

**SOME SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF SOUTHERN
NDEBELE AS SPOKEN IN SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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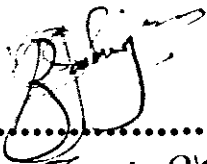
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled,

**“SOME SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF SOUTH NDEBELE
AS SPOKEN IN SOUTH AFRICA”**

**is my own work both in conception and execution and that
information drawn from other sources has been duly
acknowledged.**


.....
Zwelabo Jacob Mashiyane

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to a number of individuals without whom this study would not have been a success. Most of them are still alive and a few regrettably are no more:

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Lastly but not the least, to the Almighty, my Redeemer and my Strength who is everything to me, without Him I am absolutely nothing.

~~~~~

## **DEDICATION**

**I dedicate this work to my parents:  
my father, Nqalu Gaselani**

***“Igudaguda, inyamehloko  
Idlabayithjiya, bayithjiyele abanengi..”***

**And my late mother,  
Banikele Emma.**

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ABSTRACT

In this research an attempt has been made at taking a sociolinguistic view of the South Ndebele language. Particular attention was spent on the manner in which the ever-changing circumstances in life put pressure on the Ndebele language. This pressure is a social demand by the Ndebele community of making the language keep pace with time by making it define almost every activity in life. The reaction and response of the language on the other hand is studied carefully and the results noted. The research itself is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1 deals with the historical background of the Ndebele people. An attempt is being made to differentiate between the various types of the Ndebele groups by tracing the origins of the Ndebele people and also to give a somewhat accurate definition of the most common words which are often confused in the analysis of this language.

Chapter 2 points to the early stages of linguistic changes which eventually resulted in different versions of speech. Special attention is given to the name “Nguni” and how the Ndebele people link and relate to this name.

Chapter 3 takes a look at the influence exerted by other languages surrounding the isiNdebele language. It looks at processes like borrowing, adaptations and in some cases partial and total assimilation. It also looks at the means used by the isiNdebele language in a bit to resist the forces of “prestigious” languages.

Chapter 4 focuses on the linguistic differences found among Ndebele dialects. It looks at the phonetic, phonological and some grammatical differences found between the Ndzundza and Manala Ndebele on one hand and also those of the Northern Ndebele on the other.

Chapter 5 seeks solutions to the above-mentioned problems. Evaluations, recommendations and conclusions are made. The essential needs of the Ndebele language are looked into namely:

- Graphization
- Standardisation and
- Modernisation

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The dawning of the Industrial Revolution has had remarkable results in the languages of the world. Because of this sudden change, languages now had to wrestle with the burden of naming and describing objects and processes which came into being day after day. It was not long before this challenge slowly but sure advanced into Africa where it posed a challenge to the African languages. The ever-growing world of new inventions and discoveries ushered new sociolinguistic circumstances. This meant that languages that hitherto were only used to describe traditional ideas and used only for social intercourse, were now expected to provide and accommodate new terminology for new inventions and discoveries. As if that was not enough, there was a further demand wherein languages were stretched to their limit in order to be in par with other existing modern languages on the other parts of the globe.

With the advent of the new dispensation in South Africa the problem became even more complex. The New South Africa came along with a number of changes in the lives of the people of South Africa. Many of these changes were materialistic changes that directly affected the lives of the people. One of the major changes, was the drawing of the new constitution. Section 6 of the constitution stipulates that

constitutionally there are 11 official languages in South Africa and all are equal before the law. One of these languages is isiNdebele.

When this move came, it put tremendous pressure on both the speakers of isiNdebele as well as the Ndebele language itself. The competence of the language was now going to be tested in fields like medicine, legal practice, economics and many other fields. This new sociolinguistic situation was a direct challenge to Ndebele linguists.

1.2 Problem statement

This study is an attempt at making a detailed analysis of some sociolinguistic aspects of isiNdebele. There was a great need for such a study to be undertaken. The researcher believes that such a study can unearth answers to many linguistic problems that seem to puzzle the present day linguists of isiNdebele. So far, most black languages in South Africa received the attention of many scholars. Various studies of these languages have been undertaken and good results came out of these that contributed positively to their development. Of the most successful ones one can mention Xhosa, Zulu and the Sotho languages. IsiNdebele has regrettably not enjoyed the same advantage. It has suffered a profound neglect, so much that, even to this day, the Ndebele language is still at its crawling stage in as far as literary development is concerned. In some cases, the language shows some signs of degeneration as is noticed frequently when a true Ndebele can no longer be recalled. Whether or not the Ndebele language will ever catch up with its sister languages, i.e. the other Nguni languages, remains to be seen. The reason for this is not too hard to find. The most and perhaps the strongest reason is the controversial issue of whether or not Ndebele is a

dialect of Zulu. In fact, up to the moment the Ndebele language is still regarded by many scholars as just another dialect of Zulu. This has resulted in many scholars focussing more on the Zulu language and only refers to Ndebele in passing in a few lines. A detailed study of the controversy referred to above follows later in the next chapter.

The fore-mentioned controversy has not only caused many scholars to draw false conclusions on Ndebele, but has also to a large extent hampered and delayed fruitful studies in this language. This inevitably brings course for concern to any linguist who cares about the future of the language and not to mention the speaker of the language. The challenge is therefore for the speakers of the language, students of the language, educationists and researchers in linguistics, to start now and engage themselves in some meaningful research on the Ndebele language. Such studies can help in removing all obstacles in the way of the development of this language and put the language on a track for progress.

1.3 Aims of Study

The primary aim of this research is to study and analyse in detail some of the sociolinguistic aspects responsible for a number of linguistic patterns in Ndebele. Poorly researched topics and inaccurate analysis by earlier researchers of Ndebele have resulted in wrong conclusions as well as faulty language classification.

Indirectly this research aims to show beyond the shadows of any reasonable doubt that Ndebele is not a dialect of any language but a fully-fledged language in its own right. Being a fully-fledged language it

also experiences the same sociolinguistic pressures suffered by any other language in its situation.

As a somewhat secondary aim, this study aims to accord Ndebele the red carpet it deserves, i.e. to be studied and analysed at tertiary level just like all modern languages. By so doing it is hoped that this will help in closing down the gap that was created during the period when Ndebele was neglected and not studied at all.

