or *muthi* at the market without any knowledge of isiZulu. There is no doubt that the main and sometimes only medium of communication among Umlazi township residents remains isiZulu, particularly with regard to the less educated

sector of the community. However, the use of isiZulu-English code-switching and code-mixing is a common practice among educated individuals in the township, as is the use of *isiTsotsi* among the youths.¹⁰⁴

3.2.1.2. Informants and participants¹⁰⁵

Townships in KwaZulu-Natal, and hence Umlazi, present a contrast to the common multilingualism that characterises most other South African townships. The participants of this investigation were, with the exception of a few individuals involved in the questionnaire survey, all mother tongue isiZulu-speakers.

The data collected for this study draws from a large number of participants and informants and most of those born in the township, with the exception of short-distance trips, have never left the place for an extended period. Quite a large number of the informants were drawn from the teaching environment, as this is where the investigation was initiated. Hence, quite a large number of participants and interviewees were learners, teachers and educators. Others, however, were acquaintances, friends, and neighbours. The only two main criteria I used to choose the sample of the informants were the informant's age and their mother tongue.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ The Umlazi township, which is situated approximately 25 kilometres south-west of Durban, is subdivided into 26 sections (also called units) named alphabetically from A to Z, with the additional areas AA, BB, and CC in the periphery (Tshabalala 1998: 34). The area consists, fundamentally, of residential sites, train stations, educational facilities, community halls, markets, small-scale *spaza* [corner store] businesses, pubs and *shebeens*. Due to the high rate of crime that struck the township in particular during the 1980s and early 1990s, there are only few franchise businesses, but no large grocery shops, banks, hotels and restaurants. There are, however, a great number of small cell phone businesses and container stores located on various places in the township.

¹⁰⁵ The distinction between *informants* and *participants* is necessary in this study. First, *informants* are defined as Umlazi community members who I encountered during the ethnographic stages of my research on an informal communication level. They are members of the community who supplied me with sociolinguistic information in a subconscious way. *Informants* were not always aware of my role as a researcher in the moment of elicitation. Hence, *informants* were only subsequently asked whether the information I received could be used as data for this thesis. *Participants*, in contrast, are defined as Umlazi residents who actively participated in the study and were at all times aware of my identity as a researcher.

¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, this investigation is mainly based on isiZulu-mother tongue speakers who also have a basic proficiency in the English language, as I focused the investigation on identity construction among bilinguals. The contact with the English language was seen as a prerequisite for the identity negotiation process investigated here, i.e. the juxtaposition of isiZulu and English with regard to a notion of oneself and his/her people.

I focused on the younger generation, i.e. residents of the Umlazi Township, who were between 15 and 40 years old. The rationale behind this focus is that this group is perceived to be a determining age group to indicate future language developments, i.e. the maintenance of isiZulu, or a possible language shift to English. The questionnaires were distributed to learners of three different High Schools in Umlazi, whose names for ethical reasons are withheld. Interviews and participant observation took place in various sections of the township.

Sociolinguistically and with respect to English exposure, Umlazi residents are what I describe as ‘in-between’; that is, that township residents are located in an imagined sociolinguistic space between those who live in the city (Durban), suburbia and rural residents.¹⁰⁷ Township identities have in recent South African literature been described as culturally ‘hybrid’. Following Homi Bhaba’s (1990, 1994) description of the term ‘hybrid’ it has been argued that neither so-called ‘western’ norms and standards, nor ‘traditionally African’ ones are points of reference, but rather a third space (Callaghan 2003, Ratele 2003). I argue, however, that most townships in KwaZulu-Natal are less ‘hybrid’, not only with regard to language as will be shown below, but Umlazi in particular is also significantly less ‘hybrid’ than Soweto in terms of ‘urban culture’.

Furthermore, from the purely linguistic perspective, some of the members of the isiZulu-speaking community of Umlazi are quite limited with regard to English exposure, despite the influence of the media and the close proximity to Durban.¹⁰⁸ Unlike isiZulu-speakers who reside in central Durban areas, Umlazi township residents hardly have any contact with English mother-tongue speakers. In addition to this, Durban residents who were/are educated in traditionally ‘white’, currently multiracial (ex-Model C) schools, may offer a great contrast in terms of ethnolinguistic identity construction compared to those educated in a township environment.

¹⁰⁷ In the context of the post-colonial notion of ‘hybridity’, township identities are seen to be located in a space between ‘western’ and ‘African’ subject positions (Callaghan 2003: 40).

¹⁰⁸ A great number of families and individuals residing in the township do not possess the financial means to travel to Durban on a regular basis, as the costs of transport are too high. Furthermore, these families have no money available to spend while in the city.

Within KwaZulu-Natal there are, of course, a number of different varieties of isiZulu spoken (see, for instance Zungu 1995). Umlazi informants frequently referred to the variety commonly spoken in the country as 'deep isiZulu' and clearly distinguished the Umlazi language variety from the rural one. In comparison with other townships in South Africa, Umlazi is linguistically reasonably homogenous. In general, townships in KwaZulu-Natal do not offer the common multilingualism that characterises other South African townships, as indicated by Slabbert and Finlayson (2000: 122): "The people who live in these [South African] townships as well as their adjacent and multilingual urban centres represent communities who use the nine official African languages". In contrast, the vast majority of Umlazi residents are isiZulu mother-tongue speakers. Due to this linguistic homogeneity, one can expect the sociolinguistic situation in KwaZulu-Natal townships to be significantly different from that in the polyglot townships of Gauteng. This is because the vast majority of Umlazi residents speak isiZulu as a mother tongue. I must caution, however, that as already mentioned, there exists a dichotomy between 'deep' and 'urban' varieties, the former referring to the old, rural, relatively 'pure' African varieties, the latter to urbanised forms, which are linguistically different (Slabbert and Finlayson 2002: 238).

In Umlazi, the majority of young people employ a mixture of spoken (urban) isiZulu and 'isiTsotsi' in conversation with each other. It needs to be pointed out that what is referred to here as 'isiZulu' is not the variety commonly referred to as the 'deep' or 'real' Zulu' in South African linguistic literature. Many informants and participants of this study emphasised that, apart from elderly people, the 'deep' variety is not in fact spoken as a common language in township homes. Urban varieties are characterised, for instance, by extensive English lexical borrowing and interference, while the rural varieties are considerably 'pure' isiZulu. The discrepancy between the very 'deep' varieties of African languages and urban sub-standard varieties has resulted in occasional unintelligibility among the varieties (see Anthonissen and Gough 1998).

Gender identities were not of interest in this study.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, I would like to point out that my personal participation in township life outside of the schools was largely dominated by female interaction. It is for this reason, that females' views and perceptions about language and identity dominate this study and constitute the bulk of the data.

3.2.1.3. Research venues

Ethnographers and anthropologists have traditionally argued that the most authentic information about people can be gained in their natural environment. Although this study was by and large conducted in Umlazi, the research venues employed for the purpose of this study varied greatly. The questionnaires were distributed in high school classrooms, where a large number of group interviews were also conducted. Additional school interview venues included staff rooms, offices and the school grounds. Conducting interviews with individual teachers on the school premises was sometimes problematic, as it was generally difficult to find a private and quiet place. Staff rooms are often crowded and only very few additional venues exist. I generally asked willing participants if I could visit them in their respective homes, which often gave me access to the life of their siblings. While I was interviewing people in their private setting rather than their work place, the atmosphere in which the interviews took place was much more conducive to authenticity. Apart from the data that was collected in educational settings and private homes, I also conducted interviews in public areas. However, conducting individual interviews in the presence of other people in public was naturally unsuccessful, as frequently other individuals distracted either the interviewee or me.

¹⁰⁹ Aspects of gender have recently been investigated by Appalraju 1999, Appalraju and de Kadt 2002 and de Kadt 2004.

3.3. Methods of data collection

The main empirical investigation took place between January 2002 and June 2003, during which time I visited the township for between one to three days a week, at times staying in a community household for a few days. Occasional visits and informal data collection in Umlazi continued until the end of the year 2004. Although the theoretical foundation of this study and analysis of the data is based on sociolinguistic paradigms, it also draws extensively from an anthropologically influenced methodology. This should not be surprising, however, as methods in this line have been employed among sociolinguists for some decades now (see Labov (1972a)). Despite the fact that I draw on the results of questionnaires and interviews, I also rely extensively on participant-observation as a method of data collection.¹¹⁰ Although not employed in the classical anthropological sense, participant observation was useful in order to be able to contextualise language from holistic life perspectives of individuals. Similarly, Finch (2000: 195) argues “[...] participant observation, in which observers immerse themselves in communities, rather than relying on random sampling for the collection of data, have yielded more refined accounts of linguistic behaviour”.

Hence, the nature and mode of the central research questions further indicate an approach in the tradition of the Ethnography of Communication (Saville-Troike 1989). I attempt to understand the role of language in the lives of isiZulu-mother tongue speakers through relating linguistic behaviour to general questions about the social system and cultural values of the community. By observing and participating, I was able to examine how language(s) feature(s) in the construction of identities.

¹¹⁰ There exist, of course, important sociolinguistic studies, in which varieties of participant observation approaches have been used, such as those by Labov 1972a,b; Blom and Gumperz 1972; Breitborde 1998; McCafferty 2001. For an excellent account of the role of English in the lives of urban Africans, see Breitborde 1998.

3.3.1 The triangulation approach

[...] triangulation allowed the authors to highlight discontinuities and tensions in the participants' accounts and to offer complex accounts of negotiation of identities in specific contexts (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003: 26).

Mayring (1996: 121) describes triangulation as an approach where one is attempting to find different ways and channels to gain information in order to find answers to the central questions defining the research. It needs to be emphasised that the aim is not to gain total corresponding conformity¹¹¹, but rather to compare the differences discovered in the obtained data in order to reveal strengths and weaknesses of the respective methods. The results may be more meaningful than relying on only one single method of data collection because the method provides different steps of analysis and allows the researcher to validate his/her findings. 'In triangulation, the same pattern or example of behaviour is sought in different sources. Use of the process increases the reliability of the conclusions reached' (Seliger and Shohamy 1990).

I chose to combine quantitative and qualitative methods because, just as the three parts of a triangle are welded together (Mayring 1996: 122), I attempt to compound the three different approaches in order to gain a more holistic view of the investigated ethnolinguistic group. The following methods were used in collection of the data: questionnaires, interviews and participant observation. The handling of these methods as well as the rationale behind them shall be explained in detail below.

¹¹¹ It remains a crucial factor of qualitative research methods to include a reflection on the validity and reliability of the data obtained. Any empirical investigation demands a process of flexible analysis on the role of the researcher and a presentation of the constraints involved.

3.3.1.1. Questionnaires

The written questionnaires were exclusively designed for Grade 11 and 12 learners and were distributed between March and June 2002 at three ‘disadvantaged’ high schools in the Umlazi township. The learners had the option of choosing between the isiZulu and English version of the questionnaire, and subsequently answered it under the supervision of either myself or a teacher from the school. It was one of my aims to investigate whether the questionnaires distributed by one of the teachers would provide different results from those administered by myself – a white, non-South African, female stranger. The questionnaires were aimed to gather basic information about the participants’ feelings towards the mother tongue and towards English, and comprised both open as well as closed questions. The two-sided, single sheet of paper included 22 questions, which required respondents to indicate the use of language(s) in a variety of situations and to include personal perceptions and emotions about language(s), in particularly the mother tongue. The final design of the questionnaire was developed after the revision of a previous questionnaire used for a pilot study conducted on the University of Natal campus (see Rudwick 2001).

It needs to be noted that some of the questions were phrased in a rather simplistic, manner, for example, asking whether the individual was proud of his/her culture without actually eliciting what the participant felt his/her culture entailed. This is because the questionnaire results have primarily a survey type function in this study. My aim was to explore the results critically by comparing the data to the information gathered in interviews and participant observation. They did, however, also pave the way for a further formulation of research questions. As can be seen (Appendix A, B), the questionnaire included numerous cross-reference questions that seek information on fundamentally the same topic. It seemed adequate to provide different channels to be able to gather information on the participants’ perceptions of the status and value of the mother tongue. The approach taken with the questionnaire was direct and explicit, as the questionnaire layout clearly focused on language issues.

The paradigms of the Ethnography of Communication warn the researcher of the problems and fallacies involved in an explicit and direct approach to gathering information as described above. Various scholars (Agheysi and Fishman 1970: 150; Saville-Troike 1989: 128) have pointed out possible fallacies of using questionnaire formats for eliciting language attitudes. Participants may answer to please the fieldworker or they may deliberately give incorrect and dishonest information (Saville-Troike 1989: 128). The reader should bear in mind that the questionnaire data below is information gathered on the basis of each individual's self-perceptions, which may have been influenced by the environment (school) or the person administering the questionnaire (the teacher or me). Hence, the method merely presents a type of census data. In conjunction with the other methods of data collection, however, one can establish a reliable and representative corpus of findings.

3.3.1.2. Interviews

Interviewing is multifaceted, and scholars in sociolinguistics have developed several different approaches to interviewing (see for example Labov 1972a; b, 1984) in order to gain specific qualitative research data. "Interviewing is both a direct source of information on belief and knowledge systems and a form of vicarious observation to increase case examples of various types of overt behaviour" (Pearsall 1970: 346). One has to question, however, whether behaviour in interviews is indeed 'overt' behaviour, especially if the interviewer is an outsider to the community and has not established a comfortable relationship with their participants. On the basis of this question, I focused on *qualitative* interviews in this particular study, as most researchers in the social sciences have argued for the benefits of a 'natural' atmosphere that is as similar as possible to the normal and familiar environment of the interviewee.

The initial interviews with learners were held in the three high schools, but I subsequently interviewed anyone who would allow me to do so, i.e. teachers, parents, security guards. I also established a network with other Umlazi residents

and started interviewing, for instance, neighbours of the people I was staying with. The main characteristics that all the interviewees had in common was that they were all isiZulu mother-tongue speakers, residents of Umlazi and between the ages of 15 to 40. Most interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. In some cases, however, I only made notes during the interview, as some informants felt uncomfortable about recording their voice on tape.

As the interview framework was qualitative, the role I adopted during the interview was of crucial importance. The idea was to let the interview develop into a conversation in which I was more in the position of an active listener, rather than an interrogator. Hence, it was supposed to be the informants who controlled the interview rather than me, the interviewer, and consequently the recorded data yielded information on a variety of topics. Nevertheless, I did at times prompt the interviewees to focus on the issue of language.

In the theoretical framework chapter of this thesis I discussed the slippery surface we find ourselves on when discussing concepts such as 'ethnic identity'. While the person interviewed may, for instance, be well aware of a particular ethnic identity, it is of little use to directly and explicitly ask him/her about it. In fact, various field researchers choose not to inform their informants at all about where the focus of the investigation lies (McCafferty 2001).¹¹² My aim was to let the interviewee speak freely about the uses and the functions of language(s) in their lives, in particular the mother-tongue isiZulu. As already mentioned, I attempted to take up the role of an interested listener, rather than an interrogator, which, nevertheless included questions and comments from my side.

Initially, I always gave the interviewees the option to conduct the interview in isiZulu, but the majority of the participants, however, preferred to speak English with me. This choice must not be mistaken for a preference to speak English, but

¹¹² In the interviews I found it necessary in most encounters, and 'ethical' to give the participants of this study at least some general information on what I was interested in. The issue of language offers a less 'loaded' and less complicated platform for discussion when compared to the issue of ethnicity.

rather a choice influenced by the awkward presence of an interpreter. Interestingly, as my own isiZulu proficiency improved, I found myself increasingly making use of English-isiZulu code-switching during the interview and conversations.

On several occasions I held group interviews, either with learners in a classroom, or after school in small groups. Given the fact that the relationship of language, identity and ethnicity is deeply intertwined with general attitudes towards sociolinguistic dynamics, I chose controversial topics in order to reveal notions of identity construction among learners. Accordingly, learners and teachers discussed issues such as the eleven-official-language policy, the status of isiZulu in KZN, or the question of whether English in South Africa has been acting as a liberator or as an oppressor. As the focus of this study generally revolves around identity negotiations among isiZulu L1-speakers, which is very much embedded in the social system, it seemed adequate to discuss attitudes and perceptions in a larger group. Hence, I refer to the qualitative method of the 'group discussion' as described by Mayring (1996: 58) whereby sensitive topics and subjective meanings are frequently revealed more easily within a larger group of people. Accordingly, discussions in a group can provide a fruitful platform on which psychological barriers may be overcome with less difficulty. When individuals find themselves on common ground with others, collective attitudes are naturally exposed more readily.

I focused on general issues that would implicitly give information about the attitude and perceptions of individuals and groups towards a particular language, i.e. isiZulu and/or English. Another productive topic of discussion was the question of whether 'African literature' should be written in an indigenous African language, or whether books published by an African in English on an African setting would qualify for 'African literature'. This technique offered the advantage of stirring the learners' different perceptions in the class and gave me the chance to listen and observe. Unsurprisingly, attitudes within the class were naturally split and quite frequently at least two lobbies emerged with different viewpoints. The danger always existed that a few individuals, generally males, would dominate the

discussion, and I paid close attention to the possibility that one person may influence others by “inhibiting them from saying what they really think or leading the group into apparent agreement” (Wray, Trott and Bloomer 1998: 182).

Individual interviews were based on the *narrative* approach, whereby the participants were guided to speak about any language(s)-related matters in their lives (Mayring 1996: 55). Accordingly, there were few structural limitations and a high level of flexibility on my behalf in order to elicit the thoughts, emotions, perceptions and opinions of the individual participant. Interviews with people who were hesitant to talk about their individual perceptions and opinions tended to evolve more into a *problem-centred interview* (Mayring 1996). In those cases, I generally initiated the interview by asking the individual about his/her feelings about one of the previously mentioned discussion topics. Although interviews, if handled with care and critically explored, certainly provide a useful source of data elicitation, I regard it as insufficient to rely solely on interview findings for the purpose of this study. Researchers in the social sciences have increasingly become reluctant to trust what people say in interviews (see, for instance Vaux and Cooper 1999: 18). The actual behaviour of participants has frequently proven to be at odds with the information given during an interview. It is for this reason that it was imperative for this investigation to employ an ethnographically orientated method to create a holistic and more authentic picture of the sociolinguistic dynamics at work in the township community.

3.3.1.3. Participant observation

Dell Hymes (1964) and his groundbreaking compilation of the work of the most renowned anthropologists and linguists of the time initiated the acknowledgement of ethnography as a useful method for researcher on the social and cultural aspects of language. The principle method utilised in this research was participant observation, which is the standard method of fieldwork in anthropology. One of the crucial aims of this investigation is to look beyond linguistic phenomena in a vacuum and to reveal what Malinowski (1961: 18) called the *imponderabilia of*

actual life, “series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning of computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality”.¹¹³ Therefore, the trivialities of township life gained importance, while language use was observed and experienced as a social and cultural phenomenon in the community.

Participant observation is an interdisciplinary method, but within sociolinguistics it is understood as a variety of informal field methods (Johnstone 2000, Milroy and Gordon 2003, Spradley 1980). Its aim is to holistically understand a community in order to present detailed descriptions of a particular element of that community, which in the case of this thesis is language. Accordingly, the fundamental aim of this study is to construct a picture of the Umlazi community, which is based on a holistic approach to language use and behaviour towards language(s) – namely isiZulu and English – by engaging with the community and individual members on a close and personal level. Despite the great diversity of the community and the sharp divisions (cultural, political, linguistic, class, etc.) existent among isiZulu-speakers in Umlazi, I attempt to understand the role of language(s) in the lives of Umlazi inhabitants through a broad understanding of the community as a whole. Observation of daily language behaviour, cultural values and social networks are part of this undertaking. Speech situations and speech events are explored and the language choices of individuals systematically observed and contextualised. The analysis of how, when and why individuals decide to use isiZulu and/or English, and the distinction between conscious and subconscious choices, was part of this undertaking. Umlazi residents employ and adjust language(s) creatively by carefully choosing what is meaningful in a particular situation.

Although many sociolinguists claim that the ‘best’ and most ‘valuable’ data is inherently linked to recorded speech, it must be stressed that it certainly is the knowledge about the cultural world in which speech is embedded that leads sociolinguists to the analysis of this data (Johnstone 2000: 84). “Participant

¹¹³ However, participant observation was not employed in the *classic* (Malinowskian) anthropological sense, which requires the researcher to live with the community to be researched, for a *minimum period of one year* in order to immerse him/herself completely in the daily life of the community.

observation enables the research worker to secure his data within the medium, symbols, and experiential worlds which have meaning to his respondents” (Vidich 1970: 164/5). It is this function of participant observation that I regard as essential to this research.¹¹⁴

Observations, of course, can greatly vary in their extent of explicitness (Seliger and Shohamy 1990: 162). For the purpose of this study, I chose slightly ‘structured’ observations on the one hand and ‘open’ (unstructured) observations on the other. A checklist and rating scale was used as an additional tool for the former type, while field notes generally accompanied the latter type. In the field, my position varied from one which was mostly observing as an evident ‘outsider’, to one that was observing while participating and receiving more of an insider’s perspective. Spending time at the secondary schools made my ‘participation’ in the life of the community reasonably acceptable, as the school management approached me on many occasions in order to take up the role of a substitute English teacher. Under these circumstances I could slip into the position of a language teacher who, in the eyes of my subjects, had a common purpose (that of a staff member). This obscured my role as a researcher, and assisted me in understanding the “local knowledge” (Geertz 1983) and the “unspoken common sense” (Johnstone 2000: 82) and, most of all, the processes in everyday interactions that are based on subliminal assumptions.¹¹⁵

In my private activities in the township, I was always very well aware that the role that I, as a white, non-South African female, was playing influenced the situational dynamics quite significantly. For this reason, it was frequently helpful to spend

¹¹⁴ Although my involvement in township life from a greater anthropological perspective was rather marginal over a period of nearly three years, I regard these observations as the most valuable form of data collection. In one sense the questionnaires and some interviews created a formal situation that made the participants feel uncomfortable and behave unnaturally. The critical evaluation of the obtained data through the questionnaires and interviews by comparing them to the ethnographic data proved to greatly enrich the overall findings of this investigation.

¹¹⁵ While I stayed and spent time with different acquaintances in the township, I took part in daily activities, whether it was shopping at the market, attending a Christian cell meeting, or socialising at a shebeen. At all times, my observations focused on the use and choice of language(s) in different situations. There were also instances where I openly asked people in my company about their choice of language. I did not, however, use a tape recorder at any time and instead field notes were taken.

time with a large group of people who during the course of a gathering, split up into smaller groups at a later stage. From the sheltered distance of being a participant in one of these groups, I could observe the linguistic behaviour of others who were unaware of my presence. Sometimes my role as a researcher was open and revealed, other times I was introduced to new people as a friend or acquaintance. My position as an outsider did have certain advantages in the sense that “some of the socio-cultural knowledge affecting speech behaviour in particular contexts is below the level of consciousness of community members” (Boxer 2002: 12).¹¹⁶

In order to be a successful participant-observer, the researcher must be accepted by the community to be studied (Breitborde 1998: 15). The development of personal relationships with township residents greatly helped me to meet this criterion. While most of my contacts with township residents waxed and waned, a few turned into close friendships, which helped me gain a view of township life that ‘normal outsiders’ may be deprived of. The success of my research activities in the township was mainly based on my interconnectedness with the people and the time and effort that was put into this study by my informants and research assistants. Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that my relationship with Umlazi, apart from the personal relationships I have with residents in the township, remained that of an outsider-observer.

It is pertinent to “assess the influence of role, techniques, and methodological orientation on research results” (Pearsal 1970: 350). Accordingly, I shall mention the constraints and limitations that characterise this study. In spite of aiming to achieve an *emic* perspective, researchers have increasingly become aware that what one observes is very much based on one’s own perception and ‘cultural glasses’, to borrow one of the terms coined by Hall (1959).

¹¹⁶ To spend time in the township as a white person, other than for business purposes, remains an unusual occurrence to date in post-apartheid South Africa. The permanent whispering of ‘*umlungu, umlungu...*’ [white person] made me frequently aware of how rare the presence of a white person remains in the township.

Furthermore:

...observation does not fulfil to the same extent the demand for a strict method because the distortion of perception by the observing subject [myself] can only be reduced to an insufficient degree (Friedrichs and Lüdtke 1975: 3).

The call for self-reflexive and critical analysis of ethnographic research findings has become such an integral part of anthropological studies that the evaluation and verification is given more attention than the actual research findings. This shall certainly not be the case here. In what follows, I will limit the discussion of the limitations of this research to a brief critical analysis of the methodological tools and the role of the qualitative researcher [myself].

3.4. Limitations

It can be risky to rely on data from one particular area without looking beyond the greater national circumstances. One must certainly be careful with regard to the generality of the findings as the aim of this study is primarily to elicit specific ethnolinguistic data on a specific target group, i.e. the Umlazi township community. Hence, the particular conditions of the township setting as previously spelt out need to be considered as they cannot easily be compared to rural or suburban ones. I do claim, however, that the sociolinguistic dynamics presented in this thesis convey a picture that could be replicated to a large extent in other urban townships in KwaZulu-Natal. The research aim here is centred around a search for the deeper social meaning of linguistic behaviour, without the desire to provide a quantitative statistic, or make claims about isiZulu-speakers in South Africa in general.

The limitations and constraints of this study are partially due to my role as a researcher. The work of anthropologists and anthropological linguists has shown that ethnographic data is highly dependent on the role of the participant observer in the field (Fischer 1992). The fact that I maintained, to a large extent, an 'outsider' status in the community, coupled with my restricted knowledge of isiZulu, certainly contributed to the limitations of this thesis. A *restudy* of the Umlazi

township community, preferably by an isiZulu mother tongue speaker, would undoubtedly be highly beneficial to sociolinguistic research in the field. In order to explain the influence I, as a white, non-South African, female, researcher had on the research situation, a section on self-reflection and data validity is included in this work (see Chapter 2.4.6).¹¹⁷

3.5. Conclusion

The conceptual and methodological framework underlying this thesis provides the reader with adequate information about the research design. The type of methodology presented here is certainly only one of the many possibilities available to find answers to the central questions guiding this research. I chose the multi-method, triangulation approach in order to gain a comprehensive and holistic picture of the sociolinguistic reality Umlazi residents are confronted with in daily life. In recent years, linguists have become more and more aware of the usefulness of qualitative research methods, as linguistic, social or cultural expression can best be understood in its natural context.

Whereas the data collected by questionnaires and interviews yields information that clearly focuses on specific topics related to this research, the data collected by participant observation yields information on a great variety of issues, many of which should be explored in more detail in further research. In order to understand the complex relationship between language and ethnic identity in a contemporary South African township environment, the wider social, cultural and economic factors must not be overlooked, but must feed into the essence of the research. It is against this backdrop that I now present the analysis of the fieldwork data.

¹¹⁷ Linguistic identity negotiations, as investigated here, are not *ipso facto* this or that. Umlazi people make a variety of ethnolinguistic identity claims during the course of this research. What is presented here is my own interpretation of sociolinguistic reality on which I shall reflect in the next chapter.