It is further hoped that the findings of this study will serve as a sound contribution to the study of Ndebele. This means, it will serve as another pillar of strength to the efforts already started by fellow researchers like D M Jiyane and P B Skhosana who were some of the forerunners in giving real serious attention to the study of Ndebele at tertiary level. It is hoped that this research will further supply future researchers with sound reference material.

1.4 Motivation of study

South Africa is a multilingual country where many languages co-exist side by side. The Ndebele language is found mostly in the provinces of Gauteng and Mpumalanga where former KwaNdebele lies. In these provinces it is not common to find an area where only one African language is spoken. In any piece of an area, one is likely to find a conglomeration of African languages spoken by the community. In some areas like Soweto and Mamelodi one is likely to find a number of African languages spoken by the community. Children brought up in such areas, speak a variety of other African languages other than their mother tongues.

Like most languages in South Africa, the isiNdebele language finds itself surrounded by many other languages. These languages naturally exert their influence on isiNdebele. In some cases the influence is so severe that the speakers of isiNdebele can hardly recognise this influence as coming from another language. The extent of influence differs from one area to another. This depends on the strength exerted by the foreign language surrounding it as well as the status held by the out-language.

Another aspect worth taking note of is the ever changing life style the Ndebele people lead and how this affects their language. A linguist's attention is captured by two aspects:

- ◆ The extent to which life style affects the Ndebele language and
- ◆ How the Ndebele community in turn responds to the demands of these linguistic changes.

A study of this nature is therefore very necessary in that it will provide knowledge, understanding and insight into some of the factors responsible for certain linguistic behavioural patterns in the Ndebele language. Conclusions drawn from analysis made will enable the researcher to make valuable recommendations for the improvement and advancement of the methods necessary in the study of Ndebele. This will in turn help linguists and grammarians of Ndebele to use the most recent methods in their dealings with this language.

1.5 Research methodology

The big bulk of this study is based on literature reviews and it forms the basis of the study. A thorough examination of all material available to the researcher was consulted and closely analysed. Comparison of Ndebele and other Nguni languages was made. Deductions were drawn from similarities and differences based solely on linguistic facts. Ndebele books recently published were particularly targeted because in many of these books the authors claim to have the latest information on the language.

To a lesser degree, personal interviews were held with speakers of the language. With this method the researcher was hoping to be able to sort out all those dark areas which are not as yet found in printed form. The target group was the older generation of forty years and above who are also first language speakers of Ndebele.

Observation method was also used to a certain extent. Here tape recordings of the language from radio broadcasts were made and the data was analysed. This method was particularly preferred because people speaking from a radio broadcast are not aware that they are being recorded and therefore speak the language in their natural way.

1.6 Delimitation of scope

This study concentrates mainly on sociolinguistic aspects of isiNdebele. These are factors that result directly from linguistic situations wherein a language co-exists side by side with another language irrespective of whether or not the two languages belong to the same language family.

language co-exists side by side with another language irrespective of whether or not the two languages belong to the same language family.

Another limitation is that people interviewed, as well as those recorded from a radio broadcast were selected at random and their language proficiency was not tested before hand. Some of their views on the language, therefore, were not necessarily the views of experts of the Ndebele language.

1.7 Definition of Terms

It is perhaps very important, as early as now that a clear and concise definition of the terms that are regarded as cardinal terms of this research be well defined. This will assist in alleviating ambiguity and doubts in as far as some particular terms are concerned.

1.7.1 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics refers to the impact made by the language on the society by way of attempting to describe and name the changing nature of the language, and also how the society itself receives the new linguistic changes. Crystal describes sociolinguistics as:

A branch of Linguistics which studies all 'aspects of the relationship between language and society. 'Sociolinguistics' study such matters as the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes to language, standard and non-standard forms of language, the

social basis of multilingualism, ... (Crystal, 1985, 324).

In the quotation above, Crystal, among other things, states that Sociolinguistics also looks into those linguistic characteristics whereby one language can, without any doubt, be clearly differentiated from another, and calls this "identity". The attitudes of the people towards the changing language is given a special mentioning. We can therefore conclude that Sociolinguistics does not only deal with the behaviour of the language, but deals also with the attitude of the people. It is for this reason that Hudson (1980, 1) defines Sociolinguistics as "...the study of language in relation to society." In an attempt to differentiate between Linguistics and Sociolinguistics Hudson writes:

The task of linguistics, ... is to work out 'the rules of language,' after which sociolinguistics may enter the scene and study any points at which these rules make contact with society such as where alternative ways of expressing the same thing are chosen by different social groups. (Hudson, 1980 , 3).

1.7.2 IsiNdebele

In the introduction, mention was made that isiNdebele comprises mainly the Manala group and the Ndzundza groups. According to history these groups were named after two brothers, Manala the eldest son and Ndzundza the younger one. According to legend, a story similar to that of Jacob and Esau in the Bible took place

when their father, who was at the time very old and blind, conferred on Ndzundza all the powers as rightful heir of the tribe when in fact the rightful heir was Manala. (van Warmelo, 1930).

After a clash the two brothers took different routes. At a later date, Ndzundza's group proved to develop faster than that of Manala and were much more prosperous. It is for this reason that the most popular version of Ndebele, upon which the standard language is based is the Ndzundza Ndebele.

In this research therefore, isiNdebele will be referring specifically to the Ndzundza Ndebele as opposed to the term Southern Ndebele which is much more inclusive.

1.7.3 Language

Gregory and Carrol have this to say about language:

... what is more important is not so much that 'man talks' as that 'men talk'; that is, that language is essentially a social, an inter-organism, activity. We do not use it in isolation from the wider framework of human activity, and even in the extreme case when we are talking to ourselves, we still in a sense, have company. (Gregory and Carrol , 1978 ,1).

This research views language from the above quotation's perspective on language. It studies language from a social perspective. An attempt is being made to find out what is involved in a language used by people for personal, private or even public

use. An attempt is further made in looking at how different social situations call for different varieties of the language.

Labov (1970) feels that the name "Sociology of Language," is a better description of Sociolinguistics. He states that this is so because studying a language in a social setting has many problems that are connected with the assimilation of the language. This is more so because many people may use a particular language only as a social language when in effect they regard that language as belonging to a different domain. (Labov, 1970, 15).