4. Data analysis and discussion

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the backbone of my study, I analyse the data and information gathered from the methodological frameworks discussed in the previous chapter, namely the questionnaires, the interviews and participant observation. The respective data shall be discussed separately to provide an autonomous interpretation of the findings resulting thereof, in order to triangulate them and provide a critical evaluation of the methodological framework itself. I first present a statistical overview of the questionnaire, followed by data analysis and interpretation.

The findings of the interviews are subdivided into two parts: Those drawn from the group interviews on the one hand, and those drawn from individual interviews, on the other. The majority of interviewees in the group interviews were learners from Umlazi high schools, between the age of 15 and 23. Although learners were also interviewed individually the majority of individual interviews were conducted with teachers, parents, acquaintances and friends.

The data and information drawn from participant observation serves to critically evaluate and verify the findings that rest on the analysis of the questionnaires and the interviews. The aim of this section is to give an account on the observed language related behaviours of individuals and groups. For this purpose, certain events I participated in are described in a narrative style in order to provide sufficient detail. Finally, I will provide a section on self-reflection in the field and subsequently I shall draw conclusions with regard to the validity and reliability of the data. This is necessary, because “the methods researchers use are based on the metatheoretical assumptions they make and the theories they use to guide their thinking” (Gudykunst 2000:312).

4.2. Analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires¹¹⁸

4.2.1. Overview

The function of the questionnaire in this study is to primarily provide some census-like data in order to assess the sociolinguistic profile of the participants. As will be seen below, the questionnaire is based on a rather simplistic design in order to give the learners tangible material to work with. The first questions in the questionnaire elicited general information, **Question 4** was the first topical one. The numbers presented below correspond with the order on the actual questionnaire (Appendix A, B). I will first present a quantitative overview of the responses given to all questions and subsequently analyse the open questions with regard to further elaboration.¹¹⁹

Q 1: Date:

Q 2: Gender:

Gender	Male	Female
Of 200	102	96

Q 3: Age:

Age	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Of 200	3	17	42	43	50	20	17	2	3

Q 4: When you were a child, in what language did your mother speak to you, in other words, what is your home language?

Home Language	isiZulu	isiZulu / English	seSotho	isiXhosa	isiZulu / Tsotsi
Of 200	190	5	2	2	1

¹¹⁸ Some of the findings presented here have been published in Rudwick (2004a). For a copy of the questionnaire, see Appendix A, B.

¹¹⁹ Although the number of learners who received the questionnaires was 200, the number of responses may not always correlate, as several learners skipped individual questions.

Q 5: What other languages do you speak?

Language(s)	English	isiZulu/ English/ isiXhosa	Tsotsi ¹²⁰	isiZulu, English	isiZulu/ English/ seSotho	isiXhosa
Of 200	152	21	14	8	5	2

Language(s)	siSwati	Setswana	English/ Setswana	English/ siSwati
Of 200	1	1	1	1

Q 6: Which language(s) do you use most often in your daily life?

Language(s)	isiZulu	isiZulu/ English/	English	Tsotsi
Of 200	140	35	17	2

Q 7: What languages do you speak:

a) at school?

Language(s)	English / isiZulu	English	isiZulu	English / Afrikaans	English/ isiXhosa
Of 200	78	74	41	1	1

b) with your friends?

Language(s)	isiZulu	isiZulu/ English	English	Tsotsi	Other
Of 200	103	37	35	13	3

¹²⁰ *Tsotsi* is an abbreviation of '*Tsotsitaal*' and is also known as *isiTsotsi*, which is a 'mixed language' developed in urban areas of South Africa. According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000b: 37), the language cannot be categorised as a pidgin or a creole, but does contain pidgenised and creolised features. For more detail, see Chapter 4.4.3.

c) with your parents?

Language(s)	isiZulu	isiZulu/ English	English	isiZulu/ isiXhosa	Other
Of 200	168	22	3	2	5

d) with your sister / brother?

Language(s)	isiZulu	English	isiZulu/ English	isiZulu/ isiXhosa	Other
Of 200	108	42	35	2	8

Q 8: What language(s) besides your home language would you want your children to learn? ¹²¹

a) First choice

Language(s)	English	isiZulu	isiXhosa	Other
Of 200	146	31	5	9

b) Second choice

Language(s)	English	Afrikaans	isiZulu	isiXhosa
Of 200	36	33	30	18

c) Third choice

Language(s)	SeSotho	isiXhosa	Afrikaans	French
Of 200	30	24	21	11

Q 9: Would your parents mind if you did not speak your home language to your children?

Yes	No
75	110

¹²¹ A number of learners did not indicate a second or third choice.

Q 10: Of all the languages you speak, which one do you feel most attached to (ie you have the strongest feelings for?) (Please give reasons for your answer.)
¹²²

Language(s)	English	isiZulu	isiZulu/ English	Other
Of 200	89	91	8	4

Q 11: If you were a witness in court, and you were free to use the language of your choice, which one would you choose? (Please give reasons for your answer.)

Language(s)	isiZulu	English	isiZulu/ English	Other
Of 200	114	74	4	1

Q 12: Are you proud of your culture?

Yes	No
196	2

[Q 13 to Q16 contained statements that the learners were asked either to agree or disagree with.]

Q 13:

Knowledge of my home language makes me feel proud	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
	138	51	5	1

Q 14:

I need my home language in order to preserve my culture	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
	130	51	14	-

¹²² My sincere thanks to Nkonko Kamwanagamalu who designed this question and stressed its importance to me for this research.

Q 15:

I consider English to be a language of national unity in South Africa	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
	83	61	34	17

Q 16:

I consider English as a negative influence on my culture	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
	29	61	70	33

**Q 17: Would you prefer to be taught in your home language?
(Please give reasons for your answer.)**

Yes	No
121	69

**Q 18: Would you prefer writing your school essays in your home language?
(Please give reasons for your answer.)**

Yes	No
119	77

**Q 19: Would you prefer for your home language to be used in modern science and technology and as a medium of instruction at university?
(Please give reasons for your answer.)**

Yes	No
121	75

**Q 20: Which language do you enjoy speaking the most?
(Please give reasons for your answer.)**

Language(s)	English	isiZulu	isiZulu/ English	Other
Of 200	101	92	2	3

The last two questions were entirely open questions (see appendices I and II) that cannot be quantified, and will be analysed in detail in the section below.

4.2.2. Further analysis and interpretation

The analysis above only covers the closed questions. I will discuss details of the learners' elaboration on the questionnaire below. The reasoning behind the responses is of crucial importance as it exposes the learners underlying motives for answering in a particular way. The data obtained through the questionnaires reveals not only surprising but also seemingly paradoxical, and at times, contradictory responses. I will interpret the responses with regard to learners' ethnolinguistic identity negotiations. The first few questions show that the subjects were almost equally divided into male and female learners between the age of 15 and 23 including a dominant age cluster between 17 to 19.

Ninety-five percent of the participants speak isiZulu as a mother tongue and home language, which reflects the great homogeneity of the KwaZulu-Natal province, and the Umlazi township in particular, as outlined in the previous chapter. Only 2.5% of the learners indicated both isiZulu and English as a mother tongue, which could suggest at least two trends: On the one hand, these few learners may be undergoing language shift from isiZulu to English in their domestic environment; or on the other hand, it could mean that they employ extensive code-switching with their parents. It can be assumed that the number of children claiming dual mother-tongue (i.e. isiZulu/English) background would be significantly higher if the research was carried out in ex-Model C school (see Kamwangamalu 2000a for comparison).

Question 5 reveals that nearly all the respondents claim to speak English, a few indicated that they speak *isiTsotsi* and a few others indicated that they are proficient in other African languages, such as *isiXhosa*. This is indicative of the lack of multilingualism among *isiZulu* speakers in comparison to other African language speakers. Whereas many other African language speakers speak *isiZulu* as a second, third or fourth language; *isiZulu* speakers, in contrast, are often reluctant to learn other African languages (see Slabbert and Finlayson 2000) and limit their language learning to English only. This is the case, in particular in KwaZulu-Natal, where Black people are commonly expected to learn some *isiZulu*.¹²³

The language used most in everyday life is clearly *isiZulu* (70%) (**Question 6**). While 17.5% of the respondents stated that they are using both *isiZulu* and English as their main medium of communication, 8.5% of the learners declared that they speak mostly English, which shows, among other things, that the use of English is undoubtedly on the increase. In school, 39% of the participants claimed to use both *isiZulu* and English, a similar number only English (37%) and significantly fewer learners indicated that they spoke only *isiZulu* in school (20,5%) (**Question 7a**). From a first glance this appears to be a bilingual learning situation in which both languages are used to some extent. Considering, however, that the 'official' medium of instruction is English only, one may be puzzled about the common use of *isiZulu*. The bilingual distribution of the languages also indicates the frequency of code-switching patterns in South African classrooms which have been acknowledged positively by several scholars in recent years (Adendorff 1996; Chick and Wade 1997; Kieswetter 1995; Moodley 2001). Eighteen-and-a-half percent of the participants claim to also code-switch with their friends (**Question 7b**), most of them, however (more than 50%) speak only *isiZulu* to their friends. Nearly 20% of the learners, in fact, claim to speak only English in interaction with their peers, which is a number that needs critical examination, as the findings from interviews and participant observation will show later. The data further indicates

¹²³ For more detail on this issue, see Chapter 4.4.

that in communication with parents 83% of the learners speak isiZulu only; 11% speak both isiZulu and English, and a very low number, only 1.5%, stated that they spoke English with their parents (**Question 7c**). In contrast to the language use with parents, learners claimed to use significantly more English with sisters, brothers and other young siblings (21%). Both English and isiZulu are also used extensively (17.5%).¹²⁴

This demonstrates, among other things, that the use of English in domestic settings is rising among the younger family members. This confirms recent findings by, for instance, Kamwangamalu (2003: 237) that, “English is increasingly intruding in the family domain, which has been the preserve of the indigenous language”. The findings of the questionnaires nonetheless indicate that households in Umlazi, in which English is currently employed as the main medium of communication, are exceptional cases. Only very few learners (1.5%) indicated that their parents speak English to them at home. To conclude the first part of the questionnaire, which mostly yielded information on language usage, I argue that isiZulu presents the dominant, if not hegemonic medium of communication in the township from the perspective of the vast majority of learners. Although English is the ‘official’ medium of instruction, the responses indicate frequent use of isiZulu, in the schools, which is in line with previous research in so-called ‘Black schools’ (eg Moodley 2001).¹²⁵

Due to the fact that learners are well aware of the socio-economic value of English, 73% of the participants chose it as a first second-language option (**Question 8**).¹²⁶ Few learners (2.5%) chose to learn isiXhosa first. As a second choice, English still

¹²⁴ See Bowermann (2000), for similar findings.

¹²⁵ Moodley (2001) further shows that there is no difference in educational achievement between the learners who are taught exclusively in the English language and those who are taught by employing code-switching as a teaching method in class. Research has shown that it is beneficial for a child to use the mother tongue in order to understand complex and complicated thought patterns more effectively.

¹²⁶ 15.5% marked isiZulu as a first choice although the question had clearly asked for the choice of “language besides the mother tongue”. The choice of English would have been higher if the participants had not misunderstood the question. The common reason in favour of isiZulu was “*IsiZulu, ngoba ulimi lwesintu kanti isiNgisi ngenzela ukuthi ngikwazi ukuhlangana nabantu bezinye izizwe*”, [IsiZulu, because it is the language of the Zulu nation but I use English to be able to communicate with other races].

featured most favourably (18%), closely followed by Afrikaans (16.5%). Third, seSotho (15%) appears to be the predominant choice, followed by isiXhosa (12%). Taking into account learners' comments, it seems that English is favoured because of its appeal as a 'linking language' in interethnic and international communication. More than 50% of the learners described English either as the 'communicative language', the 'agent to communicate with other countries' or the 'way to communicate with other race groups'. "*Ngoba lubalulekile lolu limi. Ngaphandle kwalo ngeke ukwazi ukuxhumana nabantu bezinye izizwe*" [It [English] is very important. Without it [the language] you cannot communicate with people from other countries].

About 25% of the participants explained that they would choose English first because of the "need to get a job" and "in order to have success". Some comments also gave insight into the pressure and lack of choice evidently felt by some individuals. Comments such as, for instance, "We need to love English", and "We have to be good in English because otherwise you are not going anywhere", support the assumption that learners feel as if they are not given a choice, they "have to" learn English if they want to live a good life. This line of argument is consistent with previous studies that expose the choice of English as medium of instruction to be based on purely instrumental reasons (for a recent study, see Wee 2003).

The responses to the question of whether the participant believes s/he would receive approval or disapproval from his/her parents, if s/he does not speak the mother tongue at home indicate deep divisions among learners' attitudes. Fifty-five percent state that their parents would approve of such a decision, while 37% say they would disapprove. Below I present a summary of common answers to **Question 9**.¹²⁷ The learners who claim to have their parents' approval for speaking English to their children explain:

¹²⁷ That these results are by no means exhaustive is obvious when one considers that the questionnaire contained open questions. The fact that the learners were asked to elaborate on their answers individually provided extensive data material. I chose to quote one of the learners and further indicate in brackets the percentage of learners who argued in this vein. Hence, the percentage in brackets is only an indication of how many learners expressed a similar view.

- No, because English is the only language to communicate on an international and intercultural level and they know that (31%)
- No, they would be happy because that is what they always wished for (9%)
- No, my parents are happy when I speak English, even if they don't understand (4.5%)
- No, they can't because even they like to speak English to me sometimes (2%)

The 37.5% of learners who claim that their parents would disapprove of such a decision explain:

- Yes, my parents will not allow it because they would think we are adopting others people's culture, my home language is important to my culture (14%)
- Yes, they would mind because my parents/grandparents only know Zulu and if my children don't speak Zulu they can't communicate (5.5%)
- Yes, because my parents love Zulu (4%)
- Yes, because it is my home language, those are the ways of respecting Zulu language, we love it (1.5%)

The data obtained from this question indicates that a greater number of the participants believe that their parents would understand if they decided to choose English as a future medium of communication with their children. Although the question is phrased in general terms with regard to 'a language other than the mother tongue', the respondent directly interpreted this as an option for English. This finding supports the claim made by Kamwangamalu (2003: 235) that "English is welcomed with open arms into the traditional domain of Zulu, that is, the family (...)". Interestingly most of the reasons put forward are not explicitly described in purely economic terms. The learners speak of English as the 'communicative' and 'communication' language, a language that enables them to speak with whomever they like. It is indeed an ironic twist that statements in support and favour of English are spelled out on questionnaires in grammatically incorrect and poorly articulated English. It raises the question with regard to how much 'wishful thinking' is involved in this process of aiming to speak English to future children.

Despite the praise for English, a third of the participants indicate that they maintain isiZulu as the language of the home. Of the subjects, 3.5% claim that their parents do not speak any other language than isiZulu and thus would certainly mind if they were not able to communicate with their grandchildren. This percentage, however, only represents the responses of children who considered it appropriate to indicate their parents' non-proficiency in English. The majority of explanations for isiZulu maintenance are based on the perceived link between language, i.e. isiZulu, and culture, i.e. Zulu culture. Hence, the use of another language, i.e. English, in a domestic setting would undermine the 'home' culture. Consequently, loss or maintenance of isiZulu is directly associated with the loss or maintenance of Zulu culture. Webb (1996: 181) argues in a similar vein, that "languages are central instruments of culture: they give access to a community's cultural artefacts, they reflect the culture of the community".

The responses indicate, among other things, that the adoption of a language other than isiZulu at home is seen as a betrayal and would lead to the adoption of another culture. This implicitly implies that using a language other than isiZulu at home is perceived as claiming another cultural/ethnic identity and as pretending to be someone different. One learner, in fact, stated that "people are growing a culture of other countries". This student further claimed that with the revitalisation of the use of isiZulu, Zulu culture could prosper again. The findings of **Question 9** link up to a primordial understanding of the relationship between language, culture and ethnic identity. Many youths articulate a direct and inextricable link between their home language, their culture and their ethnic belonging, and also regard it as something that is cast in stone.

Although **Question 9** is phrased so as to elicit the opinion of the subjects' parents, the attitude of the subject him/herself is in most cases implicitly conveyed with the responses. The data reveals that due to the fact that English is rated highly for economic and practical communicative reasons, a high number of the subjects would choose to speak it at home and have the approval of their parents as well. It remains questionable, however, whether the responses refer to the main and

exclusive usage of English. It could also well be the case that the pro-English answers given by the learners merely refer to extensive code-switching and code-mixing between English and isiZulu.

The data obtained from **Question 10** reveals that almost as many learners claim to feel 'most attached' to English than those who claim strong attachment to their mother tongue isiZulu (43% versus 45.5%), while 4% named both these languages. English, once again, is what the learners term the 'communicative' or 'communication language' for it enables one to converse with anyone. A further reason in favour of English is that the language improves one's job opportunities and future prospects. It is evident that the motives behind this devotion to English are based very much on what the pupils have learnt from everyday life experience. The following comment exemplifies this view: "*IsiNgisi, ngoba esikhathini samanje uthola ukuthi uma ufuna umsebenzi kufanele ukhukulume isiNgisi noma uya emahofisi ukhuluma isiNgisi*" [English, because if you are looking for a job today or you work in an office you need to be able to speak English]. Quite a few of the subjects explained their attachment to English with comments such as the following "we *have* to love English" or "there is nothing you can do without English". The participants' apparent attachment to English is clearly instrumentally rather than emotionally grounded. It once again characterises the absurdity that 'choice' (between English and isiZulu) is in fact not really a 'choice', but a responsibility if one wants to strive for a good life in South Africa.

For the purpose of this study, I chose to highlight those comments that indicate ethnic identification with the mother tongue. This process and the function of the mother tongue as ethnic marker surfaces among the participants who claim to feel most attached to isiZulu in the following way:

- Because it is my mother tongue and I spend lots of time at home speaking it, I am good at it and it makes me happy (16%).
- Because I am Black, I am proud of myself, and Zulu makes me feel at home wherever I go, I am a Zulu (10.5%).
- Because I talk to the Black nation and I want everyone to hear what I am saying. Some do not understand English, I can speak with those who don't know English (5%).

- Because I like our traditional things, it is our home language and we should stick to our culture and not adopt other people's culture (5.5%)
- It is my home language and I still want to know it better so that I know who I am (2.5%).

The link established between language, culture and identity in the previous question prevails also here, albeit with a stronger emphasis on the comfort and happiness associated with the use of the mother tongue. However, comments such as 'I am a Zulu', for instance are clear expressions of ethnic identity, which gains further significance due to the pride the subjects associate with this identification as will be shown below. Strong pride associated with isiZulu and Zulu culture surfaces in many of the subjects' responses.

When asked what language would be the preferred medium in court, the subjects give isiZulu the lead, with 57% of the participants opting for it (**Question 11**). English follows with 37% of respondents. Preference for isiZulu was explained by the comfort and flexibility the mother tongue offers: "*IsiZulu, yingoba kuphenduleka kalula ngesiZulu ngoba angisazi kahle isiNgisi*" [I can only answer easily in isiZulu because I am not good in English]; "*IsiZulu ngoba alikho igama engingeke ngingalizwa uma kukhulunywa enkantolo*" [isiZulu, because there is not single word that I would miss in court].

Further comments include the notion of confidence that isiZulu provides and that family members would also be able to understand what is communicated in court. While the communicative value of the mother tongue is most frequently referred to, several respondents also argued that isiZulu is an official language and hence should be employed as a language in court. Kamwangamalu (2001a) recently conducted a survey in which subjects were asked which language they preferred their driving instructor to use and found that the majority of the isiZulu speakers (11 out of 14) chose their own languages. He further concludes that "each group identifies with the language they have strong feelings for, which in most cases is their L1" (Kamwangamalu 2001a: 86). These findings correspond to some extent with the findings at hand. Attachment to English, however, is more readily

expressed. Evidently, however, the data indicates that the majority of isiZulu speakers would choose to speak their mother tongue in a situation where they are under stress or under pressure.

More than one third of the participants, nonetheless, opted to use the English language in court. The most common reason for this preference was that the court would be an environment where people are educated and perhaps mostly white and, therefore, it was advisable to speak English so that everyone could understand: *“IsiNgisi, ngoba wonke umuntu uyazi kumele sisazi isiNgisi yikhona wonke umuntu ezozwa”* [English, because everybody knows that s/he has to know English so that everybody can understand]. Further comments revealed that the subjects were also concerned about the danger of being misinterpreted by a translator. A few respondents also indicated that they would choose English because it empowers them and makes them feel good about themselves. The immediate educated status that isiZulu-speakers frequently grant someone who is fluent in English is brought to light in these comments.

Question 12, simply and straightforwardly inquired whether learners experience a sense of pride with regard to their culture. Ninety-eight percent of the subjects answered in the affirmative while individual comments include the following explanations: “It makes me feel African,” “it’s my life,” “we can’t throw away our heritage,” “it shows us who we are”. Few learners answered the question about culture with direct reference to language. The statement “Yes, I am proud, but I need to learn other languages as well,” illustrates that this particular learner understands that one does not give up her/his culture by learning other languages.¹²⁸

The next section of the questionnaire included closed questions (**Question 13-16**), which offered four response options to the participants. Ninety-four-and-a-half

¹²⁸ It would be an interesting undertaking to compare these answers with responses of, for instance, German school children. A cross-cultural study would assumingly reveal that isiZulu-speakers carry an extraordinary strong pride and commitment with regard to their ethnic heritage and culture, patriotism of a unique kind, in fact.

percent voiced their basic agreement with the statement, 'Knowledge of my home language makes me feel proud,' while only 3% of the subjects disagreed. This further supports the common and important notion of pride among Zulu people. Similarly, the statement, 'I need my home language in order to preserve my culture,' triggered basic agreement from 90.5% and disagreement from only 7% of the learners. The awareness of this definite link between language and culture, combined with the strong sense of pride among learners, is an indication that the bulk of learners examined are unlikely to shift from isiZulu to English. The next assertion revealed slightly more dissension among the learners: 'I consider English to be a language of national unity in South Africa,' is a statement that found agreement among 72% of the participants. Twenty-two-and-a-half percent disagreed, few strongly disagreed. This not only indicates that the vast majority of learners perceive English as a linguistic means to unite different groups within South Africa, but also suggests that they associate to some extent with the language. The last statement, 'I consider English to be a negative influence on my culture,' was by far the most controversial one and revealed very different attitudes among the learners. Forty-six percent of respondents agreed with the statement while 51.5% voiced disagreement. **Question 16** reveals that learners' opinions are very divided with regard to the influence of the English language on Zulu culture.

The fact, however, that 46% of the subjects of this study perceive English as having a negative influence on their culture indicates that these youngsters reject English as a marker of their ethnolinguistic identity. In the review of literature (Chapter 2) I have referred to Social Identity Theory (SIT) as outlined by Tajfel (1982). SIT includes the premise that individuals are motivated by a desire for positive self-esteem and that this 'positive psychological distinctiveness' constructs our identity. Perceiving English as a negative influence on one's culture, which in itself is regarded as essential to the individual, conflicts with a positive identification. Hence, it has to be assumed that those who disagreed with the statement above have little ground on which to identify with the English language.

Further, in **Question 17**, the learners were asked to indicate the preferred medium of instruction in school. Sixty percent of the learners named isiZulu as the preferred medium if they had a choice, while 34% voiced preference for English. These findings challenge the common belief in South Africa that all learners choose to be educated in the medium of English. Those, however, who voiced preference for English argued that isiZulu was already mastered perfectly. This finding is congruent with Obanya's observation that "Africans feel that there is nothing to study in their own native language because they already know them well enough" (1999: 89). Other common reasons were that exams had to be written in English and that at university English would be the only medium of instruction. Hence, the participants are aware of South African contemporary reality and know that English proficiency is a requirement for academic success. "*Ulimi oselukhulunywa ezindaweni eziningi yisiNgisi, ngoba yisona esesisetshenziswa kakhulu emsebenzini nasema Technikon*" [The language that is widely spoken is English, because it is used at work places and at places like the Technikon]. Few learners also pointed out the international status of the language, as already indicated in previous sections.

However, as stated above, the majority of learners opted for isiZulu as a medium of instruction. *Yebo, ngoba ngiyakwazi ukuzwa kahle uma ukhulumua ngalo ngiyakwazi nokuqaphela ukuthi ugcinephi* [I can hear and understand you well when you are using it and be able to note your endings]. The most common comments are summarised below:

- because it is to the best understanding to me and my home language and I like it the most (33%);
- because it is my mother tongue and culture, I am a Zulu (9.5%);
- because I want to know more about my home language (6.5%); and
- because Zulu is important in South Africa and for our culture (6%).

Kamwangamalu (2000a: 55) notes that despite the constitutional principle that "every person shall be entitled to instruction in the language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable" (The Constitution, Section 32 [c]), no case has been reported of African students wanting to be educated through the medium of an African language". The collected data challenges this observation. The

preference for isiZulu among most participants is evident from their comments. It seems natural to assume that a learner would prefer to be taught complicated thought patterns in history, physics or biology in the language he/she knows best. The mother tongue offers the learners the possibility to concentrate on the content of the subjects instead of having to struggle with linguistic problems. Maphalala (2000: 150) argues that it is preposterous to speak about equal opportunities “when Black children are receiving their education through ‘foreign languages’”. Most learners in our case, however, did not explicitly state that they are feeling unequally treated by having English as a medium of instruction. A number of learners explained their choice by foregrounding the pride in their ethnic identity as the following comment explicates, “because it is my mother tongue and culture, I am a Zulu”.

Question 18 is quite similar to the previous one. Learners are asked whether they would prefer using their mother tongue when writing essays for school. The results expectedly show 59.5% of the learners answering in the affirmative and only 38.5% in the negative. I provide an individual comment in order to illustrate how English may be seen in a negative light: “*Yebo, ngoba ulimi lwami angilubandlululi, angisoze ngalulahla ngaluncela ebeleni lolulimi. IsiNgisi wulimi lobandlululo*” [Yes, because I do not discriminate my language, and I will never desert it because I sucked it from my mother’s breast. English is the language of apartheid]. The residue of the past is deeply embedded in the above statement and shows that English is by no means uncritically regarded as the ‘language of liberation’ by all. Other comments in favour of isiZulu include, “Because it is easier to express myself and my true feelings”, “I can go more into detail”, “because I write better in Zulu”, “because my *gogo* could read it,” etc. There were also a number of learners who explained their decision in terms of their Zulu identity, arguing for instance, “It reminds me who I am and where I come from”.