The above paragraph should not give the impression that studying a language in this manner is "a vague or general sort of study." Instead it should help to point out the sociolinguistic importance of the language structure within the social context of the speech community.

1.8 Literature review

The biggest dilemma faced by researchers of Ndebele is the absence of references. In any civilised world, any form of contribution made to the language can only be an addition to what already exists. This makes it easy for any prospective contributor to study what has already been covered so as to be able to see those gaps that still need to be covered. In the study of languages, one can only be able to move forward if one knows what ground has been covered already.

Many African languages in South Africa, which are today regarded as giant languages of this country, have had the fortune of getting in

contact with some of the first missionaries when white people arrived for the first time in South Africa from Europe. The contribution made by missionaries to these languages by way of developing and uplifting them was enormous. Documented literary evidence shows that, missionaries eager to communicate to the black people in their own language, soon found themselves participating in scholastic exercises in these languages. The outcome of such exercises were of tremendous advantage to these languages. These exercises soon culminated in the publication of a variety of literary work like dictionaries, grammars, orthographies, catechisms, readers and Bible translations. (Poulos, 1986).

With the type of literature such as the one mentioned in the paragraph above, early scholars who got interested in the languages that already had received attention found themselves with "ready made" material which assisted them in the study of the language. These materials did not only present them with a true record of the progress made thus far, but also gave a true report of the development made thus far in as far as those languages were concerned.

A language that has had the type of advantage referred to above can hardly be compared with a language like isiNdebele whose progress records were passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The latter method has serious shortcomings, such as distortion of facts, loss of valuable linguistic characteristics. Such characteristics could be features upon which linguistic comparisons could be based and which could also clearly distinguish the language in question from the languages with which it shares some common linguistic features.

The above-mentioned statement is a typical characteristic of isiNdebele. At this juncture, it can be stated without exaggerating that one of the major factors responsible for the underdevelopment of the Ndebele language, is the absence of written records. Unlike languages like Latin and Greek, which were codified as early as the Old Testament times, Ndebele could not be written down until recently.

Commenting on this Rasmussen writes:

The Ndebele possessed no form of writing before they encountered European culture, and even then few Ndebele learned to write before the end of the nineteenth century ... There are no contemporary first hand accounts of an Ndebele migration, and almost no such accounts of the Ndebele at war. (Rasmussen, 1978, 163).

The condition mentioned in the quotation above lasted for a long period of time, in fact, it stretched right up to the early 1980's. In a paper delivered during a Festival of African Arts at the University of Zululand, Ngcongwane (1983) painted a somewhat clearer picture of gaps of underdevelopment in the Ndebele language when compared with the other African languages. The latter scholar pointed out that while the first Zulu novel appeared in the year 1922, and that of Sotho in 1925, it is striking to note that the Ndebele language was unable to produce its first novel up until the early nineties. The first Ndebele novel was written by M.G. Masilela in 1990 and published by Centuar publishers. While the Zulu Bible was celebrating its 100th year in 1987, the Ndebele Bible Society could only manage to produce the first complete publication of the New Testament by the year 1986. Prior to that, only the Gospels

appeared individually in small booklets. Up to the end of the first millennium there was no complete Bible written in isiNdebele.

It is against such background that isiNdebele should be studied and understood. It is evident from all the above information, that although written records cannot be taken as a guarantee for the development of any language, but they nevertheless play a very significant role in the determination of the speed of linguistic change, as this cannot be stated in absolute terms. Linguistic change itself is of interest to linguists because it offers the only possibility of explaining the phenomena of language. (Bloomfield, 1950, 281).

Every language on earth undergoes at all times, what Bloomfield refers to as, "a slow but unceasing process of linguistic change." The latter scholar further states that direct evidence of this change is traceable in those communities who possess written records of their earlier form of speech. Here, cases like Sanskrit grammar and lexicon, as well as the Hindus who are known to have been excellent phoneticians and interpreters of written symbols, are quoted as good examples of communities who made use of their written records. (Bloomfield, 1950, 296).

The above information further indicates to us the value of written records. It indicates to us that no written material can be undermined. This includes all readers from grade one to church hymnals. All this material has a secondary function of storing and preserving literary information upon which new literary developments can be based later on.

1.9 Historical background

For one to fully understand the Ndebele people as well as the circumstances surrounding this language, one needs to have a historical background of the Ndebele people themselves. Some sociolinguistic changes found in the language today are direct results of historical results.

1.9.1 The origin of the name “Ndebele”

The South Ndebele people found in the former Transvaal today consists mainly of two tribes, namely, abakwaManala (the Manala Ndebele) and abakwaNdzundza (the Ndzundza Ndebele). The population census of 1980 indicated that the Ndebele people in South Africa numbered some **392 420**. This number was composed as follows: **27 100** in urban areas and **87 940** in former KwaNdebele and **33 480** in the other parts of South Africa. (Population Census, 1980, 3-4).

The origin of the name “Ndebele” is full of speculations. The necessity of trying to trace the origins of the term "Ndebele" has become apparent. A diachronic approach to the study of language has proved to be fruitful in cases where doubts regarding language exists. The confusion regarding the origin of the name “Ndebele” is often brought about by the uncertainty expressed by writers like Rasmussen who does not seem to know where the name Ndebele has originated from. (Rasmussen, 1978, 161). This is often so because, Mzilikazi, who originated from Zululand called himself a Ndebele. It is however not very clear as to when he

actually started calling himself Ndebele because historically there are no facts indicating that he ever used the name whilst still in Zululand. This is aggravated by the fact that, the people who now live across the Limpopo in Zimbabwe call themselves Ndebele as well.

A booklet published by Kruger in 1983 tries to solve this confusion by saying:

The Transvaal Ndebele, who comprise the Northern and Southern Ndebele, should not be confused with the Ndebele or Matebele of Mzilikazi (Silkaats). The latter were "recent" immigrants (c 1825) into the Transvaal originating from the Khumalo in Natal. According to historical data, the Ndebele must have been of the earliest immigrants into the Transvaal, and came here most probably before 1500. This makes the Transvaal Ndebele in all likelihood the earliest Nguni immigrants into the Transvaal. It is however, not clear at what stage and where the branching off from the main Nguni group took place.(Kruger, 1983, 33).

In this quotation above, at least two facts become imminent, firstly, that the Ndebele people found in the Transvaal today are not the same group as those found in Zimbabwe. The group found in the Transvaal today is estimated to have been there at least three centuries before the arrival of Mzilikazi. (sic!) Secondly, although the name "Ndebele" is shared by both the groups, in actual fact one of the groups must have "inherited" the name.

P S Mthimunya a history researcher wrote in an unpublished manuscript that the name "Ndebele" was another name by which the first chief of the Ndebele people was known. According to the same writer, chief Ndebele and chief Mafana were one and the same person. Whether this is a historic fact or not, is not the issue here. The issue here is that the name Ndebele was derived from an early Ndebele chief and can by no means be connected to the Zulu or Zululand. Just like in most African nations, the name of the first king normally becomes the name whereby the nation as a whole becomes known. We can think here of the Swati people of king Mswati; the Shangane people of Soshangane; the Bashweshwe people of king Moshoeshoe etc.

There are many versions of how or where the Ndebele people got their name. The most understandable one, is perhaps the one given by Rasmussen when he writes:

the name 'Ndebele' is a good example of the almost universal tendency of people receiving their names from outsiders. (Rasmussen, 1978, 161).

The latter further points out that the name "Ndebele" is a Nguni version of the seSotho name "Matebele". He says that this name was used by the Sotho people to refer to any member of the Nguni group who came from the "East". It has been used on several other Nguni people other than Mzilikazi. The Sotho people used this name on all Nguni speaking people, most probably, because they found "little difference", if any at all, in the languages spoken by the latter. He concludes:

Eventually the name 'Matebele', or 'Ndebele' in its Anglo/Nguni form, came to apply only to Mzilikazi's people and to the 'Transvaal Ndebele'. These latter were the descendants of much earlier Nguni immigrants onto the highveld. (Rasmussen, 1978, 162).

Other versions are being told orally among the African people. One version, which prickles one's mind states that the name Matebele comes from Sotho words "mathebe telele", meaning "carriers of long shields". It is only Shaka's warriors who are known to have carried long shields. This idea of long shields is said to be Shaka's own, and no other king before Shaka is known to have employed this type of war armoury. When the Sotho people saw these long shields for the first time, to them it was just a queer sight. Because of the fact that it is not easy to pronounce "mathebe telele" in a fast speech, one ends up saying "matebele". This latter view is, however, not acceptable to this research since it presupposes that this name only started during Shaka times. This is in sharp contrast with the view held by this research which argues that the name is far older than the Shaka period.

There is a third view regarding the origin of the name "Ndebele". There are those who hold the view that the Ndebele people originated from Zululand but left Zululand quiet early. This view estimates that the breakaway time could be during the sixteenth century, certainly many, many years before the Shaka period. An interesting view is the one documented by Skhosana. He writes:

AmaNdebele adabuka kwaZulu eminyakeni yabo 1557, abamhlophe bangakalibeki inyawo labo kileli leSewula Afrika. Aphuma kwaZulu asitjhabana esincani ekungaveli kuhle bona sasibuswa ngiyiphi ikosi. (Skhosana , 1996, 5).

The Ndebele people originated from KwaZulu around 1557, this was before the arrival of white people in South Africa. They were a small group when they left kwaZulu and it is not very clear who their king was at this time. (Skhosana, 1996, 5).

The above text, loosely translated means that the Ndebele people originated from Zululand around the year 1557. They were a small nation and it is not very clear who their king was at the time.

1.9.2 The part played by Mzilikazi in culture and vocabulary exchange

Mention has already been made that Mzilikazi on his way to the North, fleeing from Shaka, must have requested for "political asylum" from among the Ndebele people. There is also a view that, Mzilikazi, a former Shaka warrior, impressed the Ndebele people with his impi techniques he learned from Shaka, so much that he gained himself a good name of being a hero.

According to Skhosana (Skhosana, 1996, 8) the encounter between the Ndebele people and Mzilikazi was not that harmonious. A fierce war was waged and Mzilikazi was victorious. Mzilikazi left a trail of destruction wherein he murdered two Ndebele chiefs before proceeding to Zimbabwe. Skhosana writes:

Ngesikhathi kwaMaza kubusa ikosi uMagodongo, kwafika uMzilikazi abaleke kwaZulu ngesimanga sezipi zakaShaka. UMzilikazi wafika wasahlela uMagodongo nesitjhaba sakhe. Uthe bona abulale uMagodongo uMzilikazi, wathumba ifuyo nabafazi wanyuka nenarha watjhinga eTlhagwini, waze wayokunzinza eRhodesia esele yaziwa ngeZimbabwe namhlanje. UMzilikazi wathi nakasahlela uMagodongo kwabe sele adlule ngakuManala, abulele uSibindi. (Skhosana, 1996, 8).

During the reign of king Magodongo at kwaMaza, there arrived Mzilikazi who was fleeing from Shaka wars in KwaZulu. Mzilikazi killed Magodongo and thereafter took as captives stock and wives and went Northwards, and ultimately settled in Rhodesia known today as Zimbabwe. When Mzilikazi attacked Magodongo, he had already passed via Manala and killed Sibindi. (Skhosana, 1996, 8).

It is an undeniable fact that, Ndebele, being a member of the Nguni languages, will naturally share many linguistic characteristics with the other Nguni languages. The issue of a common origin of a group of languages, unfortunately does not give a clear indication of whether or not, one language is older or younger than the rest. Fast development in vocabulary, shifting of sounds and meaning of words, depend largely on the exposure of that particular language to situations demanding new vocabulary, as well as the needs that necessitated such changes.

Unfortunately with the Ndebele, the case is even much more complex. The arrival of Mzilikazi in the Transvaal to settle among

the Ndebele, heralded a new era of interaction of cultural traits, which were otherwise very related in any case. The cultural relationship became even more close. Things like family lives, child rearing practices, religion, attitudes, values, ideals and the like, became very close between the Ndebele and the Zulus. More often than not, where there is a difference, the difference exists only in terminology but the actual practice itself is the same.

A Ndebele youth, just like a Zulu youth is taught to observe and accept with loyalty all the traditional ways of life. The young man or woman learns to conform strictly to the habits and behavioural patterns of his or her people without questioning any of the, sometimes "strange" behavioural patterns which unfold in front of him day after day. An observation made by Dreyer (1980) from among the Zulus, is also found with the Ndebele people namely, that:

Little or no encouragement of individuality was given - personal obligation was not recognised, since it would have been in conflict with cultural stability and group solidarity. (Dreyer, 1980, 107).

Mzilikazi, therefore, apart from being a prominent figure among the Ndebele people, he and his followers played an important part in the transmission of the Zulu culture to the Ndebele. Many cultural practices among the Zulus are for this reason the same as in Ndebele. This fact is confirmed by Cobbin in some papers collected by Peires on Nguni languages when he writes:

Still, cultural and other differences between the Ndebele and other Nguni states are partly to be accounted for by the specific characteristics of the assimilants (Peires, 1983, 160).

It is the very same writer who admits that although there are major differences between the Zulu and Ndebele languages in evolution and history, but the two languages share a common terminology and other cultural practices. (Peires, 1983, 160).