The rationale for preferring English over isiZulu corresponds to a great extent to that given in **Question 17**. Those who prefer English stated that they wanted to practise the language more and that it would make much more sense to write in

English in order to practice the language. *“Ngifuna ukufundiswa ngezinye izilimi engingazazi ukuze ngizuze ulwazi lewzinye izilimi”* [I would like to be taught in other languages so that I can gain information about other languages]. This comment indicates that the learner is under the impression that languages can only be acquired if they are used as MOI. The comment raises what I call the quality - quantity issue of English teaching in the South African education system. Most people think that the English language can only adequately be acquired if it is used as a medium of instruction. In contrast, I would like to argue that one can become quite proficient in a Second or Third language, if these languages are properly and adequately taught as subjects, as is the case in many European countries. The argument that I present shall further be explored in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

Question 19, i.e. “Would you prefer for your home language to be used in modern science and technology and as a medium of instruction at university?”, presents similar findings with 60.5% of the learners answering in the affirmative and only 37.5% responding in the negative. The most common explanation in favour of isiZulu was that all Black South Africans would commonly understand the language.¹²⁹ Many learners also said that they would like to see isiZulu employed in these high domains so that they could feel proud of their mother tongue. *“Yebo, ngoba ungakwazi ukuthi ukwazi ukuqhubekela kwezesayensi kalula ngoba kusetshenziswa ulimi lwakho olukhulumayo”* [Yes, because you can be able to go further in science subjects because the language you speak would be used]. A vast number of answers also indicate that the learners truly struggle with the English language in higher domains of learning. The choice for isiZulu is based on the belief that comprehension of the subject could strongly be improved. In addition to these common sentiments, few respondents also indicated that the use of isiZulu in the higher domains of learning and academia would empower their mother tongue as it still has a low economic status in society. Of course, the use of isiZulu in a

¹²⁹ It is an interesting assumption brought forward by some learners that all black people in South Africa would be able to understand isiZulu. It has been observed that many isiZulu-speakers expect speakers of other African languages to know isiZulu. Judging broadly from the sociolinguistic reality of South Africa it must be assumed that there is quite a high number of isiZulu L₂ or L₃ speakers among the black population of the country.

domain such as science and technology would clearly raise the status of the language and give isiZulu-speakers a sense of pride. The fact that many of the youth members examined here seem to believe in the development and empowerment of their ethnic tongue is the first positive step to such a development.¹³⁰

Despite the high number of learners opting for isiZulu as a high status language, there were also 37.5% of subjects who voiced scepticism with regard to isiZulu being employed in technological domains. Their preference lies with English because according to them, isiZulu has limited lexical capacity and consequently represents an inadequate language in order to express complicated scientific concepts. South African scholars who investigated the MOI issue have previously highlighted arguments of this and similar kind (De Klerk 2002b, Kamwangamalu 1997). The isiZulu speaking youths are evidently aware that few *abelungu* [white people] understand and speak isiZulu. In order to communicate well, one needs to be proficient in English. The knowledge of English is not only directly associated with education, but also often equated with it. As Webb (1995: 29) remarks, “to be educated means to know English, and to know English means to be educated”.

Question 20, which pertained to the preferred and favourite medium of communication among learners, indicates a stark contrast to previous comments in favour of isiZulu. English is overwhelmingly preferred (50.5%) as medium of communication, only 41.5% of the subjects claim preference for isiZulu. A closer look at the participants’ comments reveals, however, that the motives behind the choice have little emotional basis. It is primarily the international and intercultural communicative value of the language that learners refer to:

- English, because I am able to communicate with other countries and I already know my language (12%);
- English, because I want to practice more and learn more than I already known, English is for a better position in life (10%); and

¹³⁰ To explore the extent to which the views of these learners are in fact ‘practicable’ and ‘feasible’, is beyond the scope of this study. I would like to emphasise that the case of KwaZulu-Natal is a unique one in South Africa as relative linguistic homogeneity is provided in the province, by the fact that roughly 80% of inhabitants speak isiZulu as a mother tongue.

- English, because it gives me strength when I talk in front of other people and I feel proud when I speak it (7%).

As can be deduced from the above, English is perceived to carry the function of an empowerment device for many youth members. Only a few individuals expressed a predilection for English that was based on emotion. Other scholars (e.g. Mhlanga 1995) have provided similar information from the classroom context; the question central to the study at hand is to what extent this preference for English affects and influences the negotiation of the identity among these young isiZulu-speakers. The questionnaire responses give inadequate insight into this issue. Interviews and the information gathered through participant observation are more fruitful in this matter. Nonetheless, I present some of the responses that further shed light on a choice of isiZulu:

- because Zulu is my own language I understand it, I don't make mistakes when I speak and I love it (12%);
- because I am a happy Zulu person, everything I do is based on Zulu (4%);
- because it is my mother tongue and I am proud of it (5%); and
- because it is so nice to speak Zulu with a person who knows Zulu, it's culture (3.5%).

I have already discussed at length why the participants identify more with isiZulu than with English. It suffices to add, however, that the choice of isiZulu has to do primarily with the comfort and confidence the mother tongue offers and its link to Zulu culture. It is strongly associated with a 'natural state of being Zulu'.

Question 21 asked the subject to explain what his/her home language meant to him/her. Almost every learner, apart from a few exceptions, answered that his/her mother tongue meant "a lot" to him/her for a variety of reasons. While isiZulu is simply regarded as the comfortable medium of expression, it also appears to provide necessary grounding for an ethnic identity. Responses that indicate such an ethnolinguistic identity negotiation were, for instance, "because I am Zulu", "because it gives me the confidence of who I am", "because I know my roots and culture", "because it's important to culture and culture is important to people", and "because it means to me where I belong". The most common of all answers was that

she/he feels 'happy'. "*Ngizizwa ngijabulile kakhulu futhi ngiluthanda kakhulu. Ngizizwa kahle impela*" [I feel very happy and I love it very much. I feel very good indeed], "*Ngizizwa ngiluthanda kakhulu ngoba uma ngixhumana nabakithi abangasekho ngikhuluma lona*" [I feel loving it very much (sic) because if I communicate with my ancestors, I speak this language]. Many learners referred to the pride they felt for the mother tongue. What this data suggests is that these isiZulu-speaking children identify largely with their mother tongue. IsiZulu is directly related to other cultural elements, such as *amasiko* or *amadlozi*, for instance, i.e. Zulu customs, traditions and ancestors. Interestingly, there were quite a few learners that noted that they felt 'free' speaking their mother tongue: "*Ngizizwa ngikhululekile futhi ngiziqhenya ngalo*" [I feel free and proud of it]. One has to ask whether this answer implies that speaking English means 'not to be free' or to 'feel imprisoned'.

The final point on the questionnaire (**Question 22**) gave the learner an opportunity to further elaborate on anything they wanted to comment on. Generally, the results were divided rather equally between those who emphasised the importance of the English language and those who made comments in favour of isiZulu. The most common aspect in favour of English was the international status that the language possesses and accordingly the opportunity to communicate with 'everyone'. A few learners simply said that they loved English, others pointed out that you 'needed to know' English and it would thus be recommendable to be educated in this language. However, approximately half of the learners used these last spaces on the questionnaire as a platform to express a plea for their home language and culture. "*Mina ngiyaluthanda ulimi lwami futhi ngiyakuthanda ukuba wuhlanga olumnyama ngoba vele ngimnyama*" [I love my language and I love to be a Black nation because indeed I am black]¹³¹; "*Ngizizwa ngisenkulukekwemi uma ngikhuluma ulimi wami*" [I feel free when I speak my own language]. Comments such as, "I like my home language and I will like to say to all people not to delay their culture and always remember where they come from", or "It is not right to turn away from your culture, I am proud to be of the Zulu nation", represent

¹³¹ It can be assumed that the abovementioned comment has been triggered by my presence as a *white* female. A follow-up study by a black researcher is hence advisable.

awareness of their own culture as different from other cultures. Other learners stressed the love and pride they feel for their mother tongues through comments such as, “I feel proud about my language and my culture because I follow my ancestors”. This line of thought reminds one of Fishman’s *paternity* factor, which is described as an “actor’s descent-related being” and the “feeling of a common ancestry” (Fishman 1989: 26).

Further comments include, “*Yini indaba umuntu angazikhulumeli ulimi lwakhe noma kuphi noma ngasiphi isikhathi?*” [Why cannot everyone be free to speak his or her home language wherever and whenever?] and “*Ngifisa sengathi bonke abantu base South Africa bangakhuluma isiZulu nalabo abasaziyo isiZulu bangasikhohlwa nesiZulu baziqhenye ngolimi lwabo*”, [I wish everyone in South Africa could learn isiZulu and those who already know isiZulu not to forget it and to be proud of our language]. The latter comment indicates that there exists a fear that some people know isiZulu but may forget the language or cease to use it.

Some learners expressed disappointment about the fact that white people, in general, make little effort to learn isiZulu. They question why isiZulu is not considered a ‘communicative language’ in KwaZulu-Natal since most people speak it. A few participants even voiced resentment and articulated a lack of understanding about the slow sociolinguistic transition process, in other words, the absence of isiZulu in the higher domains of life. The question of ‘disadvantage’ and whether isiZulu is a language of disadvantage is an ambiguous one. On the one hand a significant number of learners claim not to feel disadvantaged to speak isiZulu as a mother tongue due to the pride associated with the mother tongue and its immediate link to culture and belonging. On the other hand, some learners voiced anger and resentment about the fact that one who speaks English is instantly equipped with the linguistic potential to live a successful life in South Africa. Zungu (1998: 47) has previously argued that “those who consider speaking Zulu as a disadvantage, do so for economic reasons – they don’t want to be unemployed and to starve”. Furthermore, the above preliminary findings suggest that isiZulu-speakers would like to empower their language if they were given a chance.

However, due to the notion of having no choice (due to the economic hegemony of the English language) many learners grant English acquisition high priority.

4.2.3. Brief summary of findings

At first glance, the data above indicates that there exists little coherence among perceptions and attitudes towards languages, i.e. isiZulu and English, among Umlazi youths. What becomes evident, however, is that isiZulu is unanimously referred to as important carrier of Zulu culture, while the role of English is merely that of a necessary prerequisite for a successful life. The results, however, only scratch the sociolinguistic surface and do not allow for any major claims in terms of ethnolinguistic identity constructions. Nonetheless, the results of the questionnaires implicitly indicate that both isiZulu and English are powerful linguistic means on which to negotiate identities. The questionnaire analysis further suggests that there does exist some level of consensus with regard to the significance of the mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu and the tremendous amount of pride associated with it. This gives rise to the necessity for further exploring a notion of identity and ethnicity based on the language. It remains to be seen whether, and to what extent, the construction of Zuluness relies on the linguistic source, i.e. isiZulu.

On the other hand, English undoubtedly plays a vital role and carries an important instrumental function in the lived experience of the learners, and is perceived as *the* ticket for success. Facing the undisputed high economic value of English, more than half of the participants for instance claim to “feel more attached” to English than to their mother tongue. In this context it is clearly the conscious understanding of contemporary South African reality that shapes the learners’ aspirations. English is fundamentally linked with job opportunities, success and power, as recently argued in numerous sociolinguistic studies in South Africa (Bowerman 2000, Coetzee-Van Rooy 2000, Murray 2002). Nonetheless, its role is ambiguous and evidently generates split and divided perceptions among Umlazi school learners. Again, this will receive further attention in the analysis of interviews and ethnographic data presented in the next and subsequent section. To sum up, the

findings are a first indication of the prevailing sociolinguistic dilemma many young South Africans whose mother tongue is not English find themselves in. In this case, Umlazi youths are faced with the fact that isiZulu is clearly not equally valuable as claimed in the constitution, but only an L-variety in terms of economic status in a diglossic framework. The low economic value of isiZulu leads learners to have contradictory and paradoxical views about the status and functions of languages in their lives.

With regard to identity negotiations and a possible construction of Zuluness, the questionnaires give only little information on how respondents feel about the role of languages with reference to their identity and ethnicity. It has previously been argued that, despite the fact that 'Zuluness' in South Africa is not only associated with an ethnic identity, but is also highly politicised, most of the youth are proud of their Zulu heritage and the use of the Zulu language (Dlamini 2001: 204). Similarly, most participants are convinced that sacrificing their mother tongue in favour of English is a betrayal of one's roots and culture, irrespective of how important and powerful the latter is economically. Furthermore, there is evidence that some learners have faith in uplifting the status of isiZulu to a position that is economically more beneficial. These and other issues will be explored in more detail in the next section.

4.3. Analysis and interpretation of recorded data

In the previous chapter, I differentiated between quantitative and qualitative interviews and explained the reasons for focusing on the latter in this study. Every interview had a slightly different nature, dealing with a wide range of language issues deemed important by the interviewees. Some interviews were conducted by isiZulu speaking research assistants who assisted me in the translation of the recordings and validated my interpretations. At all times, the participants were led to speak freely about the meaning of language(s), i.e. isiZulu and English, in their

individual as well as their social and family life. The use of language(s) in the interviews and recordings itself also formed an essential component of analysis.

As most of the interviews were open-ended, I had lengthy tapes of data which yield valuable information on a variety of topics linked to the central research questions as outlined above. While I do not differentiate in the analysis between individual and group interviews, the interview extracts used in this section are employed to exemplify common views among the interviewees concerning the role of languages in their life. The taped recordings include classroom and staff room discussions, and interactions in Umlazi family homes and in public. While I acted as a substitute English teacher I sometimes let the tape recorder run during classroom interaction. Hence, during discussions and debates the participants were talking to each other rather than to me – the teacher/researcher –, which gave the atmosphere a more natural and authentic potential. As previously mentioned, one of the central aims in interviews here is to reveal negotiations and constructions of language-based identities, in particular those with an ethnic element. In order to obtain such information I raised controversial issues, such as the role of African languages, i.e. isiZulu, as opposed to English in the expression of ‘African thought’ and ‘African’/‘Zulu’ literature, the 11-official language policy or the issue of the medium of instruction in school. The analysis of the interviews lent itself to a focus on the selected issues, presented as headings here, as they are very pertinent for finding answers to the central research questions.

4.3.1. Juxtaposition of isiZulu versus English in identity negotiations

In discussing the role of the African languages versus English in the expression of ‘African’/‘Zulu’ thinking and writing, many interviewees highlighted the important role of English as a linking language and international medium of communication. There is no need to reiterate the evident advantages of using English again, as pointed out by the interviewees, as they largely overlap with previous comments on the questionnaires. What is more important for the purpose of this study is the fact that a significant number of interviewees clearly prefer isiZulu as a medium of expression in writing. The comments below illustrate this view:

I think if I would write I would do it in Zulu, I am not writing for whites only... I am writing for everyone, so if the whites cannot read my literature book they must find someone to translate it. Because I am an African boy so that's why I must write in Zulu, so that every African can read it (Mdu, 19).¹³²

If I would write I would write in Zulu, because the aim of writing is to teach and tell people about your faith. And if I want to teach an African I have to use an African language because there are many Africans who do not understand English. They may talk English but they do not understand clearly the English writing (Mlungisi, 28).

From the above sentiments one can deduce that the quoted individuals claim to be devoted to their mother tongue in terms of writing and refuse to compromise it by using another medium of expression. Furthermore, there is evidence of a certain kind of social awareness among isiZulu-speakers that suggests that there is a collective sense of decision-making among the individuals above. McKenna (2004: 198) recently argued that African students are highly concerned with social issues and Kamwangamalu (1999: 27), while discussing the concept of *ubuntu*,¹³³ asserts that “nobody in an African context lives for himself”. In line with theoretical frameworks in intercultural communication studies, members of collectivist, high-context cultures,¹³⁴ such as African and Asian ones, are more likely to be defined by the group than to have an individualist sense of themselves. This sense of a collective consciousness surfaces repeatedly in the interviews and indicates that the concept of identity is widely understood in relation to other people. Hence, Umlazi isiZulu speakers’ identities are grounded more strongly in the social world than in an individual sense. The choice of isiZulu as a code is frequently linked with the argument that many Umlazi residents have little or no knowledge of English.

Although it is not a central aim of this study to elicit attitudes towards English,¹³⁵ the juxtaposition of English and isiZulu proved to be a useful tool in interviews in

¹³² The participants are all given pseudonyms in order to assure their anonymity.

¹³³ *Ubuntu* is a multifaceted pan-African concept that represents a strong sense of collective consciousness, social awareness, and positive virtues based on mutual human respect. For more detail see, Bhengu (1996), Blankenberg (1999), Kamwangamalu (1999).

¹³⁴ Members of collectivist cultures belong to in-groups and collectivities which have greater meaning than the individual and immediate family, see Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1988).

¹³⁵ Attitudes towards English in the South African context have been discussed in more detail in other studies (Wood (1995), Young (1995), Smit (1996)).

order to reveal linguistic polarisation and implicit ethnolinguistic identity formations. It was important to determine the reasons participants brought forward their perceptions of English as a unifying language versus its potential threat to the purity of isiZulu or to their identity as *umZulu*. Those who perceive English as a unifier argued by fore-grounding South Africa's multilingualism and the necessity of a *lingua franca*. The comment by Mbali (32): "I really think the ANC and English have brought liberation to South Africa," exemplifies such a view. It also demonstrates political affiliation with the ANC, which surfaced in many pro-English arguments. Furthermore, English was repeatedly termed the 'communicative language', a label that Umlazi people appear to employ more readily than 'language of liberation'.

However, a significant number of interviewees also showed reluctance to identify the role of English as a unifying one. What surfaced in this context is a direct correlation between a critical stand towards English and an either implicit or explicit notion and ethnic identity construction, hence 'Zuluness'. In other words, participants substantiated the critical standpoint by referring to the incompatibility of cultural heritage, tradition and practices with the use of the English language. Some participants also explained that there exists a discrepancy between the Zulu value system and English language expressional power. In particular, the older participants mentioned, for instance, the decreasing value of *hlonipha* [respect] in this context. According to them, the use of the English language in conversation with the older generation is disrespectful.¹³⁶

With regard to the role of 'English as a language of unification' in South Africa there is clearly no consensus among the interviewees and, in fact, the group interviews reveal that it is an issue that is vehemently disputed in educated circles of the township community. The following two extracts illustrate the controversy:

I think it [English] is the language of unification, because sometimes Black people if they want to get some particular job, some managers they speak only English they are white, and the people who most communicate in English, and that's why English is the communicative language (Sfiso, 23).

¹³⁶ The issue of *hlonipha* and *isihlonipho* received further attention in Chapter 4.4

I disagree with English as unifier, because I am from the Zulu culture and my child will be born in the generation of English and they won't know about my culture, because they have been disturbed by English, so I don't agree with English to be the language of African unity (Sbo, 30).

Although most interviewees stressed the important role English plays in the country, several participants also voiced a rather critical or even hostile position towards the language. English is clearly positioned ambiguously with regard to language attitudes. Not only did perceptions among the different interviewees vary to a large extent but single individuals often had contradicting views concerning the function of English. Having acquired the label as the 'language of liberation' on the one hand and the 'language of colonisation' on the other, the role of English is clearly an enigmatic one. It was recently argued that many African language speakers have a love-hate relationship with the English language (De Klerk and Gough 2002: 370). The interview data collected for this study strongly supports this claim. Several individuals, in fact, used the words *love* and *hate* in relation to English in the interviews.

Most previous studies have focused on attitudes surrounding the instrumental role of English. Smit (1996: 180) for instance, portrays English as "a high status language, a language of higher education, of personal social advancement, of international and national communication, and as a language of national unification". Unsurprisingly, in comparison with the indigenous African languages, English always appears as the favourite due to its economic power. In particular in KwaZulu-Natal, however, one has to be cautious about uncritically assuming that South Africans, i.e. isiZulu speakers, see English positively. In the next section, I argue that the attitudes of Umlazi residents point to a critical view of English and stand in conflict with an overall embrace of language.

4.3.2. English as the 'other tongue'

Braj Kachru (1992) aptly entitled a selection of papers on English across cultures *The other tongue*, as the book is concerned with those who do not speak English as a mother tongue, but use it as 'the other tongue'. Apart from a few individual cases

the participants and informants of this research speak isiZulu as a mother tongue and learn English as L2. The notion of 'the other tongue' is evidently linked to 'otherness', in other words, to something that is not one's own. The analysis of the interviews shows, *inter alia*, that awareness of English as 'the other tongue' entails a distance that limits the extent to which individuals are able to feel at home with the language. Hence, there is no substantial ground on which most Umlazi individuals are able to identify themselves with the language. The comment below, voiced by a township school learner, aptly describes the 'other tongue' as the 'other self'.

The children that are learning on Union Model C schools, when they are together they like to communicate with each other in English, so that the other person see themselves as less complicated, but others try to say other things that he or she cannot understand about our own languages... So that is why the other tongue is the other self... shame, because other people try to say bad things about you while you are around them (Sibusiso, 19).

As previously mentioned, many interviewed participants express ambivalent feelings about the status of English vis-à-vis that of the mother tongue, isiZulu. Essentially, I argue, that these ambivalent feelings stem from the link the participants make between the mother tongue, isiZulu, Zulu culture and a definition of who they are and where they belong. The following interview extracts illustrate the background to this argument:

I only speak Zulu at home. I think we must not speak so much of English, because if they would they forget about our culture and that is bad, we must never forget where we came from. Because if you can think of some people they never go back to their culture (Buhle, 22).

I think if we use only English and not our home language anymore, we will forget where we come from, our culture (Nkululeko, 24).

Clearly, the above quoted individuals perceive excessive use of English as detrimental to the maintenance of 'culture' and tradition. Fishman (1997a: 39) argues that "a very common and relatively undemanding image is that of the language as a true reflection of its community". Although it is evident that 'culture' as referred to above means Zulu culture, the characteristics of this culture vary in their degree of importance from one individual to the next. As Fishman (1997a, b)

notes, the term ‘culture’ is often merely a desideratum related to distinctiveness of identity. Languages however, i.e. isiZulu and English, are not mere desiderata in the isiZulu-speaking community but part and parcel of every day communication patterns.

Nomusa (18), argues, “English is not okay because other people, they are not educated, especially those who want a job they do not get a job because they do not know how to start, they only know Zulu”. The interview extracts suggest that the interviewee is well aware that the exclusive use of English in the higher domains of life has a disempowering effect on monolingual isiZulu speaking people.

If you know English you are seen as someone who is maybe educated. The one, who is always speaking English, is maybe better than the others. I am not sure how it happens, ... whatever you need to do in your own country you need to know English instead of your mother tongue. If you want a job you must know English (Muzi, 33).

The quote above clearly illustrates again the commonly perceived direct correlation between ‘being educated’, ‘being intelligent’, ‘being successful’ and ‘being proficient in English’. In several interviews that were conducted in isiZulu the interviewee stated that s/he only speaks isiZulu because they are not educated, i.e. *“Ngisebenzisa isiZulu ngoba angifundile”*.

An argument that was repeatedly voiced against English echoes Ngugi’s (1986) sentiments as previously outlined in the theoretical foundations of this study. Many interviewees do not see English as indigenous to South Africa and perceive it as what is termed an ‘exile’ language in the quote below.

There is one thing that I don’t like about English because it is an exile language. It is not our home language (Jabulani, 18).

The etymology of the term ‘exile’ used in relation to English, seems to stem from the fact that most ANC leaders stayed in English speaking exile, such as Great Britain or the United States. The label ‘ex-colonial language’, in contrast, is hardly employed in relation to English by Umlazi participants. Although several interviewees voice the belief that losing one’s mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu, is

directly associated with turning away from Zulu culture, some also highlight the communicative value of English. Vusi (19), says English is very important because “*ngaphandlekwalo ngeke ukwazi ukuxhumana nabantu bezinye izizwe* [without it you cannot be able to communicate with people of other races]. Zandile (28) is of the opinion that “English can’t influence anyone if he knows his culture or her culture. But if you living here you need to know some other languages in order to communicate with other people”.

Several other sociolinguistic studies in South Africa have outlined the instrumental and communicative motives for regarding English highly (see, for instance Mhlanga 1995, Murray 2002). The conducted interviews suggest, however, a more diverse and conflicting reality with regard to attitudes towards English. A significant number of isiZulu-speakers seem to harbour resentment over the exceptionally powerful status of English in South Africa. It appears that many learners do not really like English, but have simply learnt to accept it as a ticket to a better future, as expressed below:

It is like that, we don’t like English, but well... when you want to work, anywhere, you know... we are forced to understand English because when you go anywhere to look for a job, they use English... so, I don’t like English, because I do it for my future, that’s all (Nonhlanhla, 23).

I just speak English because I have to. Before the white man came here, no one was talking it, you are the ones who changed us, why? They must be the ones that should speak Zulu, not us speak English. English was not from this country. English was from overseas. They must know our language, but the whites did not want to learn our language (Buhle, 34).

South Africa’s sociolinguistic history of colonialism and the atrocity of the apartheid system as an officially ‘only’ bilingual one (English/Afrikaans) still sparks much of the dislike and resentment towards the ‘white’ languages. Needless to say, most isiZulu-speakers are well aware of the prevailing unequal sociolinguistic power relations in the country, and their province in particular. Several interviewees voiced resentment over the fact that English is what is perceived as the dominant language in KwaZulu-Natal, despite the fact that it is only spoken by a minority in KwaZulu-Natal.

In general, the interview data challenges the common belief that the English language is seen as a neutral language in South Africa, a belief that Ndebele (1994) challenged a decade ago when he said that “English is not an innocent language”. In juxtaposing English with isiZulu, many interviewees emphasised the understanding of isiZulu as indigenous to South Africa. The participants further provide arguments in support of a rather primordial understanding of language, culture and identity in which isiZulu features as an agent for Zuluness. There are indications that suggest that sceptical views towards the English language are frequently linked to notions of strong ethnolinguistic identity formations based on isiZulu and a commitment to Zulu culture. The data collected from the interviews indicate a great potential for the vitality of isiZulu. This leads us to the question of the role of isiZulu and its potential as a language of education.

4.3.3. Educational issues

The results of the questionnaire suggest that a substantial number of learners prefer to have isiZulu as a medium of instruction in school. The data collected by means of interviews only partially supports this finding. Many interviewees, in particular parents, did not see isiZulu as a suitable medium for school instruction. The vast majority of parents clearly want English medium education for their children and claim that the children already have sufficient and adequate exposure to isiZulu in the home and township environment. Many of the interviewed youth members also subscribe to such a view. A recent study conducted by Kamwangamalu (2003) shows similar results. Only English is ascribed the status of the language of learning; the following interview extract supports this claim:

I think learning [in English] is a very good experience, because if we go to university you need to know English. So I think we need to be taught in English (Jabulani, 17).

Numerous studies have shown that the concept of mother-tongue education in South Africa is extremely stigmatised and that the vast majority of parents in South Africa simply choose what is best for their child (Kamwangamalu 1997).

There is no doubt that English remains the economically most valuable language in the post-apartheid state and most South Africans logically make choices according to this knowledge.

Nonetheless, there appears to exist growing discontent about the mismatch between the practical English-only education and the theoretical multilingual language policy options. Quite a substantial number of learners and teachers criticised, for instance, the lack of implementation with respect to the African languages as medium of learning. The interviewee below illustrates this in relation to the educational language policy:

In 1999, it was stated that Black schools are going to be taught in their most comfortable tongue. I feel since South Africa is supposed to be a liberated country now they should do something about the languages and about all the things being taught in English. Since we are a Black school and we are most familiar with Zulu since this is our mother tongue they should have made an adjustment. Some of us we don't understand English. Therefore they should make provision for Zulu examination papers, so that we can choose (Vusi, 17).

It is evident, from the above comment, that awareness of the new legislation has elevated the status of isiZulu. The above-quoted participant is aware of the constitutional principles and demands 'actions' in the form of implementation that follow multilingualism. Similarly, the comment below expresses dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs.