In as far as the structure of the language is concerned, the word "differences" has been used with special care because it has assumed a special meaning. Just like in all Nguni languages, the difference found between Ndebele and Zulu, or any other Nguni language, for that matter, is of two types. The first type can be said to be a phonetic / phonological difference. This type of difference refers to some particular features in words, which to the ear, sound like differences, but which are otherwise only phonological or phonetical changes.

e.g.	<u>NDEBELE</u>	<u>ZULU</u>	
	<i>ikomo</i>	<i>inkomo</i>	<i>(beast)</i>
	<i>umuno</i>	<i>umunwe</i>	<i>(finger)</i>
	<i>inyawo</i>	<i>unyawo</i>	<i>(foot)</i>
	<i>phasi</i>	<i>phansi</i>	<i>(down)</i>
	<i>phosa</i>	<i>phonsa</i>	<i>(throw)</i>
	<i>iboda</i>	<i>ubonda</i>	<i>(wall)</i>

Another difference which is related to this one is when the alveolar nasal [n] precedes either the ejective alveolar plosive [t'] or the devoiced alveolar explosive [d]. This nasal causes a permutation in the pronunciation such that [nt'] and [nd] become [nr'] and [nrh] respectively.

e.g. **into** (thing)
indoda (man)

The next difference is the one known as the inherent difference. Here we note that we have forms which are original to the Ndebele, and where Zulu has different forms.

e.g.	<u>NDEBELE</u>	<u>ZULU</u>	
	<i>umsana</i>	<i>umfana</i>	(boy)
	<i>umntazana</i>	<i>intombazane</i>	(girl)
	<i>isibhuku</i>	<i>isagila</i>	(knop-kierie)
	<i>isitjhaba</i>	<i>isizwe</i>	(nation)
	<i>umuthi</i>	<i>umuthi/isihlahla</i>	(tree)
	<i>isihlahla</i>	<i>umuthi</i>	(medicine)
	<i>umlambo</i>	<i>umfula</i>	(river)

Cobbin (1983) thinks that the Ndebele culture is a conglomeration of cultures borrowed from other African languages. (Peires, 1983, 160). The spoken language can perhaps be said to be "somewhat eclectic". An argument can be raised, however, as to which language has had the greatest influence on Ndebele which resulted in Ndebele having this eclectic type of form. This question

and many others related to it on borrowing are dealt with hereunder.

1.9.3 The part played by the Voortekkers

The part played by the Voortrekkers in influencing the Ndebele language is to be sought in the history of the encounter of these two groups in the Transvaal.

The confrontation between the Ndebele and the Voortrekkers at the place known as Roossenekal, better known to the Ndebele people as Nomtjherhelo, and the armed struggle that subsequently followed, is discussed by Becker when he writes:

During the 1850 s the Ndzundza faction, then ruled by a chief named Mabogo, was faced with a frightening situation: the Transvaal was being gradually infiltrated by Boers in search of a northern hinterland. The White men were known to have built towns and established farms between the Olifants and Steelpoort rivers, and were considered by the Ndzundza as impostors and a threat to peace. (Becker, 1979, 60).

The misunderstandings regarding a certain Mampuru, who was of Pedi origin and granted asylum by the Ndebele chief Nyabela, had detrimental results on the Ndebele. The clash with the Boers who were the remnants of the Voortrekkers, culminated in the Ndebele being invaded by the Boers in 1883, defeated and sent scattered all over places like Belfast, Bethal, Bronkhorspruit and Middelburg in the Transvaal. Becker concludes that:

... by far the majority drifted into White areas, and offered their services to the boers as farm labourers. (Becker, 1979, 66).

The scattering of the Ndebele all over the above - mentioned areas, with Nyabela their king serving a fifteen year sentence in Pretoria, was so frustrating to the Ndebele people that they regarded themselves as people without a king or governor. A Ndebele word for this would be "asibuswa" meaning "we have no ruler or governor". The meaning behind this was perhaps a protest against the Boers disclaiming the imposed governing over them by the Boers.

The township named Siyabuswa, found in kwaNdebele today, refers exactly to the above event. After many years of suffering under the yoke of the farm owners the Ndebele people at last thought that they were free at last with the institution of what the Nationalists government called "national states". To the Ndebele, to have their own regional government was as good as obtaining freedom. The Ndebele were so delighted that they named that township "Siyabuswa" meaning "we are once again being governed by our own rulers".

It is against such a background that the Ndebele language should be understood. The Ndebele people have to some notable extent undergone cultural change as well as linguistic change since their first contact with the Voortrekkers. The most rapid changes took place in material things like the way of dressing, ornaments, tools and furniture. But the most remarkable change took place in the

language where one finds that original Ndebele terminology was substituted by Afrikaans terms. This resulted in the Ndebele language losing a colossal amount of original terminology.

Throughout the world the sociolinguistic situation is such that, the language of the less privileged group sometimes tends to be despised even by its speakers. This causes the language of the privileged group to attain the status of being a "model" language. The less privileged group in turn draws and borrows terms and expressions from the privileged group's language with an attempt to speak the language of the "boss". This phenomenon is discussed in greater details in chapter 3.

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## CHAPTER 2

### 2.0 THE EARLY STAGES OF LINGUISTIC CHANGES

#### 2.1 Introduction:

**E**arly stages of linguistic changes within a language group usually pass by unnoticed. Linguistic changes are so minute that they are hardly recognisable within a single generation. The reason for this is that slight changes that normally develop within a language group are usually not perceived by the speakers of that language as differences that can threaten the language. If such changes are perceived at all, they are more often than not regarded as mere insignificant changes. However, the gap between the two versions widens until it reaches proportions wherein it becomes difficult to tell whether the two versions are now two dialects or two languages.

This is precisely what must have taken place when the Nguni group of languages split. As time went by the strong affinity evidenced in language structure and language usage was retained. However, new language differences developed both in structure and language usage. It is at this point that the different groups of the Nguni languages came to be regarded as dialects.

To decide whether or not one language is a dialect of another is a somewhat complex and sometimes difficult exercise. This is precisely so, because scholars themselves do not agree on a suitable definition which can generally be applied in defining a dialect. The most favourite pivotal

point seems to be the intelligibility or the unintelligibility between any two mediums that are being compared. For instance Jugmohan writes:

***What we must bear in mind is that different dialects of one language are mutually intelligible to a large degree, across the dialect boundaries. If we were to take the English language spoken in South Africa as an example, we would note different dialects. (Jugmohan, 1990, 5).***

The foregoing quotation seems to emphasise intelligibility between dialects. In other words, according to the quoted passage once any two languages are intelligible to each other, the likelihood is that one of the languages is a dialect of the other.

A somewhat neutral view is the one that combines both views into one. A more acceptable explanation will therefore be the one which states that to conclude on whether or not one language is a dialect of the other, the circumstances surrounding the two languages will have to be carefully considered. This means that, depending on the circumstances, there are cases when a dialect can be both intelligible and unintelligible to the mother language.

Intelligible dialects are the more common ones. This is when two or more versions of the same language differ here and there but with the bigger bulk of the language sharing the same language traits. Unintelligible dialects are not so common. This happens when speech varieties have deviated so much from one another that the only common

feature still connecting them is their structure. This is prevalent occurrence among Indian languages.

## 2.2 Ndebele as a member of the Nguni group

The linguistic affinity found between Ndebele and the other Nguni languages is a clear and concrete proof of common origin. Such affinity is found in terminology, sentence construction and in the structure of the language as a whole:

| <u>Zulu</u>   | <u>Swati</u>    | <u>Xhosa</u>  | <u>Ndebele</u> |         |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|---------|
| <i>umfazi</i> | <i>umfati</i>   | <i>umfazi</i> | <i>umfazi</i>  | (woman) |
| <i>indoda</i> | <i>indvodza</i> | <i>indoda</i> | <i>indoda</i>  | (man)   |
| <i>inkosi</i> | <i>inkhosi</i>  | <i>inkosi</i> | <i>ikosi</i>   | (king)  |
| <i>inkabi</i> | <i>inkhaba</i>  | <i>inkabi</i> | <i>ikabi</i>   | (ox)    |

Linguistic evidence has pointed beyond any reasonable doubt that languages with common linguistic characteristics such as the ones mentioned above are descendants of one and the same ancestor parent language. Linguists such as Meinhof, Bleek, Guthrie and others have alluded to the presence of a common parent language. They used names like, Ur-Bantu, Proto-Bantu and Common-Bantu to refer to the original parent language of the African languages. None of the last mentioned scholars doubts the existence, at some point in time of a common ancestor parent.

The Nguni group of languages is a group with languages that are intelligible to one another. In these languages we find languages such as Xhosa, Swati, Zulu and Ndebele. Comparative studies conducted on these languages, more and more confirm the obvious truth i.e. that

these languages are sisters and must have been together at one point in time in their history. The occurrence during an early stage of some linguistic differences, be they phonetic, phonological or even morphological in nature, rendered the languages to be regarded as different languages. It is only in studying the history of the Nguni people and the close tracing of the routes followed by the main language branches that one can clearly account for these linguistic differences. According to Bloomfield (1950) such differences take place at a slow pace. The latter scholar further states that such changes cannot be perceived between any two succeeding generations. They only become evident in those communities that possess written records of their earlier speech. (Bloomfield, 1950, 281).

Ndebele has no doubt, identified itself as a distinct language, differing profoundly from the other sister languages. The types of differences referred to in this paragraph are those differences that are found in languages forming a group. A great deal of these differences manifests themselves in phonetics, phonology, morphology as well as syntax.

### **2.3 Is isiNdebele a dialect of Zulu?**

The question of whether or not isiNdebele is a dialect of Zulu is a controversial one. Diverse and sometimes contradictory opinions are from time to time put forward by scholars. This diversity of opinion can to a large extent be attributed to the definition of the term dialect. The difference is mainly caused by the emphasis put by scholars on their definition as will be seen below.

According to Crystal, a dialect is:

***A regionally or socially distinctive variety of a language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures. (Crystal, 1985, 110).***

Basing one's argument on the above definition, one could argue that isiNdebele is a dialect of Zulu. This is so because a Zulu speaker, not familiar with the isiNdebele language, will nevertheless understand about 70%-80% of the conversation conducted in isiNdebele. This means, a Zulu speaker does not need to be taught Ndebele first before he can grasp a big percentage of a conversation conducted in Ndebele. This makes even more sense if one adds to this the historic account of the origin of the Nguni people and the route they followed as they were moving Southwards.

The above argument would seem to suggest that languages would have to be mutually unintelligible, before they can be accepted as different languages. Crystal (Crystal, 1980, 110) argues against this idea. The latter scholar quotes languages like Swedes, Norwegians and Danes which when spoken are mutually intelligible to one another, yet all these are regarded and accepted as different languages in their own right.

This same argument can also be used in the case of isiNdebele. The fact that isiNdebele shares so many linguistic features with Zulu does not necessarily mean that isiNdebele is a dialect of Zulu. In fact, at the present moment it cannot be told with an exact precision, between Zulu and Xhosa, which language is closest to isiNdebele. Innumerable linguistic features are also shared by isiNdebele and Xhosa, so much

that one is left with a split decision of not knowing which of the two languages is closest to isiNdebele, Zulu or Xhosa.

In the terms tabulated below it is noticed that there are cases in Nguni where the affinity between Ndebele and Xhosa seems to be bigger than the one found between Ndebele and Zulu. These examples show the Ndebele term to be closer to Xhosa both in sound and meaning whereas the Zulu example is very different:

| <u>Ndebele</u>      | <u>Xhosa</u>        | <u>Zulu</u>              |                |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| <i>umntazana</i>    | <i>inkazana</i>     | <i>intombazane</i>       | (girl)         |
| <i>betha</i>        | <i>betha</i>        | <i>shaya</i>             | (bit up)       |
| <i>ipumulo</i>      | <i>impumlo</i>      | <i>ikhala</i>            | (nose)         |
| <i>inciliba</i>     | <i>inciliba</i>     | <i>intshe</i>            | (ostrich)      |
| <i>sela</i>         | <i>sela</i>         | <i>phuza</i>             | (drink)        |
| <i>umuthi</i>       | <i>umthi</i>        | <i>umuthi/isihlahla</i>  | (tree)         |
| <i>ihloko</i>       | <i>intloko</i>      | <i>ikhanda</i>           | (head)         |
| <i>danisa</i>       | <i>danisa</i>       | <i>dumaza</i>            | (disappoint)   |
| <i>ukudinwa</i>     | <i>ukudinwa</i>     | <i>ukukhathala</i>       | (to be tired)  |
| <i>(kuthule) du</i> | <i>(kuthule) tu</i> | <i>(kuthule) cwaka</i>   | (dead silence) |
| <i>(munye) zwi</i>  | <i>(munye) jwi</i>  | <i>(munye) qwaba/zwi</i> | (one only)     |

The above examples should however not be taken to mean that there is no terminological affinity found between Ndebele and Zulu. A colossal amount of terms can be found between Ndebele and Zulu which are the same both in pronunciation and meaning. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

**Zulu****Ndebele**

|                 |                 |                    |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <b>inja</b>     | <b>inja</b>     | <b>(dog)</b>       |
| <b>imvu</b>     | <b>imvu</b>     | <b>(sheep)</b>     |
| <b>imbuzi</b>   | <b>imbuzi</b>   | <b>(goat)</b>      |
| <b>indlu</b>    | <b>indlu</b>    | <b>(house)</b>     |
| <b>inyoni</b>   | <b>inyoni</b>   | <b>(bird)</b>      |
| <b>izulu</b>    | <b>izulu</b>    | <b>(rain)</b>      |
| <b>ingwenya</b> | <b>ingwenya</b> | <b>(crocodile)</b> |
| <b>umoya</b>    | <b>umoya</b>    | <b>(wind)</b>      |

The only sound conclusion which can be reached, and which also accounts for the common linguistic features shared by Zulu, Xhosa and even Swati with isiNdebele, is that all these languages are sister languages who have developed from a common ancestor. This fact about linguistic intelligibility is confirmed by Winston when he writes:

***Genetically related languages preserve a certain stock of lexical elements inherited from the common ancestor, and the descendants of any one form in two related languages will be comparable, both in sound and meaning. Accordingly, genetic relationship can only be established where there are specific resemblances in both sound and meaning, either in vocabulary or in derivational or inflexional affixes,...***

***(African Languages Studies, vol iii, 161-162).***

The above passage helps us understand at least two things regarding the relatedness of the Nguni languages. First is the one wherein by dialect is understood that the languages in question may even be mutually unintelligible but as long as they derive from the same language group and there is linguistic proof of this. The other is the total reliance on mutual intelligibility of the languages in question. This means that as long as languages are intelligible to one another, they are regarded as dialects with a common ancestor. It is because of this latter fact that some linguists often refer (erroneously of course) to Zulu, Xhosa and Swati as dialects. Yet the truth is that these three are in fact fully-fledged languages in their own right.