There is something that I want to know. It is like we are still colonised, because every time in school we are told that we must always speak English, even if I go and study I must always know English, so I need a dictionary, but we don't have money to buy dictionaries. In South Africa, it is like we are not free. Who said that English must be a 'communicative' language. Even Xhosa can be a communicative language. Because it is Xhosas who like Xhosa and Zulus like Zulus. English I think must go to England because it belongs there (Zanele, 20).

The medium of instruction issue remains a great controversy among educators. The majority of the teachers who were interviewed in the course of this study argued

that the learners would certainly be able to excel in school if they were able to express themselves in isiZulu.¹³⁷

We do find that whenever the students answer in Zulu the answer is correct. So that is where you find out that the problem is that the person does not know how to express himself in English. Sometimes we do mark it correct but we tell them not to get used to that, because they have to express in English (Zanele, 34).

See what happens, we tell them: Don't ever give me an answer in Zulu. The whole thing ends up being very deep, and we end up confusing ourselves and confusing them as well. We do not really promote our language here in school, I must admit it. When I was still a student whenever you speak [sic.] Zulu on the school ground you were punished or something, so we were forced to speak English during break and playtime and this is why I say the teachers are playing a role in discouraging the culture in our kids in one way or the other. But if they can be allowed to write their exams in isiZulu there would be 100% passes, because like I am saying it is not like they don't know the answers they just don't know how to put them in English (Ntokozani, 29).

Several teachers voiced optimism regarding the performance of students in isiZulu. The majority of isiZulu language teachers did not share this sentiment to the same extent, however. The township learners do not necessarily perform very well in their mother tongue, as the spoken isiZulu variety stands in sharp contrast to what is taught as 'standard' isiZulu in school. What has been emerging is a dichotomy between 'deep' and 'urban' varieties, the former referring to the relatively 'pure' African 'standard' languages, the latter to urbanised forms, which linguistically are significantly different (Slabbert and Finlayson 2002: 238). It is debatable whether learners would in fact, perform as brilliantly had they the chance to express themselves in isiZulu as expected by some educators. Further research around this issue, is no doubt, imperative.

With regard to Afrikaans, Dlamini (2001) challenges the common belief that KwaZulu-Natal Black students hate the use and study of Afrikaans. Participants of

¹³⁷ One needs to be cautious, however, with the validity of these claims. Umlazi learners frequently have difficulties in performing well academically in isiZulu lessons, as they are not sufficiently familiar with standard isiZulu as taught in school. To this day, little data is available regarding the benefits of schooling in the mother tongue among isiZulu speaking children.

her study apparently used Afrikaans extensively because it provided them with alternative places of employment. In the case of Umlazi, however, Afrikaans clearly plays a marginal role and the vast majority of the youths consciously do not choose to acquire Afrikaans in school. Conversely, the perceptions of Umlazi high school learners contrast with Dlamini's argument. On the contrary, learners in Umlazi mostly show signs of indignation regarding Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and as the language used in exams. The comment below attests to such a view:

In South Africa we have 11 languages, so it will be difficult for the state or whoever to organise books and other things in Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho you see (...), English is okay, but not Afrikaans. See that is what is unfair. They have Afrikaans, but there is no African language involved (Sbu, 18).

There is no doubt that English is strongly favoured over Afrikaans. In fact, Afrikaans is most definitely seen as a linguistic rival to isiZulu in the educational domain, whereas English is seldom perceived in this direct way. Afrikaans language teachers in the investigated township schools often struggle to find enough students to justify the teaching. The attitudes among members in one particular school class were significantly more negative than those of most other classes. This was due to a prior event that these learners had experienced: They had mistakenly been given a biology examination in which the questions were in Afrikaans instead of English, which not only astonished the learners, but also culminated in resentment among them.

As a 'substitute' English language teacher, I was asked repeatedly why in the new South Africa, Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers could still write their examinations in their mother-tongue while isiZulu speakers had to write examinations in English. Of course, the learners argued that they would receive much better marks if they were given the chance to write the biology examination in isiZulu. It must be assumed that township school learners had previously not been aware of the fact that exam scripts are still available in Afrikaans under the new dispensation. The very fact, that this is the case, while isiZulu scripts are unavailable, unsurprisingly stirred resentment. The strong reactions against this

type of selective multilingualism can be interpreted as a plead for the recognition of isiZulu as a language of learning on one hand, and an ethnolinguistic statement on the other.

There seems to be consensus among teachers in the investigated Umlazi schools that it is of crucial importance to teach isiZulu as a subject. Some parents proudly pointed out to me that their child receives very good grades in isiZulu. Several teachers criticise the curriculum of the multiracial schools their children attend, as there are no provisions to teach isiZulu. At the same time, however, most teachers believe that although isiZulu is important for their children, the medium of instruction in schools should be English. This is in line with Murray (2002: 138) who notes that many parents are convinced that the mother tongue is learnt sufficiently in the domestic setting and that the essential purpose of education is not only to *teach* English but to *teach in* English. Although most teachers are under the impression that students would achieve better marks if they answered questions in their mother tongue, they feel unsure whether this is – in the end – beneficial to the child. The majority of parents echo this doubt. Ultimately most educators and parents push for a consistent use of English, despite their own lack of proficiency in the language. Many learners, however, express the desire to be given a choice and several interviewees claim to prefer isiZulu by emphasising the benefit and advantage the mother tongue offers. The latter shall be explored further below.

4.3.4. Language demands and ethnic identity claims

Language equality is a demand that is voiced by several interviewees. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2003: 3) recently argued, in the context of language equity, that “the fact that languages – and language ideologies – are anything but neutral is especially visible in multilingual societies where some identity options are, in unforgettable Orwellian words, ‘more equal than others’”. Several of the interviewees argue that, in the light of the new constitution, it is unacceptable that isiZulu is not as equal and valuable as English. The participant quoted below

echoes what must be considered the essence of the controversy relating to linguistic human rights in education.¹³⁸

I don't have a problem with English in fact I love it, but it is just that I want all the languages to be equal. So many here struggle [economically](...). They [English and isiZulu] should be treated equally. South Africa was a country for Zulu people. I can't go to England and say I am going to use Zulu now (...). South Africa is a Zulu country (Themba, 21).

What clearly emerges from the above comment is a notion of resistance towards English as the sole medium of economic achievement. However, there is also potential megalomania and ethnocentricity, more specifically 'Zulucentricity', based on the thinking of South Africa as a Zulu country. The 'zulucentric' notions above do not stand in isolation but overlap and correspond with various similar sentiments voiced in many interviews. They indicate powerful but also very ethnocentric constructions of identity and more specifically ethnicity. Comments which further exemplify this: "even in the old days, the only king was King Shaka, that's why I think Zulu should be the main official language" (Xolani, 40), and "we are African, especially we Zulus are the original people of this country, so that's why Zulu should be the main language" (Bheki, 23).

Most participants in the interviews gave me the impression that they are well aware of what it means to live in the 'new', post-apartheid South Africa. This manifested itself, for instance, in their questioning of the idea that children have to learn and write exams in a language other than their mother tongue. In essence, most comments express a plea for equality and the call for choice. Ironically, however, at least the official 'language-in-education' legislation already provides this choice and this is precisely how the mismatch between language policy and practice manifests itself¹³⁹. Facing the undisputed high economic value of English in South Africa, it is indeed questionable whether learners, for instance, would in fact choose isiZulu over English as a medium of instruction in school.

¹³⁸ See Kymlicka and Patten (2003) for a collection of articles which examine the issue of language rights from the perspective of political theory.

¹³⁹ For more detail, see Kamwangamalu 2000a.

What the interviews conducted in English suggest, is that many have a fairly low proficiency in English and struggle to articulate themselves in the language of learning. Hence, the majority of interviewees are not functional bilinguals who choose to speak either one of the two codes in any given situation. The comment below presents English as a 'strange' language. This suggests that the individual does not relate to English as 'his medium' and hence finds little basis on which to identify with the language.

For me when I speak English I get little scared, when I speak English, because it is not my normal language, not my mother tongue. But if I speak Zulu, I speak the normal way, I can speak to my friends, don't have to think what I want to say. English will always be a strange language to me, because I am not born to speak it, only learnt it in Grade 4 (Nonhlanhla, 28).

Faced with a largely monolingual, isiZulu speaking environment, Umlazi youths unsurprisingly focus on their mother tongue in identity negotiation processes. Functionally, isiZulu is associated with the 'normal' and the familiar, while English is not regarded as an immediate medium of expression. Almost all the interviewees assert that isiZulu does not only play an important role, but is also the crux of an individual's life in the township. Comments such as those below illustrate some of these sentiments.

IsiZulu sibalulekile kakhulu empilweni yami (Khanyisiwe, 41).
[IsiZulu is very important in my life.]

IsiZulu impilo yami, ngigumZulu (Bheki, 26)
IsiZulu is my life, I am a Zulu

IsiZulu ulimi lwami, engilithandayo kakhulu (Musa, 38).
[IsiZulu is my language, I like it very much.]

Mina ngiyaluthanda ulimi lwami futhi ngiyakuthanda ukuba wuhlanga olumnyama ngoba vele ngimnyama (Vusi, 22)
[I love my language and I love to be of the Black nation because indeed I am black.]

Ethnic identity constructions based on language, as previously discussed in the theoretical framework, are reflected in the analysis of the interview data in a significant and profound way. It is strikingly evident that most interviewees base

their ethnic belonging, to a large extent, on the pride that is associated with the mother tongue and home language, isiZulu. The ethnic distinction is further embedded in notions about Zulu culture and an understanding of Zuluness, which stands in contrast to what many participants term 'white culture'. This so-called 'white culture' is almost always associated with the English language. The following comments further support this argument:

My home language means my culture, I love Zulu, I am *umZulu* (Tombi, 28)

Me, as a Zulu person it's right to me because I know my culture and I know my tradition and I'm proud of what I am. So, it's right to learn what I want, and it's good to learn from the old people and the things that the old people have done and what they told me to do from home, it's right to do those things because I believe in all those things (Lethu, 25).

It is argued in a previous sociological study (Campell, Mare and Walker 1995: 295), exploring ethnic consciousness among Umlazi residents, that all participants expressed a strong personal commitment to the significance of isiZulu in the construction of Zuluness. IsiZulu was said to be the cornerstone of a Zulu identity, which is essentially what the vast majority of the research participants of this interview study suggest. What further emerges from the interviews of this research is a strong appreciation for white people learning or being able to speak isiZulu.

We get shocked because sometimes when we see you talking in Zulu, eye...she can speak Zulu now! (Vusi, 24)

I think I value [sic] it when the white man comes and speaks Zulu to me, because I see that my language is very important and I am proud of my language, so it's better...anyway can talk to me in Zulu (Nkosinathi 29).

It makes me feel good if a white person speaks Zulu because it makes me feel that some other people are also proud with our language and our culture (Lungelo, 22).

The comments above indicate that the participants perceive it as complimentary and very positive if white people learn to speak isiZulu. In general public discourse it is at times suggested mistakenly by white people that African language speakers

see it as worthless for English-speakers to acquire knowledge of an African language. Although educated isiZulu-speakers may respond in English when spoken to in broken isiZulu or Fanakalo, there is no doubt that the use of isiZulu is generally appreciated.

From the previous section it has become clear that negative associations linked to isiZulu, such as 'backwardness', as outlined before (Dlamini 2001), are not evident among the majority of interviewees. It needs to be emphasised, however, that the isiZulu variety as spoken by most Umlazi residents cannot be considered *isiZulu esijulile* [deep isiZulu]. The Umlazi youths, in particular, sometimes ridicule young members of the isiZulu speech community who speak 'deep isiZulu', the rural variety of the language which is close to the standard form as taught in school. *IsiZulu esijulile* is indeed regarded as old-fashioned and rural (Dlamini 2001, Zungu 1998).

What emerges then from the interview data is that isiZulu is clearly seen as perhaps *the* essential contemporary cultural resource among the members of the Umlazi community. This is, on the one hand, due to the fact that 'language' is significantly less contested than other cultural elements and, on the other, because isiZulu is a prerequisite for maintaining certain customs. Furthermore, one has to consider that many individuals who reside in the township have little to hold onto in their life, at least from an economical perspective. To take pride, however, in who you are as an isiZulu-speaker and *umZulu*, is something taught even in the most dysfunctional of homes.

This confidence in the vitality of isiZulu stands in contrast to the evident language shift happening in some middle and most upper class homes. Although some interviewees expressed concern about language shift in some homes, the majority of people had confidence in the vitality of the language. Consider, for instance, the following comment by a female teacher:

Things are different in our day, people have changed. If there is anyone who is older, you let them sit on the bus, it's not like that anymore. Zulu, our language will always be there but all other things go. They think they don't need it anymore (...). There are areas where you can't get anything if you don't speak Zulu, because people just don't speak English. I think Zulu will be recognized more and more (Gcina, 28).

In this extracts the lady addresses the issue of 'respect for elders'. The importance of certain Zulu cultural practices such as *ukuhlonipha* (respect) have come under great dispute in the community in recent years. I shall discuss this in more detail in Section 4.4. Suffice it to say at this point, that complaints about the lack of respect among the younger generation were frequent in interviews with teachers and parents. According to the comments made by a large number of adults, the isiZulu-speaking youth is negatively influenced by some of the so-called 'western' values. There clearly exists an anxiety among the older generation that Zulu cultural life will deteriorate.

A number of interviewees point out that the status of isiZulu could be raised if the language is associated with job opportunities or economic power, as the following extract shows:

What would be good is to make more job opportunities for people who can only speak Zulu. To make it a requirement to be able to speak Zulu. And people should be offered their interview in Zulu if they want so. Especially because there are still a number of people from the rural areas who know nothing about English, so we should find ways to uplift those people (Zama, 34).

The interviewee's sentiments echo an argument previously formulated, namely that "language can be regarded as a source available to ethnic groups in their competition for the goods and services of the nation" (Kotzé 2000: 11). IsiZulu-speakers are obviously aware that the promotion of their mother tongue will be of economic advantage to the language community.

4.3.5. Boundary construction

Up to this point, the creation of ethnic boundaries based on language has only been discussed from a theoretical perspective. In the section below, I analyse and interpret interview extracts which indicate negotiations and constructions of ethnolinguistic boundaries among individuals. More specifically, I argue for the centrality of language in ethnic boundary creation among *amaZulu*, with a focus on the Umlazi community. First, the ambiguity linked to English creates a strongly polarised platform on which individuals locate themselves on either side in their negotiations of ethnic, linguistic and ethnolinguistic identity. Excessive use of English may put an individual on the one far end of the platform while the rejection to speak English, negative attitudes towards English borrowings or an accentuated ZE accent may put one on the opposite end. Second, the use, non-use or nature [i.e. the specific variety] of isiZulu accent creates a ground on which individuals are categorised.

It is evident from the interviews that English interference and lexical borrowings are embraced on the one hand and rejected on the other. This dichotomy is directly linked to the construction of ethnolinguistic boundaries. In light of cellular communication, isiZulu-speakers frequently argue that English is a great sms-language, as many words are significantly shorter than in isiZulu. On the other hand, many people disapprove of the use of English lexical items in an isiZulu conversation. Borrowings vary in their degree of acceptability. Many borrowings are common and largely accepted, if used with the noun class prefix, for example *icell* or *iTV*.

Some members of the older generation, however, generally disapprove of the use of English lexical items in an isiZulu conversation and would prefer the isiZulu term of the abovementioned examples: *umakhala ekhukhwini* [*lit.* ‘the thing that rings in the pocket’, cellphone] and *umabonakude* [*lit.* ‘the thing which makes you see far’, TV]. It has been argued that “the Zulu are proud and conservative people and any move to interfere with their languages (be it in the name of improving or developing it) like borrowing terms of other languages is discouraged [sic]”

(Mngadi 2000: 5). The 'Zulu people' are no homogenous group, however, and one has to critically evaluate the above statement since many members of the Zulu youth seem to embrace English borrowings.

Interviewees argue that the excessive use of English is not desirable and is frequently frowned on. Many people regard the dominant use of it as detrimental to the Zulu value system. Nonetheless, many young Umlazi isiZulu-speakers employ the language as an empowering device. It is evident, as will be shown in closer detail below, that English may also be employed as an exclusionary device between Umlazi people. Several elderly participants voiced regret about the widespread use of township mixed-codes as they are characterised by extensive English interference. This will also receive further attention below.

Little research has thus far been conducted on attitudes of Black South Africans towards accents, such as Black South African English (BSAE). Wade (1996) argues that due to the socio-economic improvement of BSAE speakers, the linguistic vitality of the dialect is improving. Similarly, Smit (1996: 188) argues that one third of the participants of her PhD research demanded to 'africanise' English for the future education system. Although there is no sufficient data available on the attitudes towards BSAE,¹⁴⁰ scholars have argued that the variety is increasingly seen in a positive light among African language-speakers (De Klerk and Gough 2002). Concerning the Umlazi community, quite a strong sense of pride is associated with proficiency in an English variety that has a marked ethnic component in the form of an accent, i.e. BSAE or ZE.¹⁴¹ In fact, some interviewees claim that speaking English like a native English speaker is not desirable for a Zulu person. It appears, however, from my research that there are at least two opposing forces at work. This two-fold dynamic will be explored below in reference to linguistic boundary creation.

¹⁴⁰ For a general perspective on attitudes towards English in several African countries, see Schmieid (1991).

¹⁴¹ Many excerpts of the interviews show linguistic features characteristic of Black South African English, such as the extensive use of resumptive pronouns.

Many of those who have an African accent, meaning they speak BSAE or ZE, accuse those who lost their accent and speak the so-called standard South African English of betraying their African heritage. Those who speak the so-called standard English themselves, however, interpret reactions of this kind as stemming from jealousy and envy. The majority of participants of this study speak English with an African accent. This is due to the fact that a large portion of the fieldwork was conducted in and around township schools.

The significance of schooling and the discrepancy between English language proficiency due to schooling has received adequate attention elsewhere (see, for instance Smit 1996) and will not be discussed in detail here. Suffice it to say, in general, children who are educated in ex-Model C schools are more likely to lose their Black South African accent when speaking English. Many Umlazi township school learners have friends who attend the multi-racial schools outside of the township. The comment below indicates the apparent negative attitudes towards children in the community who use English excessively and speak the language without a Black South African accent. It is widely assumed by participants and informants, that many of these children also lose proficiency in their mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu.

Children who attend the multiracial schools themselves, are well aware of the fact that their English skills far exceed those of most other township school children. In terms of isiZulu proficiency the comment below gives further information.

I used to go to Model school C and they only speak English, so like it's difficult, because I never used to speak isiZulu all the time. Because even my mother taught me English at home, so I am more comfortable with English than with Zulu. I only speak Zulu when I am with friends but sometimes they laugh about me (Sibongile, 17).

The above learner claims to be ridiculed by her peers when speaking isiZulu. Little research has thus far been conducted on mother-tongue proficiency of ex-Model C school learners. A study by Schlebush (1994) presents one of the first attempts to investigate limited mother tongue competence among children attending multi-racial schools in the Cape area. The apparent abandoning of a Zulu way of life by

children educated in multiracial schools, as noted by Umlazi community members, is always directly and inextricably associated with English and the so-called 'white culture'. The comment below illustrates this:

With English there are people who forget about their culture. They are following the culture of white people, they don't know how to call on the ancestors (Buhle, 32).

The creation of a boundary based on linguistic criteria is perpetuated by the fact that the link between language and culture is seen to be indisputable. In other words, the above data clearly suggests that Umlazi individuals perceive a correlation between an excessive use of English and the adoption of a 'white culture'. It reminds one of Fanon's (1986) seminal writings in *Black Skin, White Masks* in which he argues that the mastery of the European language strongly correlates with the level of 'whiteness' which characterizes the African person.

The critical view of English voiced in this research seems to be based on the learners' experiences with regard to what happens if one adopts English as his/her main medium of communication. The notion of the 'the other tongue' as 'the other self' feeds in here again. The research suggests that many Umlazi people make a clear-cut distinction between those who learn English as a second language and those who adopt the language as the main medium of communication in the multiracial schools. A boundary created by language use and education emerges. The difference is based, among other factors, on the prevalence or absence of a Black South African accent in one's English. A distinctive way of speaking a language can represent a person's sense of belonging and ethnic identity (Giles 1979b: 257). Thus, native proficiency in English is perceived by many isiZulu-speakers as a betrayal of their ethnic identity.

At this point, the percentage of learners attending multiracial schools, although on a continuous increase, is still fairly low. Most Umlazi interviewees explained that, according to them, speaking English like the children who attend multiracial schools has both advantages and disadvantages. The former are instrumentally and the latter emotionally grounded. Although the value of English is undisputed, and to master the language preferable, many Umlazi isiZulu-speakers do not seem to

find it truly desirable as an *umZulu* to achieve native-like proficiency in English. Giles et al. (1977: 338) suggest a group strategy termed as the *redefinition of negative characteristics* as one that previously oppressed groups may develop. Accordingly, it is argued that members of a group may start to redefine their ethnic or ethnolinguistic identity by turning away from devaluing their ethnic accent or specific speech style. As Giles et al. (1977: 338) put it, “pride is suddenly evidenced in the maintenance of the ethnic tongue and dialect, and the in-group language variety is no longer a feature of group membership of which to feel ashamed”. Moreover, the “old humiliating attempts at converging towards the speech patterns of the dominant group are rejected”.

Expressing oneself in the L2 and dominant language is described as a “humiliating attempt”, which is indeed something that is echoed by Umlazi informants as they indicate that they often feel self-conscious and intimidated about speaking English in the presence of MT-speakers. It also needs to be noted, however, that during apartheid, and because of the politicisation of Zuluness, the use of isiZulu was not always desired. Today the use of isiZulu is far less complicated and hence finds more support in the community.

Accents can be powerful exclusionary devices and in the case of the isiZulu speaking community one can assert that people who speak English without an African/isiZulu accent are seen rather critically among many Umlazi residents. This suggests that isiZulu speakers approve of an ethnic component in the use of English, which indicates a strong sense of ethnic identity. These arguments again favour the existence of ethnicity that is very much based on the ethnic language. There are also voices, however, that stand in contrast to ethnicity claims and present negotiations of first and foremost a ‘South African’ identity, with less emphasis of Zuluness. The comment below illustrates this.

We are more proud of being South African than Zulu. For example when other people come also to visit, then they didn't look at us as Zulus, or Xhosas or so, they notice us as Blacks only, so we only mention that we are proud of being South African.

However, even interviewees who do not strongly foreground their specific ethnic, i.e. Zulu identity, often commit themselves to the mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu. The language then is seen as a central part of their 'Africanness' rather than their Zuluness. Political affiliation does play a role in these dynamics in a sense that IFP followers appear to have a stronger 'Zulu consciousness' than those who voice ANC support in interviews. To conclude this section then, the isiZulu-English division is one of the most pertinent features of boundary creation in the Umlazi township. The interview findings largely overlap with statements made on the questionnaires. English is rightly perceived as a necessary prerequisite for life beyond poverty, but few people identify with the language emotionally.

The interviewees, in general, appear to be committed to maintaining isiZulu by using it as the main medium of communication in the home. The following extracts illustrate this view:

I would never allow my children not to speak Zulu at home, I think it's wrong. It is very upsetting if you see someone who can express himself in English but can't talk Zulu or whatever original language (Hlengiwe, 36).

My kids go to a white school but when they come home it is Zulu only. Because the person who looks after them she needs to understand them. We believe in sticking to our culture, so we cannot do things in English. (Sfiso, 38).

Despite the fact that most interviewees expressed commitment to isiZulu, the last of the above statements suggests, that English is slowly intruding into the family domain and is increasingly being employed between parents and children. This observation is in line with other recent South African research (De Klerk 2000a; Kamwangamalu 2003). However, it should be stressed that this is common mostly in families whose children attend multiracial schools. It is only those children, who show signs of undergoing a slow language shift from isiZulu to English:

...my parents are not so in with English, so I speak Zulu only. The children enjoy speaking English, they do enjoy it so much, more often so than speaking Zulu. What happens sometimes when they are speaking Zulu they sometimes forget the name of something and then they mix the languages (Siphehile, 42).

The Zulu lesson in ex-Model C schools is very bad. Because in some of those they do not use mother tongue speaker to teach the language, where I think they should use a mother tongue speaker. So my children do second language Zulu, that is not good. These schools are actually killing our languages. Those children do not know anymore where to belong. (Sfiso, 37).

According to this mother, her children “do not know anymore where to belong to”. This clearly suggests that the interviewee feels that her children are undergoing an identity change or crisis of some kind. This is triggered most significantly by language use in education. Most African parents who possess the financial means to send their children to multi-racial schools, which are generally well-resourced, do so in order to provide the best possible education for their children. However, there are also some who chose for their children to remain in the township in order not to ‘alienate’ the children from their heritage and their belonging. The following comment was made by a female teacher whose children are currently attending an ex-Model C school in Durban.

I want to take my kids away from the white schools as well. These children you will find that though they are Black they are not, because they have only learned from whites. Here in the township schools we are promoting our culture and I have to take them out in order for them to learn it. They don’t learn about our culture there (Gcina, 36).

This parent is concerned with the apparent lack of cultural knowledge that her children are taught in the multiracial schools. The comment ultimately expresses a fear of ‘cultural loss’. Several interviewees, in particular the male ones, expressed similar concern. Despite the fact that *gender*, as a sociolinguistic variable, is not explored in this research, I would like to mention at this point that females more readily spoke in favour of the multiracial schools. Some females asserted that often males are reluctant to educate their children in the expensive multiracial schools for financial reasons. Whether the financial aspect is the crux of such dispositions or a deep-rooted fear of ‘cultural loss’, deserves further exploration from a gender perspective.

Ethnic identity claims based on the essential role of the mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu, is brought to light in various interviews. English is clearly rejected as a desirable L1. The following extract, quotes a woman who draws from this logic:

We are Zulus, we just cannot run away from that fact. It will not happen, that we will be speaking English as a first language. Yes, I can grow and graduate in English. But my culture is different, isiZulu will always be with me it will always be part of me. It only that now that I am a Christian that there are certain things I take and others that I leave. I don't go to sangomas - no - but for example weddings are traditional [...], and I tell my children stories from the Zulu past and they are so much part of our culture. At the end they set an example in some way. All of this is told in Zulu, of course (Nosipho, 35).

It can be seen that this participant seems to be committed to isiZulu and Zulu culture, [whatever she perceives that as being] despite the western influence she experiences in terms of her religious identity. In fact, she identifies language as one of the most dominant aspects of Zulu ethnic identity: "it will always be with me, it will always be part of me". In contrast, the interviewee explains that other elements of Zulu culture may be left behind as they conflict with her Christian beliefs. The maintenance of isiZulu hardly constitutes a conflict for people, as long as English acquisition is assured. The above extract also illustrates how flexible and dynamic isiZulu-speakers are in constructing their ethnic identity. Boundaries shift between traditional cultural elements and western norms and religions.

It has been pointed out before that isiZulu-speakers are generally known to be extremely proud of their ethnic heritage. This perception is deeply rooted in the history of the community as explained in Chapter 2.4. Even today, many isiZulu-speaking children are brought up learning about the importance of the birthplace, descent and the essential roles of ancestors in both the war of conquest and the fight against the British forces. They are taught to be proud of who they are and where they come from.