The term "dialect" as used by Ngcongwane seems to have a different meaning. The latter scholar refers to languages like Transvaal Ndebele, Ndebele of Zimbabwe and Ngoni of Malawi as dialects of Zulu. It is remarkable to note that Zulu is often picked upon and never Xhosa or even Swati.

Ngcongwane seems to emphasise a diachronic point of view:

***Zulu is incidentally a uniform language. It has no distinct dialects like Tswana or Northern Sotho. It is believed that Shaka unified all the dialects of the time when he implemented his great military campaigns. ...The only distinct dialects are the Ndebele of the Transvaal, the Ndebele of Zimbabwe and the Ngoni of Malawi. (Ngcongwane, 1987, 7).***

The passage referred to above seems to regard Transvaal Ndebele as just but one of the dialects of Zulu. The same writer, however, admits that

there is a stage in the development of a language where it attains maturity and disengages itself from a subsidiary position, to a level of a fully-fledged language.

***The genetic idea is normally concerned with this type of thing. The idiolects collect up to form dialects, and dialects collect up to form languages. (Ngcongwane, 1987, 7).***

The above passage shows that Ngcongwane does make a distinction between the terms dialect and language. The former could be confined to different speech varieties spoken by groups of people speaking one and the same language with different social status or who are separated by geographical boundaries and thus resulting in different versions of the same language. The latter refers to fully-fledged languages from the same group of languages that share a number of linguistic characteristics inherited from their parent language.

It is in this sense that the terms dialect and language are understood and are used in this research. This research therefore treats isiNdebele as a fully-fledged language rather than as a dialect.

#### **2.4 The amaNdebele and Matebele**

There are times when the two words mentioned above seem to create confusion. On many occasions, the name “amaNdebele” is used very loosely. Firstly it is used to refer to the Mzilikazi group that left Zululand during the times of Shaka to settle across the Limpopo River in the present Zimbabwe. Secondly it is used to refer to the Nguni group of people found in the present Mpumalanga and some parts of Gauteng

who are believed to have settled in that area as early as the fifteenth century.

## **2.5 Differences between isiNdebele and the other Nguni languages.**

Mention has already been made that isiNdebele is a member of the Nguni Group of languages. For this reason therefore, marked differences are not expected. Instead, linguistic changes showing a close affinity are expected.

Doke in his book entitled "The Southern Bantu Languages" published as early as 1954, outlined the main features found in the African languages of South Africa. Doke classified his comparison into eight categories. (Doke, 1954, 27). This research will however concentrate on three categories namely, the vowel system, phonology and some aspects of morphology.

## **2.6 The vowel system**

isiNdebele, like most languages of its class shares a common structural form of the vowel system with its sister languages in the Nguni group of languages. Doke noticed that these languages have what he referred to as:

***a perfect balanced system with one low vowel a, and an equal number of equally positioned front and back vowels. (Doke, 1954, 27).***

isiNdebele has five vowels just like Zulu, Xhosa and Swati. All its vowels fall somewhat slightly below the cardinal points as found in the vowel chart of the IPA. Further to these vowels, isiNdebele has semi-close vowels, [ɛ] and [ɔ] which are varieties of the semi-open vowels [e] and [o] respectively. Each of these pairs constitutes a single phoneme in each case, which depends a lot on the quality of the succeeding vowel, i.e. whether this vowel is a high or low vowel. There is however no need to differentiate these in practical orthography, as these constitute no clashes.

It has been generally accepted that in a language like isiNdebele wherein there are semi-open and semi-close vowels which constitute phonemes, the semi-close member is found when the vowel of the succeeding syllable contains either a close vowels [i] or [u], or when the succeeding consonant is a nasal with a latent or elided [i] or [o]. (Doke, 1954, 27).

e.g. [bɔna] (see)                      vs        [bonilɛ] (saw)

[leli] (this)                      vs        [lɛlɔ] (that one)

[nomsana] (and the boy)

Again, isiNdebele, just like the rest of the South Eastern zone languages, displays both long and short vowels. It has been observed that the pattern followed by long vowels is that these fall on the penultimate syllable of disyllabic and polysyllabic words.

e.g. **umsa:na** (boy)

**umloboka:zi** (bride)

**umthanye:lo** (broom)

## **2.7 Some grammatical aspects of isiNdebele**

### **2.7.1 The initial vowel**

IsiNdebele has the occurrence of the initial vowel as one of its characteristics. This is a common characteristic of all the Nguni languages. The initial vowel is a feature of the noun prefix. Doke noticed that languages like Sotho and Venda lack the initial vowel. Languages like Zulu, Xhosa and Swati differ immensely among themselves in that Zulu and Xhosa will always have an initial vowel whilst Swati has many cases where the initial vowel is non-existent. IsiNdebele on the other hand has most of its nouns occurring with initial vowels:

e.g. **Umsana uraga ikomo** (the boy is driving a cow)

**Inyanga ingiseze isihlahla.** (the healer made me drink  
some medicine)

Several cases do exist, however, where the prefix is used without an initial vowel in isiNdebele sentences. This is not a rare

occurrence in the Nguni languages. Von Staden conducted a study in the Zulu language where he looked at all cases of the occurrences of the noun without the initial vowel.

Some of the most common occurrences in isiNdebele are the following:

### 2.7.2 Vocative:

A noun used vocatively will always occur without an initial vowel. This normally occurs when we shout or call a person either from a distance or near:

|      |                        |   |                    |
|------|------------------------|---|--------------------|
| e.g. | <b><u>Vocative</u></b> |   | <b><u>Noun</u></b> |
|      | <i>Fuduka</i>          | > | <i>uFuduka</i>     |
|      | <i>Mbalekwa</i>        | > | <i>uMbalekwa</i>   |

### 2.7.3 Exclamations:

Normally a noun in Ndebele will always occur with an initial vowel. In cases where exclamations are made using a noun, the noun so used will occur without an initial vowel:

|      |                           |   |                         |
|------|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|      | <b><u>Exclamation</u></b> |   | <b><u>Noun</u></b>      |
| e.g. | <i>madekhethu!</i>        | > | <i>amadoda wekhethu</i> |
|      | <i>baba nomma!</i>        | > | <i>ubaba nomma</i>      |

#### 2.7.4 The prefixing of “ku-” or “kwa-” in forming locatives:

In Ndebele locatives are formed from ordinary nouns. A number of such nouns simply prefix “ku-” or “kwa-” to form locatives. Once a locative uses these prefixes the noun used loses its initial vowel:

| <u>Locative</u>           | <u>Noun</u>       |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| e.g. <i>kuFikelephi</i> > | <i>uFikelephi</i> |
| <i>kumalume</i> >         | <i>umalume</i>    |
| <i>kwaJiyana</i> >        | <i>uJiyana</i>    |
| <i>kwarhulu</i> >         | <i>urhulu</i>     |

#### 2.7.5 When a noun follows an absolute pronoun:

In a number of Ndebele sentences the speaker may prefer to start the sentence with an absolute pronoun. In such cases, the noun immediately following the absolute pronoun will always drop its initial vowel:

e.g. *Thina bantu sakhe savelelwa*

instead of

*Thina (a)bantu ...*

*Wena msana, yiza lapha!*

instead of

*Wena (u)msana...*

instead of  
***Leli ikhuwa***

***Le ndoda*** (This man)  
instead of  
***Le indoda***