Zulu speakers are very proud. Most Zulus attribute a lot of pride to their language and they are not so interested in learning other languages. The Zulu are happy with their language, ... it was known as the most powerful language during Shaka time, so that has given them that power (Jabulile, 32).

We do have to be proud, we have to be proud to our self and with our language, not other languages, but the English people they are happy, because they are using their own language not other language. We have to take it up on us, we have to use our language (Mzuyabonga, 18)

We as Blacks have to be very proud because we are able to speak English where other whites cannot even say a word in Zulu. So I think we have to be very proud of ourselves (Dalicebo, 22).

Several interviewees voiced criticism against the families who have adopted English as the main medium of communication in the home. As pointed out earlier in the discussion in learner group interviews, the loss of the mother tongue is generally perceived as detrimental. Similarly, most parents and teachers feel that the loss of the mother tongue would deprive the child of a sense of belonging.

Ngicabanga ukuthi abazali abangasikhulumi isiZulu banenkinga. Ngoba ngaleyondlela abakwazi ukhuluma nabantu bakubo, uyabona futhi nokuthi akukho nokuncane abakubhala ngesiZulu okuyinto embi kabi, kumele wazi imvelaphi yakho. Kuyadabukisa kakhulu (Vusi, 38).

[I think the parents who don't speak Zulu are having a problem, because they cannot even talk to their people, you will see that they won't write anything in Zulu, which is wrong, you need to know where you come from. It is very sad].

In the comment above ethnic identity is once again clearly constructed with reference to the mother tongue and in connection with the 'home' culture. The interviewee above clearly 'others' the people who employ English at home. He distinguishes his own ethnolinguistic identity from that of the people he refers to in his comment on the basis of linguistic reasons. It also becomes apparent that many township residents associate the predominant use of English directly with a higher financial status. Evidently, the issue of class plays a significant role here as children who attend multiracial schools belong to middle-class homes, while many township school learners live in abject poverty. Various parents, whose children attend the multiracial schools, admitted that their children speak more English than isiZulu at home. Nevertheless, they seem to have strong faith in the vitality of isiZulu as it is the main medium of communication in the township.

In our days people want to dominate and some children of the wealthy families in the township are not even able to speak proper Zulu. My kids are in a white school and in class they will only speak English, but at the school are many Zulu kids and in break they will speak Zulu with them, so Zulu will stay (Zama, 40).

Zulu will not disappear, as long as we parents can enforce it in our homes (Mbali, 32).

Umlazi residents who send their children to ex-Model C schools are aware of the fact that their children increasingly use English as a medium of communication with their peers, but do not seem to disapprove of this behaviour. Most of these parents, however, felt it necessary to assure me that their children 'know their Zulu' and insisted that there is no threat that the mother tongue could be lost as it would remain the main medium of communication in the homes.

Ngeke ngingavumeli izingane zami ukuba zikhulume isiZulu ekhaya. ngicabanga ukuthi kubi lokhu. Kuyacasula kabi ukubona umuntu othile ekwazi ukukhuluma isiNgisi kodwa angakwazi ukukhuluma isiZulu (Nzama,40)

[I would never allow my children not to speak isiZulu at home, I think it's wrong. It is very upsetting if you see someone who can express himself in English but can't talk isiZulu].

We speak isiZulu to retain the language, because if we would speak English especially to our kids...eeish no...because they go to white schools, so they just speak English at school, come back home and still speak English it will be bad...that will just destroy the language (Zodwa, 34).

The findings from the interviews suggest that township residents insist on using isiZulu as the main medium of communication in the home. There is only little evidence that interviewees perceive the language as endangered. Similarly, Campell et al. (1995: 295) state that their Umlazi informants had no sense of isiZulu being under threat, they had "confidence in its vitality appeared secure". The notion that isiZulu is regarded as a marker of ignorance and illiteracy, as outlined by Dlamini (2001: 203) was levelled by few informants, but does not represent a commonly shared sentiment among Umlazi people. Mostly, the participants expressed pride in, and devotion to, their mother tongue. Nonetheless, it remains questionable whether language maintenance is secured if many of the

children who are attending multiracial schools already chose to use English as their main medium of communication. South Africa witnessed how fast language shift occurred in the Indian community from one or two generations to the next. Although the Umlazi township language contact situation does not suggest a language shift, it remains to be seen whether the South African isiZulu-speaking community, in general, may undergo a language shift or not.

4.3.6. Summary of findings

The analysis and interpretation of the interviews and recordings reiterates to some extent the findings from the questionnaires. The above analysis clearly shows that the vast majority of interviewees express commitment to the mother tongue and perceive the link between isiZulu, culture, roots and belonging as inextricable and direct. Many interviewees further draw clear boundaries between what they term ‘white culture’, which is associated with the English language and Zulu culture, which is associated with isiZulu. On the basis of what is stated in interviews it is, however, unclear whether the commitment to isiZulu as an important cultural resource and mode of cultural expression is directly linked to a genuine support for the language or whether it is merely lip service in order to demonstrate pride in Zulu culture and belonging¹⁴².

English features, without a doubt, as a vital element in the life experiences conveyed in interviews and, despite some tangible criticism, the language seems to play an instrumental role for most of the participants. Nonetheless, English is widely seen as a ‘strange’ language in which participants do not entirely feel at home. There also exists ample potential for resentment with regard to the powerful status of the English language in comparison to isiZulu in KwaZulu-Natal. This, indeed, suggests strong ethnolinguistic vitality of isiZulu. Once again, the issue of language in education proves to be a crucial one that stirs ambivalent and paradoxical feelings among community members in the township. To be precise, here exists a great deal of uncertainty among parents, teachers and learners over

¹⁴² Interviewees are often uncertain, for instance, whether the use of isiZulu in the higher domains of life (e.g. politics, business, technology) is indeed desirable.

whether the use of English as a medium of instruction is indeed beneficial. The ambivalence manifests itself in contradictory views on the functions of isiZulu which, *inter alia*, results in ambiguous ethnolinguistic identity constructions. Though isiZulu is widely perceived as the language of the home, it is also this domain in which the increasing use of English is observed. I hasten to say in this context, however, that excessive use of English is only observed and recorded in homes where children attend ex-Model C schools, hence middle- and upper-class homes.

Despite the slow intrusion of English into the family domain, most interviewees expressed confidence and faith in the vitality of isiZulu. To what degree these views are in fact 'realistic' remains yet to be seen. Negative attitude patterns towards losing one's mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu, certainly count in favour of isiZulu vitality. I conclude this section with the words of a female participant that illustrates one of the essential findings of this data analysis.

SingamaZulu. Ngeke ngikukholwe lokho. Izilimi zihambisana namasiko, ngakho-ke abanye abafundi abafunde ezikoleni zabamhlophe bayakukhohtwa konke lokhu okungamasiko, abazi ukuthi kumele bakubize ngokuthini, kodwa baphakathi nendawo esithubeni, abazazi ukuthi bangakuluphi uhlangothi (Nosipho, 21).

[We are Zulus. I will never forget that. Language goes with culture, so some of the learners from white schools forget the cultural things, they don't know what to call themselves but they are somewhere in between, they don't know where they belong]

The psychological state of 'in-between' as an imagined space in which the township youth is located has already been discussed. The significance of language, however, in the creation of this in-between state has previously not been adequately acknowledged and this is precisely the gap this research fills. A few issues emerge from the above analysis, which demand further exploration. In the next section I present the information attained by participant observation and ethnographically elicited information. Although the three analyses (questionnaires, interviews and participant observation) are autonomously discussed, the section below already attempts to briefly synthesise the findings.

4.4. Participant observation

This section presents an in-depth discussion of my own observations concerning language use in the township over the course of two years (2001-2003).¹⁴³ The discussion of the ethnographic data is, of course, selective and analysed in respect to its pertinence in relation to the central research question, which is twofold. First, to what extent can isiZulu be regarded as an agent for Zulu ethnic consciousness, hence Zuluness, to what degree is Zulu ethnicity constructed and perpetuated through and by the use and functions of isiZulu? Second, what is the significance of the language beyond a Zulu ethnic identity, in other words, what is the value and status of isiZulu beyond a commitment of individuals to Zulu people in general?

Hence, the essential research goal was to observe how people perceive themselves with regard to language(s) (isiZulu and English) and whether people behave and act accordingly. I aim to explore, *inter alia*, whether an individual in a contemporary township community can claim Zulu ethnicity without being proficient in isiZulu. Furthermore, it is to be explored whether isiZulu proficiency is sufficient grounds on which one is able to construct Zuluness. As there exist, multifaceted ways for individuals to highlight and foreground their identities and ethnicity, opposing dynamics and friction may be revealed.¹⁴⁴

Although it is not the aim of this study to explore contemporary Zulu culture or markers of ethnic identity other than language, I find it necessary to outline some of the cultural elements most informants referred to as the strongholds of Zuluness. These domains into which English apparently does not or hardly enters are domains of 'traditional' Zulu culture, such as the belief in *amadlozi* [ancestors],

¹⁴³ The type of data obtained through the ethnographic approach and the method of participant observation took a variety of forms. While a bulk of the information gathered was recorded in notebooks, a great amount of 'impressions' and 'anecdotes' also remained unrecorded. Certain events pertinent in the specific context of this research are described in detail, while others only find brief mention.

¹⁴⁴ As previously mentioned, it is particularly important for this research to focus on the grass-roots level. 'Common' and 'ordinary' people, residents of the Umlazi township, are the subjects of this study.

ukuhlonipha [the custom of respect], *ilobolo* [bride price], and *ukuhlaba*, the ceremonial slaughtering of cows and goats.

Research findings, based on participant observation, are structured first into, the educational setting; second, the religious and traditional domain and third, the domestic and social setting. Fishman (1972c: 441) laid down the meaning of ‘domains’ as “institutional contexts and their congruent behavioural co-occurrences”.¹⁴⁵ Domains, as used in this work, however, are not abstract constructs but real life spheres in which the sociolinguistic behaviour of the participants of this study was investigated. In the fourth section I introduce an important township language variety that was only peripherally mentioned in previous sections of this study. Hence, the focus lies on an urban mixed-code spoken in the Umlazi township in KwaZulu-Natal, which is referred to, most commonly, as ‘isiTsotsi’ by its residents. IsiTsotsi, and its function as a common township code, does not quite fit into either one of the abovementioned domains and, hence, deserves a section on its own.

4.4.1. Selected domains

4.4.1.1. The educational setting

The information gathered by means of participant observation in educational settings concentrated on four Umlazi high schools, the names of which cannot be disclosed for ethical reasons. The investigated schools all share a common fate of destitution, reflected in a lack of learning materials, overcrowded classrooms and under-qualified teaching staff. Regarding English language exposure, there exist great disparities between these and multiracial schools.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ The concept of ‘sociolinguistic domains’ was first introduced in 1964 in one of Fishman’s groundbreaking papers.

¹⁴⁶ Most of the township schools have a so-called ‘arts and culture’ department, with members actively involved in the maintenance of ‘traditional’ Zulu cultural values and the organisation of so-called ‘cultural events’ and ‘cultural competitions’. Frequently, the last day before vacations is used to organise, for instance, Zulu dance or praise singing. The performance of Zulu drama, such as, the well-known ‘*Ukufa kukaShaka*’ [The death of (king) Shaka], *izibongo* [praise singing], or Choir singing is a common part of this undertaking.

Zulu cultural elements are alive and evident in Umlazi township schools. The importance of *amasiko* and *isiZulu* manifests itself in various ways through behavioural and communication patterns. The vast majority of learners and teachers in this study assured me that *isiZulu* was the necessary prerequisite to retain Zulu custom and tradition. However, to what extent learners and teachers maintain these Zulu cultural values, customs and traditions, is not always clear. In order to illustrate the ambiguous and, in fact, paradoxical sociolinguistic ground on which the commitment to the Zulu language and culture is built, I will describe in detail a particular event that occurred in one of the township schools.

One of the many extracurricular events I participated in strikes me as particularly relevant with regard to Gumperz's (1982:66) assertion that it is frequently the indigenous language that serves as the 'we-code,' while the 'dominant' language is the 'they-code'. The 'we-code' is associated with informal and personal interactions whereas the 'dominant' language is used in more formal and less personal situations. I use the example of the election of the school representatives in one of the investigated schools in order to illustrate how *isiZulu* functions as the 'we-code' and English as the 'they-code'.¹⁴⁷

The election, which took place in a big community hall, was 'officially' conducted in English. A young female teacher acted as facilitator on the stage by calling out the candidates, who then introduced themselves and their campaign.¹⁴⁸ It was evident that the candidates' proficiency in English was far better than the average English proficiency among the learners in the school. The other learners were instructed to ask the candidates questions, but instead everyone remained silent.¹⁴⁹ Eventually, a female teacher walked up to the stage and declared that questions could be asked in *isiZulu* instead of English. She herself code-switched from

¹⁴⁷ These elections generally take place in the first few weeks of the school year. Every learner receives a list of five or more candidates to choose from for specific issues such as environment, sports, financial aid, etc. As most schools have approximately 1000 learners, the community hall nearby is rented for this purpose. The candidates are seated on the stage while the rest of the learners are seated in the auditorium.

¹⁴⁸ The candidates of the Arts and Culture category clearly emphasise the relevance of Zulu culture in their campaign and direct one's attention to questions such as 'Who am I?' or 'Where do I come from?'

¹⁴⁹ While I was reflecting on this behaviour later, a young teacher suggested that one of the reasons that the learners may not have asked the candidates any questions was because they felt intimidated by my presence.

English to isiZulu while speaking. The facilitator added that no one should be afraid to speak in English. She argued, "It is not our mother-tongue language, so it is okay if you make a mistake". She further criticised those who laughed at others for making mistakes. Learners then started to ask questions and at some point a Grade 10 learner stood up and asked why the elections had to be conducted in English. The facilitator completely ignored the question. Ironically, the one learner who evidently had the best proficiency in English and eloquently conducted his campaign in English, won the election for school president. If today's young leaders in the Zulu community are chosen 'only' because of their brilliant command of the English language, the vitality of isiZulu must be questioned.

The fact that the question of language featured in the event, and was explicitly addressed by various teachers, demonstrates the pertinence of language choice in the daily life experience of community members.¹⁵⁰ English is commonly used on the formal communication level and isiZulu on the informal one. From the outsider-observer perspective it is clearly noticeable that all micro-level communication is conducted in isiZulu, i.e. teachers and learners conversing with each other during the event, while the macro-level communication follows in English, i.e. the person speaking on stage. Only towards the end of the event did a few teachers address general issues in isiZulu to conclude the function. At this point, however, the formality of the situation was already compromised. This clearly illustrates the power dynamics between English and isiZulu and what I shall call the 'South African sociolinguistic paradox'. It manifests itself among African language speakers in the love for the mother tongue on the one hand, and the support of English as a superior medium in formal discourse on the other.

While discussing the event with the teachers, I learned that the candidates did not choose to speak English, but rather that the school management had decided on the matter. The educators explained that if they allowed candidates to speak isiZulu on stage, half of the school would have run for school president. Consequently, one

¹⁵⁰ It needs to be pointed out, however, that my presence during the event may have further stirred the language discussion, as it is highly likely that learners would have felt less intimidated to speak English in my presence.

could argue, that the English language is also used as a means of exclusion among isiZulu-speakers themselves. As discussed in the theoretical framework, language can be used as a weapon to distinguish between external boundaries and internal lines (Khleif 1979). In this case, the English language is the very criterion used to demarcate the in-group, in this case, the in-group of prospective school representatives. Those who are not sufficiently articulate in the English language are members of the out-group and are denied the opportunity to become a school representative.

The event described above raises the question of the *de facto* importance of English versus isiZulu. If young leaders, even in the so-called 'Black schools' of the isiZulu-speaking community, are chosen on the basis of their proficiency in English, the vitality of isiZulu seems questionable. Clearly, the instrumental value of the language is uncontested. If the role models of an *ethnolinguistic group* can only be those who master the out-group's language or 'they-code', reassurance about the importance of the mother tongue in the life experience of individuals seems to be merely lip service.¹⁵¹

The finding described above is just one of many that indicate the sociolinguistic dilemma most African language speakers are confronted with whose mother tongue is not English. Umlazi isiZulu-speakers are faced with the fact that their mother tongue does not even have equal status to English in their own community. The sociolinguistic paradox outlined previously is perpetuated by 'loving' the one language (isiZulu), but 'choosing' the other (English) in specific contexts. From a power-dimensional perspective the researcher can identify a highly diglossic constellation that is at work between English and isiZulu in the Umlazi township schools. As mentioned earlier, all micro-level communication is conducted in isiZulu (i.e. learners conversing with each other at break-time, teachers with learners outside the classroom, teachers conversing with each other), while most

¹⁵¹ I do not imply, however, that the informants of this study have been dishonest regarding the information I was given during interviews. I merely attempt to describe the sociolinguistic dilemma isiZulu-speakers find themselves in.

macro-level communication takes place in English with situational code-switching (i.e. teachers in the classroom, official meetings, public assemblies, etc.).

Even so, most of the informants from the educational domain voice concern about the maintenance of isiZulu as *the* language of the community. Although several informants feel unsure about the importance and relevance of ‘Zuluness’ in their life, they assign great importance to isiZulu. The source of concern, in particular among teachers, is rooted in the fact that they have difficulty in maintaining the use of isiZulu consistently in the home with their own children who attend ex-Model C schools. Most teachers deny, however, that their children are likely to undergo an actual language shift from isiZulu to English due to the apparent maintenance of isiZulu in the home.

Many township school learners regard themselves first and foremost as South African, rather than Zulu. The significance of language, i.e. isiZulu, however, appears to transcend ethnic and ethnolinguistic identification processes. Even the informants who question the significance of Zuluness in their life see great value and importance in the mother tongue, isiZulu. As Fishman (1991, 1999, 2001) has argued, ethnic identity construction does not necessarily exclude identification processes on a more general or national level. IsiZulu speakers may vary in their degree of feeling Zulu, African, South African, etc. However, the significance of the mother tongue, i.e. isiZulu, endures beyond the specific lines social and political identity negotiations have established. By and large, two opposing forces are at work. On one level isiZulu is perceived as a cultural resource and people are adamant about maintaining the language, on another level, English is seen as a powerful weapon to escape poverty and to be able to live a successful life. Slabbert and Finlayson (2000: 133/4) conclude with a similar observation:

On the one hand it seems as if there might be a shift towards English and the associated “modern” and “Western” values. (...). On the other hand, there is a growing concern about the loss of the African language and culture. (...). A shift back to the African language and cultures, indeed to an African renaissance, is therefore a distinct possibility.

There is ample evidence of 'apartheid residues' in township schools from a sociolinguistic perspective. One school, for instance, has the notice '*Remember to speak English or Afrikaans at all times*' with other notices such as to '*Keep the premises of the school clean*', or '*Be respectful to every teacher*' displayed on boards in classrooms. This shows to what extent the belief that the ex-colonial languages are the languages of higher status is still ingrained in the minds of educators today. What is particularly paradoxical in this case, is that the school principal who is responsible for the display of these notices frequently addresses the learners in isiZulu during the morning assembly to improve comprehension. The motivation for this clearly stems from the fear of excluding those who are not proficient in English.

The most severe sociolinguistic paradox of them all, however, manifests itself simply in the conduct of lessons in a language that often neither the teachers nor the learners are sufficiently fluent in. I was initially very puzzled by the fact that not only learners, but also teachers struggle to express themselves in English, the 'official' language of learning. Their [the teachers'] difficulties raise the question of whether knowledge can be adequately transmitted in a language that is barely mastered. It is clear that comprehension is frequently achieved by the use of isiZulu or isiZulu-English code-switching. There is little doubt that both teachers and learners could work more efficiently and productively towards a more consistent use of the shared mother tongue. From my own teaching experience, learners are often frustrated because they do not adequately understand the official language of learning. One truly has to question to what extent the township isiZulu-speaking youths will be empowered, if they are not capable of expressing and articulating themselves adequately in the formal discourse of their own community?

The township school sociolinguistic dynamic is two-fold. First, English is not *de facto* the only medium of instruction and second, English lessons are taught by teachers who are, more often than not, incompetent. Although the 'official' medium of instruction in Umlazi schools is English, the language has, similarly to

Martins' (1996: 16) observations in rural schools, "a fairly constrained purpose and use and little communicative value". Despite some efforts on the part of the principals and school management staff to enforce a more consistent use of English on the school premises, isiZulu is clearly the dominant language and sometimes the only one spoken outside the classroom by learners and teachers alike.

Those who teach English in township schools are frequently under-qualified victims of Bantu Education and apartheid. De Klerk and Gough (2002: 358) argue that "by 1990, most teachers of English in Department of Education and training (DET) schools were L2 speakers [of English], products of Bantu Education themselves, whose English was inadequate through no fault of their own". The same problems prevail today, as most white people who are mother-tongue speakers of English are unwilling to teach in township schools for security reasons. It is beyond the scope of this study to shed light on the vast range of problems that these schools are facing. Many of the roots of these problems are not sociolinguistic in nature. Suffice it to say that the learning conditions in township schools – are to anyone educated in a western school model – unacceptable and not conducive to learning.¹⁵²

To summarise, most teachers perpetually insisted on the use of English as the language of learning and medium of instruction despite the fact that the reality of the linguistic practices in the classrooms suggested otherwise. In fact, the use of isiZulu and English-isiZulu code-switching appears to be so extensive that an outsider-observer may not be able to determine whether the medium of instruction is English or isiZulu. Although code-switching can indeed be beneficial to the learning process (Adendorff 1996; Moodley 2001), one also has to remember that once the school chooses English as the official medium of instruction, metric

¹⁵² Most of Umlazi township schools, with the exception of two boarding schools, can be said to have very few educational resources. In many cases there are not enough textbooks and other learning materials available. This is frequently combined with large classes (up to 60 learners in one class), in venues designed for approximately 30 learners. Moreover, high absenteeism by both teachers and learners is a common problem. It appears that the environment is frequently one of mutual disappointment and frustration.

exams have to be written in English and English only, which often poses serious problems for township learners.

In conclusion, it needs to be pointed out that very few Umlazi teachers themselves, in fact, chose for their child to attend a school in the township. The vast majority of high school teachers send their children to the formerly 'White' or 'Indian' schools. This is in line with previous research by, Slabbert and Finlayson (2000: 133), who observe that "parents of the higher income classes are increasingly tending to send their children to English-medium, traditionally 'White' (ex-Model C) schools".¹⁵³ Similarly, Kamwangamalu (2003: 234) notes that "the country has witnessed an influx of Black students from the township schools to formerly White and Indian schools in their quest to be educated only through the medium of English".

Obviously, very few parents decide to educate their children in the so-called 'Black' schools, which are notoriously under-resourced, if they have the necessary financial means to send their offspring to the better equipped multi-racial schools. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that life in the township is not always easy for children who attend the multiracial schools as they sometimes experience exclusion by other children in the community. The significance of language deserves highlighting in this dynamic and will receive further attention in the conclusion. Evidently, children who are unable to speak isiZulu adequately are looked down on or are even ostracised by some community members. Those who look down on these children explain that "they have lost something" and this 'something' is most commonly referred to, in some way or another, as *amasiko*, 'culture' and 'belonging'. This issue will further be attended to below (see Chapters 4.4.3. and 5.2).

¹⁵³ Slabbert and Finlayson (2000: 133) point out that in traditionally 'White' schools, the curriculum frequently excludes the teaching of an African language.

It is worth mentioning that the educational background and its linguistic implications is a platform on which a vast number of isiZulu-speakers create ethnolinguistic boundaries. Fishman (1989) argues that linguistic and ethnic boundaries are based on reciprocity, hence, language-based discrepancies are creating ethnic differences, and vice versa. As previously indicated in the analysis of the interviews, the boundary constructed through language, i.e. the use of isiZulu or English, or a combination of either language, is one of the most potent variables in the township. Participant observation confirms that ex-Model C school children who adopt English as their main medium of communication find it at times difficult to 'fit-in' with other Umlazi children. The use of somewhat derogatory terms such as 'coconut' or 'oreo' reflect negative sentiments toward these children.¹⁵⁴ The situation is complicated as children may find themselves confronted with highly contrasting cultural and sociolinguistic values.

Furthermore, there is a lobby of people who openly criticise other Umlazi isiZulu-speakers who use English as a main medium of communication in their home. Another lobby of wealthy people, however, perceives this behaviour as being rooted in envy. Hence, an antagonistic dynamic is at work and divisions are created within the township community that are constructed along sociolinguistic lines.

To conclude the focus on the educational domain, it is evident that the township schools investigated during the course of this research all have one thing in common. They are all located in an isiZulu-dominated environment in which 'Zulu culture', what ever it *de facto* entails, still plays a significant role. The promotion of English as the sole 'official' language and medium of instruction is based on a paradox rooted in its sociohistorical status and its prevailing hegemony in the post-apartheid state. It is clear that this learning environment is not always conducive to the academic success of learners. Although some form of bilingualism exists in the

¹⁵⁴ Derogatory terms for educated, well-off people, such as, *Ooscuse me*, have been pointed out before in township studies (Wilson and Mafeje 1973). Although not discussed explicitly, the inextricable link to an educated and financial 'well-being' and language is evident in the earlier sources: "English is used in many situations among themselves, as Latin was used by educated men in medieval Europe, and French by the upper class in nineteenth century Russia" (Wilson and Mafeje 1973: 27).

township schools, I argue that English is hardly the dominant medium of communication on and around the school premises. Teachers and school management staff may not be willing to admit this, but most micro-level conversation is taking place in isiZulu. The predominant medium of communication in class, which could be termed 'Zunglish', is a mixture between isiZulu and English code-switching patterns and an Africanised version of the so-called standard South African English.

The Durban Language Survey, which was conducted between 1996 and 1999 as a joint project by the Department of Afrikaans and Nederlands at the then Natal University and the Babylon Center of Tilburg University in the Netherlands, has demonstrated the dominance of isiZulu in so-called 'Black schools' in KwaZulu-Natal (Broeder, Extra and Maartens 2002). The findings of my study largely confirm the existence of what Heugh (2000a: 30) refers to as an "almost schizophrenic educational system" in which students are largely taught in an African language, but are expected to perform in English. Few learners from township schools are proficient in English when they leave school. The reasons for this have been spelt out before, "most teachers are not proficient enough to use it [English] adequately as a medium of instruction" (Broeder et al. 2002: 76).

Zulu ethnolinguistic consciousness and the value of traditional practices, however, are doubtlessly fostered in township schools. The 'Arts and Culture' departments of the schools often organise events in the spirit of tradition. Zulu cultural plays such as those discussed by Groenewald (2001) play a significant role in school life. Teachers are promoters of the English language on the one hand, and vernacular agents on the other. In other words, educators often find themselves faced with a dilemma. They want to speak out in support for the significance of isiZulu, but at the same time it is their job to emphasise the important role of the English language. This sociolinguistic dilemma creates an all-encompassing paradox in which the so-called 'Black schools' operate, not only in KwaZulu-Natal, but assumingly also in other areas of the country.

4.4.1.2. The religious and traditional domain

Scholars have acknowledged the value of sociolinguistic analysis of religious interaction for a long time (e.g. Pike 1960, Samarin 1976). Fishman (1997a), in particular, highlights the significance of the religious domain in language-identity research. In this section I attempt to question what role isiZulu plays in the construction of a spiritual or religious identity. Hence, this section briefly discusses the language-identity link in this domain while it integrates Christian and ‘traditional’ belief systems, despite the fact that a detailed discussion of either could make up a doctoral thesis on its own. The reason for doing this is two-fold. First, I argue that by approaching language and identity from a sociolinguistic perspective in the context of this particular case study, one can synthesise spiritual affiliations because the issue of language, or more precisely the maintenance of isiZulu, transcends the dispute that exists in the community on the basis of spiritual orientations. This will be explained in further detail below. Second, the domain of religion in general is investigated in the context of a particular mode of behaviour, hence language behaviour in a spiritual context.

The ethnographic research suggests that in Fishman’s (1997a) ‘spirit and soul matters’, there is evidence of isiZulu hegemony in Umlazi. Whether religious activities and ceremonies take place in the context of Christianity, institutions of syncretism or traditional belief systems is sociolinguistically fairly uninteresting, due to the fact that isiZulu is *the* language of religion in the township. As has been argued,

through the study of various types of religious discourse, it becomes apparent that specific speech behaviours are employed to conjure up a sense of spirituality. Such discourse gives credence that linguistic contributions are guided from above, and it creates a sense of group cohesive activity that can only be accomplished in the context of the specific spiritual context (Boxer 2002: 129).

This “sense of group cohesive activity” Boxer (2003) refers to above exists in Umlazi through the primary and dominant use of isiZulu. The spiritual significance of isiZulu is a clear indicator of the language’s profound position in the community. Umlazi has, due to its size, a vast variety of religious institutions,

churches and community halls located in different sections of the township. Christianity has many supporters in the African community, and there are both traditionally Lutheran/Catholic churches as well as independent and African churches such as Nazareth, Shembe and Zionist variants. The religious meetings, church services and Zulu traditional events that I attended and observed in the township were all primarily conducted in isiZulu with little code-switching involved.¹⁵⁵ Christianity is very strong and wide-spread among community members, and with regard to identity constructions, many people foreground their identity as a Christian, rather than emphasising their ethnic or linguistic belonging. In general, the sense of Zuluness is weaker among Christians than among those who have traditional belief systems. Predictably, the link between language and culture manifests itself less dominantly among Christians because parts of Zulu culture are considered taboo for a Christian. Nonetheless, isiZulu is clearly the dominant language in church and religious gatherings in the township. This indicates that the language remains the one part of Zulu culture that has great significance for Christian people.

With reference to the traditional belief systems and the issue of *ukuhlonipha* in particular, it is evident that there is a strong intergenerational conflict because many young men and emancipated women regard the custom in a critical light, whereas older people view it as a precious tradition that should be maintained. *Hlonipha* may be defined, from a general perspective, as any kind of practice and behaviour sharing respect, but one must also understand the spiritual aspect of it. It is important to distinguish the behavioural aspect of *ukuhlonipha* from *isihlonipho*. The latter is the 'language of *hlonipha*' as an actual linguistic performance. The linguistic practice, *isihlonipho* is characterised by the careful avoidance of syllables that occur in the names of the husband's siblings (Finlayson 1978, 1995). It further includes an additional isiZulu lexicon, as the examples below briefly illustrate (data provided by Zungu 1985):

¹⁵⁵ Some of the churches have partnerships with other overseas churches of the same congregation. Needless to say, when international visitors participate in the service, an isiZulu-English interpreter is employed or the entire service is conducted in English.

<u>IsiZulu</u>	<u><i>hlonipha</i> term</u>	<u>English</u>
ihhashi	ipele	horse
ingubo	iloko	dress
imvu	isikhabu	sheep/lamb

I am concerned here only with the sociolinguistic implications *ukuhlonipha* carries today, rather than with the lexicon of the language variety, *isihlonipho*.¹⁵⁶ Dlamini (2001: 206) notes that “in Zulu households, children are brought up with a strong emphasis on *ukuhlonipha abadala* (respect for adults) and a non-confrontational way of disagreeing with adults”. My observations clearly indicate that the use of English and *hlonipha* as respectful behaviour is frequently seen as contradictory. In other words, parents and elders perceive it as disrespectful for children to speak to them in English: according to them the language does not provide sufficient respect. Hence, the youths frequently refrain from code-switching into English among elder relatives. This, however, does not necessarily imply that the linguistic custom of *isihlonipho* is upheld.

Finlayson (1995) argues that although *isihlonipho* is undoubtedly still practised in rural communities, women today are no longer ostracised for neglecting some aspects of it. In fact, the contrary may be the case in urban areas, where a woman may be ridiculed for upholding the linguistic tradition (Finlayson 1995). In the Umlazi township community the basic aspect of *hlonipha* behaviour is undoubtedly still valued. Members of the older generation, however, repeatedly complain about the younger generation’s lack of respect. The linguistic aspect is still practised to some extent among the older generation in Umlazi. Many isiZulu-speaking females of the older generation use *isiHlonipho* as a space and linguistic means by which they take pride in traditional Zuluness. Most young women, however, regard the use of the linguistic variety as outdated and ‘backward’.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ For research into the linguistic aspects of *ukuhlonipha* see Zungu (1985), Dowling (1988) or Finlayson (1995).

¹⁵⁷ The value of the linguistic variety of *isihlonipho* is contested: On the one hand, it is argued that *isiHlonipho sabafazi* is “an unfailing source of enrichment to the Zulu language” (Zungu 1985: 3), on the other hand it is claimed that “in Xhosa society the historical existence of the language of respect has influenced the way in which Xhosa males have marginalized women in their literature, and in their social, educational and political institutions” (Dowling, 1988).

The ceremonial slaughtering of cows and goats underlies, from an ethno- and sociolinguistic perspective, an ironic twist. As outlined before, *ukuhlaba* was commonly referred to as a domain in which isiZulu is a prerequisite to ‘properly’ participate. Considering the fact that a cow can only be purchased for a minimum of R2000 – and analysing my own observations during the participation in these events – I am lead to think that in most cases it is middle- to upper-class residents, in other words financially wealthy township homes that are able to afford a ceremonial slaughtering. Due to the fact that these homes are largely isiZulu-English bilingual, which equally accounts for many invited participants to the event, English and extensive isiZulu-English code-switching patterns characterise communication during these events. Nonetheless, the ritual itself, *ukuhlaba*, [the actual act of slaughtering], is performed by only using isiZulu in order to call on the ancestors. In these cases isiZulu is both the basis of the religious communication and the ‘sacred’ language of the ceremonies itself.

With regard to the belief in *amadlozi* [ancestors], most informants indicated that isiZulu is the one and only medium in which communication with the ancestral spirits can be facilitated. Comments such as “*amadlozi abakwazi ukukhuluma isiNgesi*” [the ancestors do not speak any English] express the apparent uselessness of English in relation to ancestor religion. Anderson (1983) argued that it is essentially the ‘sacred’ language that makes religious communities ‘imaginable’. Clearly, there is no doubt that Umlazi isiZulu-speakers are convinced that it is impossible to communicate with *umvelinqangi*, *umdali* [creator] or *amadlozi* [ancestral spirits] in English or any language other than isiZulu. It was previously argued that “it [isiZulu] is the only language used when performing traditional Zulu worship rituals and ceremonies otherwise *umvelinqangi* and the ancestors will not understand” (Mngadi 2000). The exclusive use of isiZulu in this domain is testimony to the sacred character and the treasured position the language maintains in to have in the community.

Some sociolinguistic scholars (e.g. Trudgill 1983, Fishman 1991) argue that in cases where language plays a peripheral role in the ethnic identity of a group, it is

frequently religion that holds ethnic ties together. This is certainly not the case in the South African isiZulu-speaking community, as spiritual affiliation is what often splits relatives and friends. The inextricable link, however, between isiZulu and the traditional belief system is indisputable. Unlike the traditional Zulu religious domain, western religions – most notably Christianity – may be less dependent on the use of the indigenous tongue. Various church services in and around Durban, including those that have predominantly Black members, employ English as the main medium. In Umlazi, however, prevails to be a link between isiZulu and Christian worshipping. Considering that the Bible was the first text to be translated into isiZulu and that it was mostly missionaries who created isiZulu orthography and, hence, promoted the African language in the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that isiZulu still plays an important role in the religious domain today.

Despite the dominant use of isiZulu in Umlazi churches, however, it needs to be acknowledged that English does from time to time enter the Christian domain. This takes place in the use of English bibles, isiZulu-English code-switching in cell group meeting among middle-class people, and English gospel singing. Zulu traditionalists, or *sangomas* and *inyangas*, by contrast, have absolutely no use for English in spiritual activities, apart from borrowings that have long been part of the isiZulu lexicon. These kind of lexical borrowings are generally phonologically and morphologically integrated into isiZulu by the use of the noun prefix. Similarly, this accounts for the congregations built on syncretism, such as the Nazareth and Shembe church varieties, which combine the belief in ancestral spirits and God. Hence, the independent churches are special agents for the promotion of isiZulu in the community.¹⁵⁸

Certainly, Christianity on the one hand, and ‘traditionalism’ on the other present vital points of discussion and dispute in the Zulu community today, as in most other African communities. Abu-Haidar (1996) demonstrated that language choice is often influenced by religious affiliations. As mentioned in the case of the Umlazi isiZulu-speaking community, there is obviously a stronger commitment towards

¹⁵⁸ For more detailed historical information on syncretism, see the pioneering work of Pauw 1963.

the mother tongue, especially by more traditionally orientated people of which there are many. A direct correlation between Christianity and a more dominant use of English does not exist as there are a large number of isiZulu monolingual Christian institutions in the township.

IsiZulu is clearly a symbol of the ethno-religious identity of the people, independent of the specific religious affiliation. A few informants further explained that engagement with Christianity is a way in which parents enforce the use of isiZulu by children who attend multiracial schools, as they are encouraged to read the isiZulu version of the Bible in the home.¹⁵⁹ What this illustrates is that the adoption of western religious concepts, i.e. Christianity, did not result immediately in the adoption of the western language, but promoted the maintenance of the vernacular, isiZulu.

The emphasis that was put on the indigenous African languages among many Christians “brought the religion into profound continuity with mother tongue aspirations” (Sanneh 1989: 229). Despite the use of English borrowings, which is common for all urban African language speakers, isiZulu is almost always the medium of religious discourse. As Fishman (1997a: 15) notes:

... both ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ are plentifully associated with the vernaculars and through them, in turn, the vernaculars are associated with religion (faith), both explicitly and implicitly, with other sanctified desiderata such as the ethnic ancestors and with the people’s glorious future yet to come and, above all, with a perceived dynamic ethnocultural capacity to appreciate its own link to the divine, to be sensitive of moral values, to remain loyal to verities, to be both creative and authentic simultaneously. Spirit and soul are part of the affective, cognitive and overt behavioural link between religion, language and ethnicity, a power-laden ‘tri-unity’, the power of which the modern world has often underestimated to its own detriment.

¹⁵⁹ Code-switching from isiZulu to English takes place quite regularly and pastors and cell group leaders, as educated individuals, frequently engage in it. Township residents in church and in the private homes, where cell meetings take place, have often both isiZulu and English versions of the Bible. The vast majority of cell meetings I attended were conducted in isiZulu. It needs to be noted, that many township Christians have not abandoned the belief in ancestral spirits, but rather amalgamate the worshipping of ancestors with their Christian belief. Despite the pressure of some church leaders, these individuals hold onto their traditional beliefs; they are in a sense, ‘under cover’ traditionalists.

The joint role of religion, language and ethnicity, as mentioned above, plays a crucial role in defining group membership among Umlazi residents. Religion as a social domain, is in fact a stronghold of the vernacular and consequently contributes first to the maintenance of isiZulu and second to its strength as an identity marker in the community. The spiritual element in the Umlazi isiZulu-speaking community is noteworthy and the dominant use of isiZulu speaks for itself. It is worth recalling that also in the above-analysed questionnaires several participants claimed that the belief in *amadlozi* was a crucial aspect of their Zuluness, and argued that the use of isiZulu is essential in order to communicate with the ancestral spirits. “The most common ethnolinguistic theme within the religious realm”, argues Fishman (1997a: 13), “is the one that refers to the vernacular as the spirit or the soul of the ethno-national collectivity, of its individual members, or of their traditional faith”. Accordingly, those who strongly believe in *amadlozi* and engage in traditional activities within the Umlazi community are unlikely to shift from isiZulu to English as the main medium of communication as the language is seen as the sacred language of the ancestors. Those who foreground their religious identity as a born-again Christian, for instance, rather than their ethnic identity as a Zulu do not have linguistically embedded identities to the same extent but maintain isiZulu nonetheless.

4.4.1.3. The domestic and social settings

Recent sociolinguistic research suggests that the domestic setting – as the stronghold of the indigenous African languages – is losing ground in urban areas, and that English is slowly entering the family domain (Kamwangamalu 2003). There is no doubt that English is increasingly used as the dominant medium of communication in urban areas, but the sociolinguistic reality of township life suggests otherwise. One has to remember that the language-shift in urban areas is in fact happening on a microscopic scale, if one considers the demography of isiZulu-speakers in South Africa and in KwaZulu-Natal, in particular. It needs to

be stressed that many children in upper middle-class households in Umlazi are expected to speak isiZulu in the home.¹⁶⁰

In middle-class homes, intergenerational communication indicates that many Umlazi parents consciously choose to speak isiZulu in order to maintain the language at home, while the child uses English. While staying in a financially stable home (the father was a surgeon and the mother was a teacher) I observed a number of situations in which a significant level of divergence took place. The short extract below exemplifies communication patterns of this kind.

- Mother: *Ufunani?* [What do you want]
Child: I want....
Mother: *Haybo. Ufunani?* [Hey, what do you want?]
Child: ...the ball. I want the ball.
Mother: *Musa ukudlala ibhola manje. Sifuna ukudla manje.* [I don't want you to play with the ball now. We want to eat now].
Child: Please, mom. Just for a short while...
Mother: *Cha, hamba manje.* [No, go now]

The child seems to deliberately choose a language (English) not used by the addressee (her mother). Although the mother speaks isiZulu, the child diverges in English. According to Giles et al. (1977), speech divergence occurs when speakers wish to increase the social distance between themselves and the communication partner, and furthermore when they want to emphasise their distinctiveness. In the case above, however, it is difficult to determine to what extent my presence influences the child to speak English. When I later approached the mother and asked whether it was common for the child to speak English, the mother claimed that the child only spoke English because I was present in the room. However, earlier on, I had observed the same child speaking English with her peers and cousins. It is debatable whether the explanation given by the mother was accurate. The reaction of the mother was very emotional: "Oh, no. She only speaks English

¹⁶⁰ Frequently, the use of English in certain informal situations was entirely due to my presence. However, this was not always the case, in particular after the informants were aware that I could understand some isiZulu and was attempting to learn more. Interestingly, Umlazi isiZulu-speakers, in particular children, have a very clear sense of when it was appropriate to speak English and when it was not. The 8-year old son of a young lady I had befriended in Umlazi, who lives in one of the informal settlements in H-section, vehemently criticised me for using the English language in the squatter camp. It was clear that he would not dare to speak English to any other residents in the settlement.

because you are around. She knows her Zulu very well!”. Although I had not questioned the daughter’s proficiency in isiZulu, the mother found it necessary to point it out in her response. I interpret this behaviour as an ‘act of denial’. There is little doubt, in fact, that the child will continue to use English as one and perhaps her main medium of communication.

Although it is difficult to make any clear prognoses about language use in future South Africa, there is little doubt that the number of English ‘home language’ speakers will increase in urban environments. The willingness of parents to use only isiZulu in the home is often not enough to support mother-tongue maintenance. Also, PuruShotam (1998: 170) notes in the multilingual context of the Singaporean society that “some parents who use only the mother tongue at home with their children find that they unwillingly switch to English as their child enters the English medium school”. This is definitely the case in some South African homes where parents find it hard to maintain the use of isiZulu with their children once they enter the multiracial school. This is because the child has difficulty using the language effectively after spending most of her day in an English-dominated environment. When children spend so much time speaking a language other than their mother-tongue, it is indeed very likely for language shift to occur. Despite parents’ persistent efforts to use isiZulu consistently in the domestic environment, unsurprisingly these children often identify more strongly with the language they are exposed to for most of the day, which is English.

Even so, Umlazi children often know naturally which choice of language is adequate under particular circumstances. As mentioned earlier, children – in particular – are remarkably street-wise with regard to linguistic choices in the township. As discussed in Chapter 2, Edwards (1985: 118) argues that the power of the educational system has been overrated, and that schools alone do not have the potential to significantly affect language maintenance or shift. The findings of this study suggest that many parents succeed in maintaining isiZulu as the language of the home because they strictly discourage their children from speaking English at home. However, there are complaints by parents that children are unable

to write in their mother tongue and that reading skills are not at the same level as their reading skills in English. In this context English is, indeed, perceived as a threat to isiZulu and perhaps Zuluness. On one occasion, I witnessed how negatively the church crowd reacted to the poor isiZulu reading skills of a child. My neighbour mentioned to me that she found it incredibly embarrassing that the child reads better in English than in his mother tongue.

As noted earlier, this study is based on the premise that the isiZulu-speaking community of Umlazi is not a homogenous collectivity, but rather a language group that encounters friction with regard to a whole range of sociolinguistic issues. It is important to understand, however, that isiZulu-speakers hold a rather unique position among the speakers of the African languages in South Africa. This has a linguistic source as well as linguistic consequences. The former refers to demographic features, and the latter to the findings of this research. Clearly, there exists a considerable level of fragmentation in the Umlazi community, which is characterised not only by class, political affiliation and educational status, but also with regard to linguistic behaviour and attitudes. While parents who are not proficient in English have little fear about their children losing touch with their mother tongue and culture, the educated middle-and upper-class is increasingly concerned about mother-tongue maintenance. Consequently, poor and uneducated parents tend to worry less about their child's loss of the mother tongue and instead feel proud of the increasing use of the English language (see, for instance, Kanwangamalu 2003).

In contrast, many educated parents are disturbed by the fact that their children¹⁶¹ seem to switch from isiZulu to English as the main medium of communication, despite the efforts of parents to maintain isiZulu in the home. Puru Shotan (1998: 1970) argues that this increasing concern about the position of the mother tongue is generally linked to the "typical notion of the mother tongue as the flag of one's community, and vehicle of one's culture". Indeed, there exists a substantial amount of concern among parents and elders about the fading significance of isiZulu in the

¹⁶¹ Needless to say, these children attend multiracial schools.

life of the youths. Many informants expressed the view that the loss of isiZulu can be equated with losing a sense of your belonging. This awareness and the parental disapproval of a shift from isiZulu towards English in domestic settings may have a positive influence on the maintenance and development of isiZulu. Nevertheless, it is clear that parents are unwilling to jeopardise their children's education on the basis of holding onto roots. Frequent comments, such as "we need to be proud of our language/culture", and "we must never forget who we are", are in conflict with the dominant choice of English in most domains of life. IsiZulu would have to gain economic strength for a larger number of people to support the language as a medium of instruction for instance.

The social contacts Umlazi residents pursue play an important role in individual ideas about the relationship between language, culture, identity and ethnicity. In a nutshell, it can be said that the lack of contact between the youths attending ex-Model C schools and those attending the less prestigious township schools, is not only based on class issues, but also sociolinguistic ones. There is a clear boundary between these two youth groups, which is polarised through language use. More precisely, a child that speaks broken isiZulu or English with a mother-tongue accent runs the risk of being mocked by township school children, while a child that has a strong, Black, South African English accent or struggles to articulate themselves in the language may be mocked by an ex-Model C school learner. Although this dichotomy has its roots in education, the implications manifest themselves best in the social setting. Hence, the social network youth members expose themselves to is strongly influenced by the choice of language, i.e. the use of isiZulu, English and *isiTsotsi*.

Research into L1 maintenance and shift in the context of immigrant families has shown that language socialisation inside and outside the family plays an essential role in the children's linguistic behaviour (cf. Hulson; De Bot and Weltens 2002, Raschka; Wei and Lee 2002, Wiklund 2002, et al.). Although immigration studies are not directly comparable to the situation focussed on here, we also have a sociolinguistic dynamic in which the L2 is the language that is economically viable

and dominant, whereas the L1 is first and foremost perceived as the vehicle for the transmission of the people's culture. Although isiZulu is not an immigrant language it faces a similar challenge. Stoessel's (2002: 110) argument that "the emotional attachment to the language itself leads to a fear of losing it, since the language represents the identity, and loss of the language would result in identity loss" is easily applied to isiZulu speakers in KwaZulu-Natal. The closely perceived link between language loss and identity loss recurs in sentiments voiced by the majority of participants in this study. In public discourse, 'identity' is rarely seen as a flexible, multifaceted construct as discussed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. IsiZulu is an essential part of the identity of the people and it is important to acknowledge that many Umlazi isiZulu-speakers regard their ethnolinguistic identity as something that is primordial and needs to be maintained by all means. It is equally important, however, to point out that the significance of Zuluness as an ethnic identity is based on nostalgic reasons rather than on an actual appreciation of what this particular identity entails. Although isiZulu and English are the two language varieties on focus in this work, I will briefly refer to an additional variety, *isiTsotsi*, as it is a common medium of communication in the township.

4.4.2. *IsiTsotsi*¹⁶²

Msimang (1987) describes the development of township language varieties as one of the most significant sociolinguistic developments in Southern Africa. Even so, very little research has been conducted concerning urban mixed-codes, which were previously referred to as *isiLovasi*, *Tsotsitaal (Flaaitaal)*, *Iscamtho* etc¹⁶³. Hence, it was recently argued that informal varieties of this kind need to be assessed further (PanSALB 2000). The section below is an attempt to discuss the township language variety of Umlazi which is widely used in the social arena. The one referred to most commonly is *isiTsotsi*, and this language variety plays a significant role in the construction of identity among Umlazi residents, in particular the male youths.

In the context of this thesis I have a rather limited task with regard to the exploration of *'isiTsotsi'*, but it nevertheless serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, I focus on Umlazi *'isiTsotsi'* as a language variety hitherto discussed only peripherally by South African sociolinguists and give an extract of some lexical items of the language. On the other hand, I examine the social functions and significance of the language and how it features with regard to the construction of identities and ethnicities in the community. It has long been argued that township colloquial codes are among the most powerful media of communication among African-language speakers in South Africa (Wilkes 1978: 110).

My research findings suggest that Umlazi *isiTsotsi* is an extremely dynamic language variety, the use of which is significantly more common and widespread than a superficial glance suggests. Despite its widespread use and increasing acceptance as a common colloquial township code, *isiTsotsi* carries a rather ambiguous status among isiZulu-speakers. It is evident that this variety has not yet found adequate attention among researchers. It can be assumed, for instance, that

¹⁶² Some parts of this chapter appear in Rudwick (2005).

¹⁶³ The paucity of research in this field is demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the fact that some previous papers dealing with the varieties from a sociolinguistic perspective in a South African collection were re-published seven years after the original edition with Oxford University Press (compare Mesthrie (1995e) and (2002)).

isiTsotsi has started to creolise (see also Msimang 1987) and that the variety is used in some domestic settings (as at least one of the languages of the home).¹⁶⁴

It comes as no surprise that the variety spoken in the Umlazi township and other areas in KwaZulu-Natal is lexically and structurally significantly different from the varieties hitherto discussed in the context of the Gauteng province. *Tsotsitaal*, previously also referred to as *Flaaitaal*, initially relied heavily on Afrikaans for structure and draws from various other languages for its lexicon (Makhudu 1995: 298). The reasons for this are two-fold. First, as previously mentioned, KwaZulu-Natal is linguistically fairly homogenous due to the numerical hegemony of isiZulu mother-tongue speakers. Second, Afrikaans only plays a marginal role in the province today and is hardly taught at all in 'African' and so-called 'Black' schools. Therefore, the linguistic properties and the lexicon of *isiTsotsi* must be assumed to be closer to the variety previously referred to as *Iscamtho* by Ntshangase (1993, 1995, 2002) because it uses isiZulu as its base language and borrows heavily from English.

It has been argued that the term *tsotsi* came into being in the 1940s to describe an urban subculture made up by black, predominantly working-class, young males (Glaser 1992: 47). In this section, I identify the variety investigated here as *isiTsotsi* because the large majority of my informants referred to it as such. It is important to note that the Afrikaans translation of language: '*taal*', that was previously used by South African scholars (Childs 1994; Makhudu 1995, 2002; Slabbert 1994) is not commonly employed by Umlazi isiZulu-speakers. This is a clear indication of the rather peripheral role that the Afrikaans language plays in the lexicon of the variety on focus here. In short, the *isiTsotsi* as spoken in Umlazi has been relexified as can be seen below:

¹⁶⁴ Also see, Makhudu (1995,2002), Msimang (1987) and Ntshangase (1993).

	English	isiZulu	'isiTsotsi' (Umlazi)
Verbs:			
	sell	-thengisa	- dlulisa, -mashisa
	steal	-ntshontsha	- ntswempula, bhathula
	give	-nika	- gaya / -fakela
	look/see	-buka, -bona	- check-ala/ - twasa
	bewitch	-takatha	- speed-trap
	wait	- linda	- dima, -bhobha, bloma
	come	- fika, -uyambiza	- zwakala/- shayisa la
	bring	- letha	- shayisa la?, zwakalisa
Nouns/Name:			
	tobacco	ugwayi	inkawuza
	mother's brother	umalume	ankeli
	girlfriend	intombi	itekeni
	trouble	hlupeka	isimoku, istofu
	lie, deceit	amanga	iskelemu
	residence	indlu	Enjojeni, emtiba
	money	imali	Nyuku, sheleta
Adjectives	short	- mfishane	- isinqamu
	little	- ncane	- manizana
	nice	- mnandi	- nswempu, - iyavuma
	expensive	- biza	- khobola
	a lot, plenty	- nqwaba	- isithakava ne
	dishonest	- mukholisa	- umshaya ngolalela
General Expressions:			
	Hello	Sawu/Sanibona	Kawani-lova/ Heita
	Alright/Great	Kuhle	Grendi/ moja, fede
	Something is not right	Kuyabheda	Ziyafiliza Kuntshwepu, Ibhemile
	Leave it!	Yeka!	Sheyintela! Nkawuzela
	Well done!	Wenzakahle!	Wadlala!
	You understand!	Uyezwa	(Uyayiphakathela?) Uyabamba intambo
	I'll be back	Ngiyabuya	Sekeni hafu, sekena
	Don't worry	Unganaki	Skawara,
	Hey (Attention)		Ekese

The scope of this thesis does not, unfortunately, allow for a detailed analysis of the lexical items displayed here. Suffice it to say that there seem to be four main sources from which the *isiTsotsi* lexicon derives: a) archaic isiZulu words (ie *itekeni*) b) English words (ie *istofu*) and c) recontextualised English words (ie sharp) and d) recontextualised isiZulu words (ie *wadlala*). The dialogue below provides an excerpt of a conversation in which *isiTsotsi* is employed, which was recorded by one of the interlocutors, Vusi. The translation follows first in standard isiZulu, then English.

Zandile, Nkule and Xolani: *Hey, Mavusana, howzit?*

[Sawubona Vusi, kunjani?]

[Hey, Vusi, how is everything?]

Vusi: *Ngigrendi, ninjani majtha?*

[Ngisaphila nina ninjani?]

[I am great, how are you guys?]

Xolani: *Sigrendi, angithi awusasivali e-Congella court?*

[Nathi sisaphila, awusafiki ngani e-Congella court?]

[We are fine, why are you not visiting us at Congella court anymore?]

Vusi: *Ngiyafika lapha edawa, ngishaywe iguzu.*

[Ngiyafika enzansi kodwa ngingafici muntu.]

[Whenever I come down there, I find no one.]

Vusi: *Ningeniswe ubani?*

[Ningeniswe ubani?]

[Who let you in?]

Xolani: *Singeniswe omunye ulova*

[Singeniswe enye indoda]

[We were let in by some guy...]

Vusi: *Niyafuna ukubona ingoje yami?*

[Niyafuna ukubona indlu yami?]

[Do you want to see my room?]

Xolani: *Noma kanjani, mase uyasikhipa sisafuna ukuthi shwi e-Lan...*

[Impela, emva kwalokho sizobe sesiya e-Lan...]

[Definitely, thereafter we will go to the Lan...]

Vusi: *Iyanibulala indlela, buka nje u-Linda akazi nokuthi I-dryer le, akakaze awashe elondelo*

[Senifile ukuhamba, awubheke nje u-Linda akazi ukuthi i-dryer le, akakaze awashe nhlobo elondolo]

[You came a long way, look at Linda, he doesn't even know the dryer, he has never washed in this laundry]

- Linda:** *Awubhekeke manje usuyawhaya*
 [Usuyangisukela-ke manje]
 [You are teasing me now]
- Vusi:** *Serious majitha, ok asambe siyoyibona,ikhona la ngichibuka khona*
 [Iqiniso bafowethu, kulungile asihambe siyoyibonayikhona-ke la ngihlala khona]
 [Serious guys, ok let's go and see my room....alright this is where I am staying]
- Xolani:** *Igrendi I-room yakho kodwa angifuni mina ukuzohlala la es'gele*
 [Inhle indlu yakho kodwa angifuni mina ukuzohlala la esikoleni]
 [Your room is beautiful, but I don't like to stay on campus]
- Vusi:** *Udlala ukuba yibhari wena*
 [Wenziwa ukungazi wena]
 [It's because you are stupid]
- Xolani:** *Bayangixaka ukuthi abanjani abantu abahazayo behlala la esikoleni*
 [Bayangixaka abantu abangaphumeleli behlala la esikoleni]
 [The people who fail whilst living on campus puzzles me]
- Vusi:** *Akuyi ngokuthi uchibukaphi kodwa ngokuthi ukeleza kanjani*
 [Akuhambi ngokuthi uhlalaphi kodwa kuya ngokuthi ufunda kanjani]
 [It's not about where you stay but how you study]

As can be deduced from the above dialogue, isiZulu is the matrix language and main lexifier of the Tsotsi variety displayed here and, hence, the language is lexically more similar to what Ntshangase (1995, 2002) previously referred to as *Iscamtho*. *Mavusana* (first line above), for instance, is the *isiTsotsi* term for the name 'Vusi' and it suggests that the discourse is based on informality and intimacy. *IsiTsotsi*, as spoken in Umlazi and isiZulu is largely mutually intelligible, even though there exist distinct lexical differences.

There exist a number of studies focusing on 'Tsotsi' language varieties in Gauteng (Ntshangase 1993, 1995, 2002; Makhudu 1995, 2002, Mfusi 1990; Molamu 2003, Msimang 1987, Slabbert 1994) but research into those spoken in KwaZulu-Natal has largely been neglected (see only Zungu 1995, 1998). 'Tsotsi' varieties all over the South African linguistic landscape seem to have at least one thing in common: they all represent linguistic means by which to identify a particular group of people or a particular urban area. More importantly, however, for the context of this study, *isiTsotsi* may at the same time transcend the boundaries of one particular subgroup.

It is a language variety that is highly context-dependent because it represents a common medium of informal township discourse. However, the identity linked to the use of *isiTsotsi* plays a significant role. Ntshangase (2002: 407) argued in the context of *Iscamtho* that the variety “reflects an urban identity and, at the same time, the social barriers between its users and non-users”. Zungu (1998: 45) argues in the context of KwaZulu-Natal that the youth in general today “prefer to have nothing to do with forms which bear ethnic tags. They distance themselves from what represents the past through the use of slang, which differs significantly from standard Zulu especially with respect to vocabulary.”

However, what is referred to as ‘slang’ above may be regarded as a variety in its own right, and it is not only spoken by many young township males, but also by a significant number of urban residents in general. Whether the variety carries no ‘ethnic tags’ is further debatable for two reasons. First, according to speakers of other African languages, Umlazi *isiTsotsi* speakers are easily identified as isiZulu mother-tongue speakers. Second, Umlazi *isiTsotsi* speakers are also identifiable as residents of KwaZulu-Natal.

Ntshangase (1993: 117) argues that *Iscamtho* did not only cease to be specifically a criminal language, but it also ceased to represent an exclusively male code, as today females “feel at ease using this language without any fear of being stigmatized”. Similarly, *isiTsotsi* is a ‘common’ medium of communication among the younger generation in the township and not an exclusively male code employed by a subgroup of the community. Many learners in township schools have difficulty in isiZulu lessons and show poor academic performance in their ‘mother tongue’. This, according to the teacher informants of this study, is because the variety the youths grow up speaking is in sharp contrast to the standard isiZulu, as taught in school.

Within the framework of diglossia it has been argued that L-varieties are generally more frequently employed than people may admit to. Referring to Arabic as a L-variety, Ferguson (1959: 330) argues that “very often, educated Arabs will

maintain that they never use L at all, in spite of the fact that direct observation shows that they use it constantly in all ordinary conversation”. Interestingly, one can make similar observations about a number of educated isiZulu-speakers in Umlazi. Teachers, for instance, may deny in an interview that they employ *isiTsotsi* and at best admit that they understand the variety to some extent. Nevertheless, they are subsequently found to use a large quantity of *isiTsotsi* lexical items in informal communication with colleagues or in conversation with friends. Although not all educated individuals in Umlazi deny using *isiTsotsi*, females – in particular – are reluctant to admit the use of the variety.

Frequently the ‘language’ used by township residents is a mixture of isiZulu and *isiTsotsi*. Various teachers, predominantly males who participated in this study, indicated that they do code-switch to *isiTsotsi* in the classroom in order to create solidarity between themselves and the learners and to improve comprehension among learners. The social power dynamic feeds into this situation, of course, and as Ntshangase (1993: 95) has argued: “adults who use *Iscamtho* when speaking to teenagers can be interpreted as negotiating social relations with them”.

Despite the ‘crossing’ from one variety to another in the context of a situation where the use of only one variety is adequate under ‘normal’ circumstances, people clearly distinguish between the functional use of *isiTsotsi* and isiZulu. The Umlazi township youth is highly influenced by the language varieties used by local musicians such as *Mandoza*, *TKZee* the late *Brenda Fassie* and others. It is evident that the young and ‘hip’ African art and music scene, in particular Kwaito music, makes extensive use of ‘Tsotsi’ varieties. Examples are, for instance, the Theatre “*Umoja*” [the Great], the film title “*Sharp, sharp*” [Alright, Cool], and the SABC1 catch phrase “*YaMampela*” [the real thing]. The latter term has recently stirred up quite a lot of debate among isiZulu speakers who have a purist approach to their mother tongue. The Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini has recently criticised the abovementioned SABC1 slogan [*YaMampela*], because it is not ‘proper’ isiZulu (Mofokeng 2005). Concerns of this kind are indeed common among isiZulu speakers as the authenticity of isiZulu is seen to be at stake in this context.

The issue of isiZulu language purism and its link to identity negotiations will receive further attention in the conclusion.

What is of more immediate importance is that the findings of the empirical research suggest that *isiTsotsi* is a very common, perhaps even the most common medium of communication among the Umlazi youths. The original stigma attached to 'Tsotsi' varieties as a kind of criminal register is not as pertinent among Umlazi township residents, although, according to my informants "real Tsotsis' still exist" (see also Kynoch 1999). Who they are, what they embody, and how they identify themselves other than through language, are questions that go beyond the scope of this investigation. Suffice it to say that the use of *isiTsotsi* is not limited to a 'Tsotsi'-identity, but that the variety simply represents a language that is an urban and 'hip' medium of communication among the younger generation of the Umlazi township. Thus, in present township life, the use of *isiTsotsi* is first and foremost associated with an informal context of 'youth discourse', the social setting and a personal level of communication.

IsiZulu functions as the common language in school and as the medium of communication between older people in the community, whereas *isiTsotsi* is the cool 'township lingua', the language of the 'urban street-wise'. Speaking 'isiTsotsi' is one way of creating a boundary between oneself and others, but at the same time it can also express solidarity. It is this linguistically based identity construction among the Umlazi youth that distinguishes them from people in the older generation who migrated to Umlazi from rural areas several decades ago. The ex-rural residents often employ *isiZulu esijulile*, the 'deep-Zulu' as referred to by the informants of this study. Umlazi *isiTsotsi*, however, cannot simplistically be reduced to a language that escapes ethnic associations. The variety, as spoken in Umlazi, and perhaps other areas of KwaZulu-Natal as well, is a sub-variety of isiZulu, or as Zungu (1995) calls it one of the Contemporary Codes and Registers (CCR) in the Durban areas. Most *isiTsotsi*-speakers in Umlazi consider themselves urban and street-wise Zulus who speak a distinctive 'in-code'.

There is clearly a paucity of research into *isiTsotsi* varieties as spoken in KwaZulu-Natal. Further detailed research studies of the linguistic properties of KwaZulu-Natal varieties need to be undertaken urgently, preferably by someone who is proficient in both isiZulu and *isiTsotsi*. The complex and dynamic nature of *isiTsotsi* is further demonstrated by the fact that the data I collected with the help of research assistants in one section of Umlazi did not always correspond with data collected in another section of the township. The varieties are fluid and are constantly enriched as the youth creatively adds new words to its lexicon based on isiZulu, English or sometimes other South African languages. It would be a fruitful undertaking, however, to collect corpora on the lexically stable items of the KwaZulu-Natal *isiTsotsi* variety. The section above highlights the importance of *isiTsotsi* in the context of Umlazi youth culture and explains that the language variety is an important source from which the youths and other township residents draw in respect to identity negotiations.

4.4.3. Summary

Most isiZulu-speakers use the ethnic mother tongue, namely isiZulu, in conversation with each other and during interaction in the township. Therefore, there exists little indication for language-shift from isiZulu to English. Mother-tongue maintenance in conversation has been discussed in previous South African research on in-group language use (Kamwangamalu 2001, Ngcobo 2000). In a questionnaire study of language crossing in South Africa, Kamwangamalu (2001: 91) notes that “there seems to be a general tendency for the subjects to ‘stick’ to their own (ethnic language for those who speak one) language for in-group interactions”. Systematically observed conversation patterns in the township clearly confirm this statement. It could be inferred from the findings discussed above that the extent to which language shift is taking place in the Umlazi isiZulu-speaking community is still very much in its infancy. This may be in direct contrast to isiZulu-speakers who reside in central Durban areas. Even though more and more of the township children who are attending multi-racial schools are in the process of shifting away from the dominant use of isiZulu, the majority of the members of the Umlazi township community identify strongly with the mother

tongue and use it as the main medium of communication. Despite the fact that the young generation is clearly the agent for language shift in the community (Gal 1979), one has to remember that only a minority of the children attend the better schools.

It has previously been argued that isiZulu-speakers are frequently reluctant to accommodate speakers of other African languages (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000: 132). The use of the mother tongue is a sign of distinction that the in-group members demonstrate in order to show that language is a salient dimension of their in-group identity (Giles et al. 1977: 120). IsiZulu-speakers are well-known for their reluctance to learn other indigenous African languages. The experience of African non-isiZulu speakers in KwaZulu-Natal suggests that many isiZulu-speakers expect them to acquire at least rudimentary levels of isiZulu. This reveals the extraordinary sociolinguistic position isiZulu-speakers have in KwaZulu-Natal. The linguistic homogeneity provides the language with a position in the province that carries significantly more vitality and strength than any other African language in the country. Therefore, sociolinguistic scholarship in South Africa has to be based on clearly differentiated discourse with respect to the geography of the country. In other words, one has to be cautious with arguments about 'African-language-speakers' in general. A province such as Gauteng, in which all of the official languages are spoken, cannot in any way be compared to KwaZulu-Natal, the home of the linguistic 'African' hegemony of isiZulu-speakers.

Although this study did not focus on socio-psycholinguistic dynamics, I would like to mention that *speech divergence* and *convergence* (Giles et al. 1977, Beebe and Giles 1984, Bourhis et al. 1979) has been observed in several situations. On the one hand, many isiZulu-speakers modify their speech in conversation with white people and often quickly switch to English with the intention of improving communication. This situation makes it difficult for someone who wants to improve his/her language skills in isiZulu. On the other hand, as a non-isiZulu speaker, one is frequently excluded from communication patterns in the Umlazi township. I don't argue, however, that the use of isiZulu rather than English in the

company of white people is a political statement or necessarily any kind of identity statement. Rather, it is the result of the ultimate convenience and comfort that communication in the mother tongue offers. The preferred use of isiZulu further indicates, more than anything else, that most Umlazi residents are not 'at home' using English. In other words, many are self-conscious and utterly uncomfortable speaking the language. Speech divergence does not always need to be an act of identity, nor does it necessarily reflect a speaker's negative attitude towards his/her addressee (Holmes 1992: 258).

The isiZulu-speaking community examined here is deeply divided with regard to the role of English and its association with what is termed 'white culture'. The same individuals sometimes have contradictory opinions in terms of the general function of the language, English lexical borrowings and English mother-tongue accents. Although English is seen as a necessary and indispensable tool to negotiate a 'modern' South African identity, the language is, as deKlerk (2002) has pointed out 'hated' and 'loved' at the same time. To describe attitudes towards English as positive on the whole would certainly convey an inadequate picture of the Umlazi isiZulu-speaking community as a whole. It may hold true for other areas in the country (see Smit's (1996) investigation in Grahamstown), or other African language speakers, but clearly not for KwaZulu-Natal township residents. IsiZulu is regarded by most to be located on a completely different level of expression than English. Moreover, many youth members also identify strongly with *isiTsotsi*.

While most informants emphasise the dominant role isiZulu plays in their life, there exists significant tension over which role the language will play for future generations. In financially stable homes children are frequently sent to schools outside the township, where exposure to the English language is all encompassing due to mixing with English mother-tongue learners and teachers. Adults and older children who have younger siblings frequently refer to these as 'being caught in two worlds' or 'in-between'. On one hand, they are reasonably comfortable expressing themselves in English and being influenced by 'white culture', but on the other hand, there is family and community pressure to understand isiZulu and

'Zulu culture'. Members of the older generation frequently voice complaints and, at times, even resentment concerning the neglect and abandonment that isiZulu suffers in the hands of the younger generation. Parental efforts to maintain isiZulu as the dominant medium of communication in the home frequently fails. Many parents become aware of the fact that while the child's English skills improve, their isiZulu proficiency deteriorates. Consequently, a frequent complaint is the lack of literacy in the mother tongue on the one hand and what is considered 'excessive' use of the English language on the other.

There is a clear linguistic divide between children attending the Umlazi township schools and those attending multiracial, ex-Model C schools. From this perspective, isiZulu is not only a shared mother tongue, but also a boundary marker in intra-ethnic relations within the community. For some informants isiZulu is not only important, but also represents the cornerstone of Zuluness and, hence, provides sufficient resources to claim Zulu ethnicity. For others, there is a whole range of cultural elements and traditions that are essential to what is regarded as Zulu culture. The question of whether one can claim Zulu ethnicity without proficiency in isiZulu can only be answered by presenting the dichotomy that exists in the township itself. It is clear that most community members regard it as crucial to maintain isiZulu. Besides, those who lose proficiency or speak what is perceived as excessive English are frowned upon by other community members. Educated families and working mothers make efforts to have their children raised by nannies who only speak isiZulu with their children. In actual fact, one informant explained that she had to lay off one of her employees because she was not a mother-tongue isiZulu speaker. However, the generation of adolescents educated in multiracial schools do not consider isiZulu as important in their lives.

There is much discussion over which variety of isiZulu is the appropriate one. Some informants regret that the 'proper' isiZulu is no longer spoken among Umlazi community members. The standardised school variety of isiZulu often competes with the actual variety that children learn in their respective households.

There is a further linguistic divide within the generations, more specifically the exclusive use of isiZulu among grandparents and more and more code-switching among the children. However, even in middle- and upper-middle-class families where parents hardly speak any English, brothers and sisters use it in communication with each other. This shows that despite its ambiguous status, English is embraced by many.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2003: 21) have suggested three types of identity options in multilingual settings: “*imposed identities* (which are not negotiable in a particular time and place), *assumed identities* (which are accepted and not negotiated), and *negotiable identities* (which are contested by groups and individuals)”. The South African society as a whole has undoubtedly moved from a general state of *imposed identity* options to a state of *assumed* and *negotiable* ones. Concerning the isiZulu-speaking community, I argue – on the basis of this research – that a Zulu ethnolinguistic identity that foregrounds language as one of its essential pillars remains an *assumed identity option* in the post-apartheid state. The reasons for this are two-fold. On the one hand, it has been argued that assumed identities are “those that many – albeit not all – individuals are comfortable with and not interested in contesting. Oftentimes, these identities are the ones most valued and legitimized by the dominant discourse of identity” (ibid.), which in the case investigated here highlights language as a signifier of this identity option.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Although the high status of English is entrenched by the fact that it is learnt as a second language by almost all high school learners in the world, it is important to remember that even highly educated individuals in Europe may have poor proficiency in English. Apart from the Arabic-speaking African world, it is still unthinkable to find an attorney or surgeon who is not proficient in at least one European language (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 64).

4.4. Reliability of the data

One of the most serious challenges of conducting qualitative and ethnographic research as an ‘outsider’ is the difficult task of ensuring that the researcher is not biased and is able to limit the influence of his/her own cultural frame and point of reference. The researcher’s problematic position points to the question of reliability, and demands one to critically evaluate whether the obtained data is indeed characteristic of the community being studied.¹⁶⁶ ‘Reliability’ of findings can only be assured when repetitions of the research would result in similar findings. ‘Validity’ is related to three main areas: *representativeness*, *retrievability* and *confirmability* (Seliger and Shohamy 1990: 104). Accordingly, *representativeness* is dependent on the degree to which the observed data actually represents the ‘normal’ and ‘authenticity’ of those to be studied. The research situation and personality of the researcher can distort the data. For this reason it is necessary to reflect on how the researcher – as a white, non-South African female – was perceived in the community.¹⁶⁷

It has been argued (Pennycook 2001: 8) that “a postmodern-problematizing stance, however, needs to maintain a greater sense of humility and difference and to raise questions about the limits of one’s own knowing”. In this thesis my attempt was to improve *confirmability*, *reliability* and *validity* by using the multi-method approach, which offered a variety of sources for data elicitation. The triangulation technique made it possible to evaluate the data from different angles and perspectives. Subsequently, I was able to critically evaluate and then practise caution when it came to certain attitudes expressed on questionnaires and interviews. The sociolinguistic dynamics isiZulu-speakers find themselves in could

¹⁶⁶ Since the publication of Malinowski’s diaries in 1967 there was a turning point in ethnographic representation within anthropology and the demand for more critical self reflexive ethnographic work. After a period of ‘denial’, Labov (1972b) paved the way for a more self-critical approach to eliciting linguistic data. Nonetheless, self-reflection and critical data evaluation has only received adequate attention in recent years (see, for instance, Newman and Ratliff 2001).

¹⁶⁷ Perhaps one of the most significant events during my research was the suggestion by one of my young Umlazi acquaintances that I be given an isiZulu name, Jabulile, which was based on my progress in speaking the language. Apart from this experience, it needs to be noted that I remained an outsider for most of the research activities. Despite the fact that I frequently did not carry my tape recorder and essentially just spent time with Umlazi people, my role was never quite that of an ‘insider’.

only be understood adequately in this context. In this way, certain findings could be confirmed, while others were discredited. It has to be acknowledged, however, that particular perceptions are simply partisan and range from one individual to another. In other words:

...neither of these criteria [reliability and validity] is easy to apply in interpretative sociolinguistic research, since we work with people. Even in the most constrained situations, no two people behave the same way, no two observers are likely to take identical field notes, and no two readers come to exactly the same understanding of the text. What we mean by validity is a function of what we mean by truth, and many humanists and social scientists are sceptical about the possibility of absolute truth and limit their search to knowledge that holds for certain purposes, in certain contexts, and for certain people (Johnstone 2000).

In view of this and in the absence of an 'absolute truth', I have attempted to present the methodological background and the limitations of this thesis as transparently as possible. The study, which draws from quite a large number of informants, was conducted in different settings in the township and engaged repetitively with the same research questions to approximate the abovementioned criteria.

Labov's (1972a) observer's paradox is echoed by Wardaugh (1992: 150) when he aptly asks: "How can you obtain objective data from the real world without injecting your own self into the data and thereby confounding the results before you even begin?" There is, of course, no simple answer to this question. However, it is desirable to problematise and reflect on the research situation and to acknowledge that there may be no 'absolute truth' with regard to a particular research question. Decades of anthropological research have already given testimony to this. Considering that this thesis was written by a white, non-South African female researcher, a further question raised by Johnstone (2000: 86) gains relevance: "Since it is a participant observer's goal to become, at least in some sense, a member of the group being studied, would it not be better if the researcher were a member of the group to begin with?"

The 'insider'/'outsider' debate occupied ethnographic research tremendously and there is no doubt that both positions have their advantages and disadvantages. While 'indigenous' researchers face the difficult task of creating sufficient distance

between themselves and their informants, the role of an ‘outsider’ provides space and awareness for linguistic and cultural differences and further creates some kind of pre-eminent distance. As previously argued, “while a foreign researcher runs the risk of being culture blind, an indigenous research runs the risk of being blinded by the familiar” (Bolak 1997: 97).

As a foreign researcher, it was obviously a fascinating and enriching experience for me to get to know a society that was so unlike my own, and furthermore offered a contrasting experience to what represents a white suburban lifestyle in South Africa. However, in the initial stages of the fieldwork, I often felt uncomfortable, insecure and uncertain as to what to do and how to behave in order to improve my position. During this early stage of the research I encountered various people in the township who, understandably, seemed to be sceptical towards me as an *umlungu* with hardly any knowledge of isiZulu, who was investigating ‘anything’ she could in the township. The significance of language, i.e. isiZulu, must not be underestimated and deserves particular emphasis in this regard. As the pioneer of participant observation explained “one step further [...] can be made by the ethnographer, who acquires a knowledge of the native language and can use it as an instrument of inquiry” (Malinowski 1961: 23).

The ideal in anthropological fieldwork has always been to acquire proficiency in the indigenous language of the society to be studied, in order to be able to reveal ‘indigenous knowledge’. Linguists, however, have traditionally put the emphasis on elicitation techniques of a particular language, which do not require the researcher to gain conversational fluency in the language variety spoken by the community under investigation (Newman and Ratliff 2001: 5). Nonetheless, in recent years several experienced field linguists (Dimmendaal 2001; Gil 2001) have emphasized that learning the language under study does contribute significantly to the success of the research. It is worth mentioning that as I acquired more knowledge and confidence in employing isiZulu as a medium of communication (even though I still had rudimentary skills), I encountered less scepticism and criticism aimed at me as a researcher. Indeed, in a variety of situations, I felt

'accepted' merely because of the appreciation people expressed over my efforts to speak isiZulu. There is no doubt that a researcher with an 'outsider' status will always find it easier to integrate him/herself in the society to be studied by learning the indigenous language of the people. This observation in itself is also relevant and provides an indication of how people see and perceive themselves with regard to the language(s) they speak, in particular the mother tongue, isiZulu.

In retrospect, it appears as if I benefited a great deal from my 'outsider' status. This is because there were numerous situations in which I was able to use my position as a non-South African as a resource, rather than a constraint. It is highly likely that sensitive subjects are more easily discussed with a 'stranger' than with a friend. I quickly discovered that my 'outsider' status gave me an advantage when it came to the following matters: whether or not it was advisable for isiZulu-speaking parents to speak English in their homes, or whether or not to send children to ex-Model C schools. Quite a few informants explained to me that they would not like their friends to know what they had revealed to me.

Furthermore, it appeared advantageous to my fieldwork that I was not South African. The fact that I was from overseas contributed very positively to the investigation for at least three reasons.¹⁶⁸ First, it was beneficial in the context of this particular investigation that my mother tongue was not English. Unsurprisingly, it created a strong feeling of solidarity between the community members and I that we all spoke English as an L2. I quickly found out that many isiZulu-speakers are timid about speaking English in the presence of native speakers of the language. The learners involved in this study generally seemed relieved to discover that my mother tongue was German, and not English. They frequently expressed a keen interest in German and requested that I speak a few sentences of it.

¹⁶⁸ Note that these experiences are based entirely on my own personal observations and judgements and have not been confirmed by any of the participants of this study. However, in retrospect, the advantage I perceive seems even more justified.

The second reason why my 'outsider' status, in particular my European background, was advantageous is based on the historical constraints of South Africa's colonial and apartheid legacy. De Kadt (1998: 267) explains:

The Black/White interface in post-apartheid South Africa is still largely one of empowerment and disempowerment, to which a further measure of inequality is contributed by the fact that interactions between black and white people are generally conducted in the second language of black speakers.

The issue of disempowerment is salient in this investigation as many of the participants of this study belong to what is considered the 'low class' of South African society. Most individuals and families that participated in this study struggle to survive financially. The fact that I was taking an interest in the lives of individuals and attempting to learn the language gave some of my informants a sense of empowerment. Also, my German background was intriguing to most township residents, which further benefited the investigation. It was especially exciting for the township youths to be in the company of someone who came from a place that only very few of them had seen pictures of. In the schools, learners who volunteered for interviews were generally equipped with a catalogue of questions for me as well. This mutual interest in each other's culture and society contributed to an extremely productive atmosphere for my research.

Reinharz (1997: 5) distinguishes between three main categories of 'selves' in the field. The *research-based selves* (ie a researcher, a listener, a person who is interested in the African language and the African way of life); the *brought-selves* (ie white, non-South African woman,); and the *situational created selves* (ie a substitute English teacher, a visitor, a friend). Evidently a person conducting research slips into different roles depending on the circumstances s/he finds him/herself in. With regard to data collection, it was the *situationally created selves* that were most useful in collecting 'authentic' data. In retrospect, I recognise that I benefited greatly from the involvement that some principals provided for me in the school, such as taking up the position of a substitute English teacher. By taking up this role, I was able to become, at least to a certain degree, an 'insider' to the school. Naples (1997: 71) points out that 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are

not fixed and constant positions, but that “as ethnographers we are never fully outside or inside the ‘community’, our relationship to the community is never expressed in general terms but is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated”. During most of my stay in the township my role was clearly that of an outsider. Nonetheless, there were a number of occasions in which people made me feel as if I was one of them. It is important to note in the context of this thesis that acceptance as an insider was quite substantially based on my performance in isiZulu.

Gender, as a research category, was not considered significant for the purposes of this study. Suffice it to say that, as a female, I engaged more in the life activities of younger generation females in Umlazi. Although I spent a substantial amount of time with a number of male participants, the amount of data collected from females outweighs that collected from male isiZulu-speakers. Furthermore, I must stress that my rather limited knowledge of isiZulu has undoubtedly contributed to the limitations of this work. To echo Fishman’s (1997a: 2) warning, language issues are not only highly emotional, but also partisan. However, I hope that this thesis contributes to further knowledge of contemporary ethnolinguistic dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa and, more specifically, KZN township environments. The chapter below concludes the analysis and discussion of the empirical sociolinguistic findings based on questionnaires, interviews and participant observation.

5. Conclusion

The multi-method approach to the topic and the triangulation of the findings has proven to be very useful in analysing data on linguistically motivated identity construction within the Umlazi isiZulu-speaking community. Among other things, the research confirms that information given in questionnaires and interviews is frequently incongruent with the factual behaviour and actions of individuals. In middle- and upper-class Umlazi homes, slow language shifts take place among children and adolescents, without parents openly admitting to it. This and other sociolinguistic developments could only be adequately elicited by the method of participant observation. Hence, I argue that socio- and ethnolinguistic research requires an *emic* approach.

Although it is not the purpose of this last chapter to relate the findings of this study to practical language issues in the post-apartheid South African state, and to offer any recommendations, I do assess what relevance and implications the findings have in the context of the wider sociolinguistic reality of the country. In other words, indications for isiZulu maintenance or shift, implications for the language policy, language in education issues as well as South Africa's commitment to a multilingual society are briefly addressed. Despite the fact that this research is entirely based on Umlazi, most of the conclusions drawn in this context apply to any KwaZulu-Natal township context. The emphasis here is on KwaZulu-Natal rather than on townships in general. I cannot recommend applying what is argued here to South African townships outside of KwaZulu-Natal, which are linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous.

The first section of the conclusion frames the research findings in a historical context, and the second section integrates and interprets the empirically collected data from a specific theoretical perspective. The third and concluding section critically evaluates Zulu ethnolinguistic identity in contemporary South Africa on the basis of the main argument presented here.

5.1. 'Black Englishmen', 'Coconuts' and 'Oreos'

As previously discussed,¹⁶⁹ 'Black Englishmen' is the label widely employed to describe the 19th century African language speakers who attended mission schools, spoke immaculate English and adopted a western lifestyle. Thus, the term entails a combination of two cultures and two languages and clearly expresses a state of hybridisation. Inherent in the expression is also the idea that Englishmen are not black. Of course, this is not tenable today when there are in fact many British citizens who have Black ancestry. What is important, however, in the context of this research, is that the English language and Blackness is still dichotomised among most isiZulu-speakers today. Hence, the 'alien' status of English is still recognised. It would be a difficult task to investigate the historical significance of the term [Black Englishmen] or to reconstruct how monolingual and traditional isiZulu-speakers perceived the so-called 'Black Englishmen' at the time. The term itself ceased to be used in contemporary South Africa, but new terms have been coined among isiZulu-speakers to capture a similar concept.

The two most commonly known terms in contemporary isiZulu-speaking society are 'coconut' or 'oreo'. There is no doubt that these expressions carry a negative connotation in Zulu traditional society today (outside brown/black and inside white). Speaking English like a native speaker, although desired by some, is looked down on by many others. The statement that these people [*coconuts/oreos*] *do not know where they belong* is a common explanation among isiZulu-speakers. The historical perspective is, hence, most eminent in sociolinguistic considerations. It is in fact an ironic twist because it is largely due to South Africa's apartheid legacy – most notably the Group Areas Act and Bantu Education system – that most African language-speakers had poor access to English.

The boundary between those considered 'coconuts' and those that are not has a linguistic foundation that also correlates with other factors, i.e. class. Despite some exceptions, the common link between class and language choice is noteworthy.

¹⁶⁹ See Chapter 2.4.

Although the adoption of English as a replacement for isiZulu as the mother tongue remains entirely unacceptable for most individuals of the township community investigated here, the language is widely used in middle- and upper-class homes. There is also clear evidence that middle- and upper-class parents are aware that their children may be moving away from using isiZulu. Intermittently, this is also combined with an entirely westernised value system and the rejection of traditional Zulu customs. It is not surprising that the more financially secure the home, the more common is the use of the English language.¹⁷⁰

In contrast, those who grow up in abject poverty with little prospects to hold a professional position located in the higher domains of life, take pride in their culture and belonging, and in speaking isiZulu or township mixed-codes such as isiTsotsi. Many seem to value their position as isiZulu-speakers and Zulus in the post-apartheid state. Working-class families will undoubtedly maintain isiZulu as their dominant medium of communication and the mother tongue of future generations, while middle- and upper-class members may slowly undergo a steady language shift from isiZulu to English within the next few decades. The role of education is significant here. Most Umlazi adolescents who do not attend or have not attended multiracial schools clearly differentiate between themselves and those who do. The 'others' speak excessive English, possibly consider it their L1 and practise the so-called 'white culture'. In other words, they may be labelled 'coconuts'.

Thus, the differentiation between English and isiZulu as languages that carry identities surpasses a simple 'black'/'white' dichotomy because isiZulu-speakers regard black English MT-speakers as 'others'. What becomes evident, however, is that English features in this context as the crucial dividing agent and creates a boundary between residents in Umlazi. There are clear indications that those who have adopted English as the main medium of communication are considered 'Zulu dissidents' by some of the Umlazi residents. Furthermore, there exists widespread

¹⁷⁰ Wealthy Umlazi families also tend to move away from the township into more prestigious and racially mixed urban and suburban areas. Sometimes, however, families also return back to live in the township again after having lived in a suburban setting because they find it difficult to adapt.

agreement that isiZulu is needed in order to maintain cultural practices and traditions, as well as the notion of Zuluness. It is not always clear, however, whether 'Zulu culture', which incorporates isiZulu as a very significant factor, is merely used as a label or as something of concrete relevance in the individual's life.

Despite the boundary that English does create from one perspective, it also needs to be acknowledged that the language is employed widely in combination with isiZulu. In fact, isiZulu/English code-switching and the use of *isiTsotsi* functions as a resource for an urban identity construction. Similarly, Breitborde (1998: 7) recently argued, in the context of Monrovia Kru society, that English must also be understood as a resource:

... in perhaps a unique way, Kru consciousness of their own past positions them to use the English language itself as a way to resist powerful social norms which themselves valorize English [sic]: their heritage as early African speakers of English, and their own direct historical relationships to European and American English-speakers, empower them to deploy English (and not just the Kru language) as an expression of a distinct urban ethnic identity in contradistinction to elite, native-English speaking Liberians.

The situation described above is very much comparable to the one discussed in the present study. In fact, one could even rewrite the quote above and replace *Kru* with *isiZulu* and *Liberians* with *South Africans*. The crux of the above argument is that English is used as a source of linguistic creativity among urbanites, but native proficiency in English is not only contested but also largely undesired. Furthermore, English may be valued for all the benefits it has to offer, but the excessive use of it – one that dominates informal communication - is widely disapproved of in the Umlazi township community. What emerges then are 'dual identities': the synchronous formulation of a 'western identity' on the one hand, and a 'Zulu identity' on the other, which is by no means contradictory to a positive Zulu ethnolinguistic consciousness. The former is associated with knowledge of the English language, and the latter is inextricably linked with isiZulu. Despite the desire to be functionally bilingual, the vast majority of Umlazi people reject

English as a ‘self-making’ tongue, and see the language as the ‘other tongue’ in the sense of Kachru (1992), which was discussed earlier (Chapter 2.2.1.).

Private and personal life, however, is dominated mostly by the use of isiZulu and Zulu consciousness in the Umlazi township. In homes where ethnic affiliation plays a marginal role, ‘Africaness’ is propagated by referring to isiZulu as the most widely spoken African language in the country. What is inherent in the attitudes of parents in general is a “concern about the loss of the African languages and culture” (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000: 134). The seemingly contradictory behaviour of sending children to English-only medium schools in which isiZulu may not even be taught as a subject on the one hand, and concern about the loss of isiZulu on the other, is characteristic of aspirant middle- and upper-class parents. The maintenance of isiZulu clearly poses one of the biggest challenges for the parents who send their children to ex-Model C, multiracial schools. Children and adolescents who shift from isiZulu to English are often perceived as dissidents of Zulu culture and society in the township. Many of these families do not remain in the township and move to suburbs and more central urban areas. Those who remain in Umlazi are often ostracised by their own peers and neighbours. The increasing use of English among some members in the isiZulu speaking community functions as the catalyst for others to despise the ex-colonial language even further. Negative attitudes towards English are based on the argument that it ‘destroys’ isiZulu and these sentiments are not only voiced by the older generation, but also surface among members of the youth as well.

There is quite a high level of purist and prescriptivist attitudes among isiZulu-speakers. It manifests itself, inter alia, in complaints about the ‘deterioration’ of isiZulu. Deborah Cameron’s (1995) term ‘verbal hygiene’ comes to mind in this context. King Goodwill Zwelithini, among others, has recently argued against the incorrect and improper use of isiZulu by referring to the SABC1 slogan “*YaMampela*”. According to him, the ‘proper’ isiZulu translation of ‘the real thing’ is *Yangempela*. Similar examples and sentiments are voiced by many members of the older generation of isiZulu-speakers in Umlazi while the youths embrace the

use of isiTsotsi. One cannot deny the extent of English interference in the variety of isiZulu that is spoken in the township generally. Clearly, township isiZulu-speakers do not commonly use the isiZulu word for cell phone, *umakhala ekhukhwini*, but employ the English borrowing, *icell*, for instance.

To conclude this part, I argue that the choice for language, isiZulu *vis-à-vis* English is one of the most immediate and most consequential means by which boundaries are established within the township community. Derogatory terms used by some isiZulu-speakers, such as ‘coconut’, ‘oreo’ and the like, are intended to demarcate intra-group boundaries created predominantly on linguistic grounds, such as accents or the choice for English *vis-à-vis* isiZulu. The question that remains unanswered is to what extent the maintenance of isiZulu fosters, or at least preserves, Zulu consciousness and Zuluness, or whether the concern about isiZulu stands autonomously without a necessary link to ethnic identity construction. This question is pertinent because Zuluness may become less and less important in the democratic state, and with regard to language maintenance one must question whether isiZulu can be maintained without the existence of a Zulu consciousness. These and other more specific questions are attended to in the following section.

5.2. Zulu Romanticist thought

While applying German Romanticist thought in the tradition of Herder and Humboldt to the Zulu context, Makoni (2003: 140) argues that:

[...] according to the invisibility of language, race and territory, you would, for instance, be said to be Zulu if you were Zulu ethnically[sic]. That is, because you were affiliated with Zulu or inherited Zulu ethnically, you were, as a result, considered to be a speaker of Zulu. The possibility of someone who feels affiliated with Zulu ethnically, but who does not speak Zulu, is a contradiction within the framework of language, ethnicity and race embodied in German Romanticist thought.

The significance of isiZulu in the construction of a Zulu ethnic consciousness, as social identity, is indeed indisputable because the language is widely regarded not

only as a symbol but as a prerequisite and agent for claiming ‘Zuluness’ and/or Africanness. Although anthropologists and other scholars have become increasingly cautious about the use of the term ‘culture’, it needs to be pointed out that the participants of this study had no such concerns. They continuously referred to *amasiko*, whereby ‘Zulu culture’ in particular was something that stood in opposition to ‘white culture’. What these respective cultures actually entail often remained unspecified, although the value of *amadlozi*, *hlonipha*, *ilobolo* and *ukuhlaba*, for instance, are common points of reference in Zulu culture.

Most members of the Umlazi community perceive the link between language and culture as inextricable and direct. The majority of interviewees expressed a strong commitment to home language and selected aspects of Zulu culture. When the distinction between ‘white culture’ and ‘Zulu culture’ is salient, the former is immediately associated with the English language. Thus, English is perceived as representing a culture different from the one that is associated with Zuluness and isiZulu. Although ‘culture’ does not have the same meaning for all the participants of this study, it is clear, as Fishman (1997a: 42) argues, that “‘culture’ is a *desideratum* related to distinctiveness of identity and sophistication of attainment and that in both respects it is viewed as inseparably linked to the beloved language”. Indeed, the essential role of isiZulu in this *desideratum* of Zulu culture is evident. Fishman’s (1997a) comparative study of ‘positive ethnolinguistic consciousness’ further discusses how mother-tongue languages all over the world are loved and praised. Hence:

...the beloved language (most probably as a constituent of a multilingual repertoire) will be more than just ‘a piece of the pie’. As always, it will be the instrument (or, increasingly, the co-instrument) through which the pie (liberal ethnoculturalism or ethnocultural liberalism) is conceptualised, communicated, symbolised, adopted and fostered. Until that much desired time arrives, we must address positive ethnolinguistic consciousness with the same constructive and hopeful forbearance with which we address humankind as a whole, notwithstanding its profoundly disappointing behaviour again and again (Fishman 1997a: 178).

In light of the above, I would like to argue that linguistically grounded ethnic identity in South Africa can indeed be a useful element in the struggle to find unity

in diversity. The findings of this study leave no doubt to the significance of language in identity construction for the particular language group investigated here. This also includes ethnic identity negotiations. The research clearly demonstrates how isiZulu takes up an extraordinary space in which members of the Zulu community locate themselves and their understanding of who they are.

Referring to speakers of Afrikaans, Kembo-Sure and Webb (2000c: 122) argue that “the link between language and culture (or cultural identity) is sometimes perceived to be very direct”. Indeed, PanSALB has received more complaints about the diminution of Afrikaans from Afrikaners than from any other language community in South Africa since the establishment of the 11-official language policy. The reason for this, however, is obvious. In apartheid South Africa, Afrikaans was, besides English, the only official and economically viable language for more than three-quarters of a century. In contrast, and as discussed in Chapter 2.2, African language speakers grew up for generations with the knowledge that the only escape from poverty was proficiency in either English and/or Afrikaans. The indigenous African languages were devalued and marginalised through discriminatory political strategies. I would like to argue that isiZulu-speakers are no less proud of their language than Afrikaans speakers are, but that the weight of history overshadows this pride. In other words, historical circumstances have made it economically and politically viable for Afrikaans speakers to take public pride in their language, while isiZulu-speakers had to borrow the ‘white man’s languages’ for political and economic reasons. However, this study shows that the vast majority of Umlazi individuals who participated in this study expressed a great responsibility towards their mother tongue. This responsibility also transcends any kind of ethnic consciousness, i.e. Zuluness. It suggests that language is not necessarily immediately linked to ethnicity. In other words, one does not necessarily have to commit to the ethnic identity and Zuluness because one wants to maintain isiZulu.

Although this argument has to be explored further, it appears as if the significance of isiZulu transcends the arena of religion and politics. Hence, Christians and

traditionalists both treasure isiZulu. ANC supporters, despite being generally cautious about ethnicity, are no less interested in the preservation of isiZulu than Inkatha Freedom Party associates. Despite this, neither party particularly promotes isiZulu. This, however, is not surprising, as de Kadt (2005) recently pointed out, language development is only taken seriously when linguistically defined ethnic identity becomes politically important.

It needs to be emphasized, that even individuals who choose not to pay particular attention to the ethnic tag, treasure the language. This is the most pertinent indication for the maintenance of isiZulu. More 'hybrid' identities thus do not necessarily signal incipient language shift in the case of the isiZulu-speaking community of Umlazi. For example, isiZulu-speaking Christians often foreground their religious Christian identity more than anything else and pay little attention to Zuluness. The mother tongue, isiZulu, however, is indeed treasured in Christian homes. While the belief in *amadlozi*, for instance, is contested and continuously debated within the community, especially among Christians, the significance of isiZulu is very seldom questioned. Ironically, the desire to maintain isiZulu is voiced even by people whose children appear to be on the verge of undergoing language shift from isiZulu to English. Although a Christian Zulu who rejects the worshipping of *amadlozi* may be looked down upon by traditionalists, the chances of the person being called a 'coconut' are slim. It does not, however, follow from this that Christianity and a 'coconut' label may not go hand in hand, if it is combined with an excessive use of English.

Drawing also from Fishman's work, Olshtain and Kotik (2000: 203) argue that, "any ethnic community which maintains strict boundaries distinguishing between *insiders* and *outsiders*, can be successful in securing intergenerational mother tongue continuity, even within a larger society with a different dominant language". Although this was argued in the context of immigration, the statement is also salient in the South African context. The isiZulu speaking community of Umlazi permanently constructs and reconstructs strict boundaries between themselves as isiZulu-speakers, Zulus and others. It is also clear that

“contemporary ethnic communities and identities in Africa did not and will not fade away with the inevitable advance of global modernity, but rather represent critical aspects of the particular African experience of modernity itself” (Berman et al. 2004:3). IsiZulu is undoubtedly an agent for not only a construction of a specific ethnic identity, hence Zuluness, but also an important identity symbol for Umlazi individuals in general. Consequently, what needs to be stressed is that the subjects of this study have what I call *language-embedded* or *linguistically grounded* ethnic identities.

5.3. Rethinking ‘Zulu ethnolinguistic identities’

One of the main arguments presented here is that most isiZulu-speakers take pride, in fact quite extraordinary pride, in the language they speak as a mother tongue.¹⁷¹ A post-modern approach to culture, identity and ethnicity regards the relationship between these concepts as fluid, multidimensional and context-dependent. This study shows, however, that individuals at the grassroots level often do not subscribe to such a view. In other words, isiZulu-speakers have a romanticised notion in a sense that it is unacceptable for a Zulu not to know any isiZulu. A similar notion to what Fishman (1997a) called ‘a moral obligation’ exists among many isiZulu-speakers. “This position is akin to that which is taken *vis-à-vis* other verities and sanctities, that is, the beloved language is often viewed as one of the normative, constituent values of decent society” (Fishman 1997a: 72). The maintenance of isiZulu is clearly one of these normative, constituent values in the Umlazi community.

In view of the above it needs to be asked just how much rethinking the notion of ‘Zulu ethnolinguistic identity’ requires? Is the apartheid-prescribed direct and inextricably link between isiZulu and Zulu ethnicity outdated in contemporary South Africa? Jenkins concludes his ‘Rethinking of Ethnicity’ by arguing that

¹⁷¹ This does not necessarily entail, however, a promotion of the language in all spheres of life. Many individuals express scepticism with regard to the use of the language in tertiary education, technology and business.

“ethnicity means something to individuals, and that when it matters, it can *really* matter” (Jenkins 1997: 168). Furthermore, some of the “cultural stuff” simply carries “greater affective and personal consequences than most others” (ibid.). In this thesis it is argued that one of the certainties of Zulu culture and Zuluness, as experienced by the people investigated here, is the maintenance of isiZulu itself. Hence, the language is one facet of the ‘cultural stuff’ that is outstandingly salient. In other words, one can hardly claim to be *umZulu* without being able to speak isiZulu. Although Zuluness, just as any other kind of ‘Africanness’, is hybrid and dynamic in post-apartheid South Africa, the weight of the language remains remarkable.

The significance of isiZulu, however, further transcends a notion of ‘Zuluness’ in the sense that it is the immediate and most powerful instrument Umlazi residents can identify with in the post-apartheid state. People use the language as a celebration of who they are and as a reminder of where they belong. Hence, language, i.e. isiZulu, is not only the essence of Zuluness today, but also transcends the boundaries that make up an ethnic identity and ethnicity, and represents one of ‘the’ markers of identity in KwaZulu-Natal ‘*per se*’.¹⁷²

In light of the South African eleven-official language policy, the findings are clearly supportive of the multilingual framework. This research leaves no doubt that isiZulu is tremendously important to Umlazi people. Why, one may ask, is it that the numbers of registered students in the isiZulu Programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal are decreasing? The answer is essentially based on three factors. First, most isiZulu-speaking students rightly feel that studying isiZulu is economically not very viable, and second, many students think that they already know their mother tongue well enough, which makes further study unnecessary. Last, there is the paradox that those who speak the ‘deep’ variety of isiZulu¹⁷³

¹⁷² Additionally, it should be mentioned here that some of the youths in Umlazi and presumably other townships also identify very strongly with *isiTsotsi* and other urban-mixed varieties.

¹⁷³ Principally, these learners come from rural areas and speak an isiZulu variety that is closest to the standard taught at tertiary level. Therefore, these learners would do very well in the discipline of IsiZulu Studies.

generally have no access to the university because their English proficiency is simply not adequate to fit the linguistic demands of a tertiary institution.

Wilson and Mafeje (1973: 175) argued in the context of the Langa township that, “in the most general terms the coherence of a group depends upon a balance between the strength of the common purpose and the intensity of conflicts within it”. There is definitely some conflict over language and the functions of isiZulu *vis-à-vis* English in the community, but the social and cultural value of isiZulu is hardly contested. Although language, ie isiZulu, is certainly not the only ‘cultural stuff’ which Zuluness is based upon, it is the only category that has immediate effect and that holds the community together in the post-apartheid state.

On a broader and concluding note, I argue that it is imperative that the exploration of the multifaceted South African language situation continue to be tackled from the grassroots level. Language is one of the most immediate and powerful tools for further reconciliation and development in the country. This research provides ample and profound evidence for the vitality of isiZulu in the community. Therefore, I would like to echo Alexander’s (1989) sentiments that every South African should learn at least two of the languages that are spoken in the country. Indeed, “learning them should be the norm, not the exception” (Deumert and Dowling 2004: 44). The issue of language is so inextricably linked to the country’s dark past that one who argues against the promotion of multilingualism implicitly argues against democracy. Especially in a province like KwaZulu-Natal in which approximately 80% of the population speaks isiZulu as a mother tongue, at least some knowledge of the language should be of paramount importance to all residents.

Furthremore, there is a great need in KwaZulu-Natal, as elsewhere in the country, to unravel the sociolinguistic and socio-psychological processes concerning children who are undergoing language-shift from isiZulu to English as a mother tongue. This study indicates that cases of language shift are still scarce in the township. They are, however, rapidly increasing in suburban areas. The future of

isiZulu is, despite its apparent vitality, uncertain. It remains to be seen whether the support for isiZulu is sufficiently strong enough for the language to make its mark in the future of South Africa. Further research needs to be undertaken in order to examine the extent of language shift from isiZulu to English in suburban environments in comparison to rural or township areas. Also, it would be interesting to explore what impact tertiary education has for the youths who grew up in Umlazi, other townships or in rural KwaZulu-Natal areas. These and other sociolinguistic topics demand further exploration elsewhere. A follow-up study on isiZulu-speaking people should preferably be conducted by someone who has 'insider' status in the community.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire (English)

1. Date: _____

2. Male Female

3. Age: _____

4. When you were a child, in what language did your mother speak to you, in other words what is your home language? _____

5. What other languages do you speak? _____

6. Which languages do you use most often in your daily life

7. What languages do you speak
at school _____

with your friends _____

with your parents _____

with your sister/brother _____

8. What language(s) besides your home language would you want your children to learn?
(Please answer even if you don't have any children. In that case, just imagine that you have children).

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

Please give reasons for your answer to (8) _____

9. Would your parents mind if you did not speak your home language to your children?

10. Of all the languages you speak, which one do you feel most attached to (i.e. you have the strongest feelings for)?

Please give reasons for your answer to (10) _____

11. If you were a witness in court and you were free to use the language of your choice which would you choose? _____

Please give reasons for your answer to (11) _____

12. Are you proud of your culture?

13.

Knowledge of my home language makes me feel proud.	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

14.

I need my home language in order to preserve my culture.	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

15.

I consider English to be a language of national unity in South Africa	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

16.

I consider English as a negative influence on my culture	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree

17. Would you prefer to be taught in your home language? Yes No

Please give reasons for your answer to (17) _____

18. Would you prefer writing school essays in your home language? Yes No

Please give reasons for your answer to (18) _____

19. Would you prefer for your home language to be used in modern science and technology and as a medium of instruction at university? Yes No

Please give reasons for your answer to (19) _____

20. Which language do you enjoy speaking the most? Please give reasons for your answer to (20)

21. Can you explain what your home language means to you?

22. Anything you would like to comment on? _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH YOUR TIME AND EFFORT.

Appendix B: Questionnaire (isiZulu)

1. Usuku: _____
2. Owesilisa Owesifazane
3. Iminyaka: _____
4. Ulimi olukhuluma ekhaya? _____
5. Olunye ulimi olukhulumayo? _____
6. Iluphi ulimi olisebenzisa njalo? _____
7. Ulimi olukhuluma
esikoleni _____
nobangani _____
nabazali _____
nodadewenu / nomfowenu _____
8. Yiluphi ulimi ofisa abantwana bakho balufunde ngaphandle kolimi olukhulumayo phendula noma ungenazo izingane, yenza sengathi unazo
a. _____ b. _____ c. _____
Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (8) _____

9. Bangathanda abazali bakho ukuthi izingane zakho zingakhulumi ulimi lwakho lwesintu?

10. Ezilimini zonke ozikhulumayo yiluphi olubona usondelene kakhulu nalo noma olubona luncike kuwe kakhulu? _____
Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (10) _____

11. Uma ungufakazi enkantolo yiluphi ulimi ongaketha ukuphendula ngalo? _____
Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (11) _____

12. Uyaziqhenya ngesiko lakho?

13.

Ngiyaziqhenya ngolimi lwami.	Ngiyavuma impela kakhulu	Ngiyavuma	Angivumi	Angivumi neze

14.

Ngidinga ulimi lwami ukuze ngigcine amasiko ami.	Ngiyavuma impela kakhulu	Ngiyavuma	Angivumi	Angivumi neze

15.

Ulimi lwesingisi ngibona luyilona limi lwesizwe eMzansi Africa	Ngiyavuma impela kakhulu	Ngiyavuma	Angivumi	Angivumi neze

16.

Ulimi lwesingisi ngibona lunomphumela omubi emasikweni ami	Ngiyavuma impela kakhulu	Ngiyavuma	Angivumi	Angivumi neze

17. Ungathanda ukufundiswa ngolimi lwakho? Yebo Cha

Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (17) _____

18. Ungathanda ukubhala i-iseyi ngolimi lwakho? Yebo Cha

Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (18) _____

19. Ungathanda ulimi lwakho lusebenze kweze sayensi nezobuchwepheshe ezikhungweni eziphakeme zemfundo Yebo Cha

Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (19) _____

20. Iluphi ulimi othanda ukulukhuluma kakhulu? Nika izizathu zempendulo yombuzo (20)

21. Uzizwa unjani ngolimi lwakho lomdabu?

22. Phawula noma ngani? _____

NGIYABONGA KAKHULU