~~~~~

CHAPTER 3

3.0 SOME LINGUISTIC COMPARISON BETWEEN ISINDEBELE AND OTHER LANGUAGES OF THE SAME FAMILY

3.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to show that languages in close proximity will always influence each other's structure. Depending on the length of the period of proximity as well as the strength of influence, the language with a stronger influence will always exert its influence on the weaker language. In particular, this chapter aims at demonstrating that although Ndebele belongs to the Nguni group of languages, there are however signs suggesting some heavy influence from the Pedi language.

This chapter further acknowledges existing Sociolinguistics findings by Ngcongwane that whenever there are different languages meeting deliberately or by sheer coincidence, the languages involved in this situation will affect one another either positively or negatively. (Ngcongwane, 1987). The results of such an encounter will depend on a number of factors. These include factors such as the extent of population, political status of the language and literary development. (Weinreich, 1974, 1). It seems the same thing has happened between isiNdebele and the other neighbouring languages that surrounded Ndebele from and during the early stages of the Ndebele civilisation.

Wena pholisa, mgijimise!

instead of

Wena (i)pholisa...

2.7.6 Axiomatic negatives

Axiomatic negatives are linguistic constructions found in the language where the verb negates the very noun it immediately follows. Such constructions are very common in the Ndebele language. Speakers usually use these forms to show extreme negativism. In such cases the noun always occurs without its initial vowel.

e.g. ***Angifuni msana lapha.*** (I do not want any boy here)

Angiboni komo lapha. (I do not see any beast here)

Angesabi mloyi mina. (I am no afraid of any witch)

2.7.7 After demonstratives:

Constructions wherein a demonstrative is followed by a noun are used very often in the Ndebele language. Where such constructions occur the noun is always found to occur without its initial vowel:

e.g. ***Leli khuwa*** (This white person)

The historical account of the Ndebele language shows that the Ndebele people had for a long time been surrounded by other language communities belonging to the Kintu languages. The Northern Sotho community is normally the one community which is thought to have maintained a close proximity with the Ndebele people. Such a proximity is of utmost importance in Sociolinguistics because it lays the first brick necessary for language influence. This stage is referred to by Ngcongwane as "language contact" and is therefore the initial stage which may cause language change. (Ngcongwane, 1990.).

3.2 Possibility of a North Sotho basilect and semi-basilect

Studies in Comparative linguistics show that languages of the world are classified into language families. One of the major criteria of this classification is the structural appearance of the language. Structural appearance takes into consideration a number of factors such as the word morphology, formulation of syntax, verb usage and so on. As long as languages are related, they stick to this relationship regardless of intelligibility. Some languages may be totally unintelligible to each other yet because of the structural appearance these are grouped into one language family.

More often than not it happens that the structure of some languages somewhat differs from its sister languages. In comparative linguistics the term "basilect" is used. Changes of this nature take place when the speakers of a language tend to copy the language structure of the languages adjacent to theirs.

In his book entitled “Sociolinguistics” Hudson sighted a case by Bickerton who during his study made use of two terms namely “basilect” and “acrolect” (Hudson, 1980, 186). This is an instance where one language becomes so influential over another to the extent that it either forces its influence on the next language or the other language through lack of self confidence readily gives in.

An instance same as the one mentioned above seems to have taken place between Ndebele and North Sotho. In a number of occasions some Ndebele language structures tend to follow North Sotho linguistic styles instead of Nguni.

3.2.1 North Sotho linguistic styles

Any language left alienated and surrounded by foreign languages, will adopt linguistic styles of the surrounding languages. IsiNdebele language, which is a Nguni language, has because of historical circumstances been surrounded by a Pedi speaking community. As a result, some linguistic features, which are foreign to Nguni are now found in isiNdebele, features which are traceable to the Pedi language. These linguistic features are found mostly in the isiNdebele vocabulary, which has a tendency of sharing vocabulary with Pedi – vocabulary, which tendency is not found in the other Nguni sister languages.

3.2.1.1 Phonetic features

The study of comparative Nguni phonetics shows a number of linguistic characteristics found in this group of languages. Most of these sounds are common to all these languages, or at least very closely related. This serves as a tangible proof that these languages are 'sisters'.

Ndebele however has some phonetic sounds not found among the Nguni languages but among the Sotho languages. The following will better clarify this:

tl [tʰ]

This sound is described by Ziervogel as "the voiceless ejective alveolar lateral explosive" (Ziervogel, 1967, 124). This sound is different from the Zulu sound found in words like 'inhloko' in that in Ndebele it is not preceded by any nasal. It is notable that this sound is not found in the other Nguni languages namely Swati, Xhosa and Zulu. IsiNdebele is the only Nguni language that has deviated from the group. It thus sounds logical to conclude that this sound came as an influence from North Sotho. It occurs in a number of isiNdebele words such as:

<i>tlaya</i>	(cut into two lengthwise) e.g. ukutlaya umutja
<i>tlakalaja</i>	(open one's legs wide)
<i>tlabhuza</i>	(dip one's feet in water or mud)
<i>tlubhuza</i>	(dip an object in some liquid)
<i>tlubha</i>	(clean one's mouth/ brush one's teeth)
<i>tlola</i>	(write)

In North Sotho this sound is found in words like:

<i>tla</i>	(come)
<i>tlala</i>	(hunger or famine)
<i>tlase</i>	(below) etc.

tlh [tlh]

This sound is described by Ziervogel as “the aspirated equivalent of tl” (Ziervogel, 1967, 124). Again it is found in a number of cases in isiNdebele but never in the other three Nguni languages. The following terms illustrate this:

<i>tlhala</i>	(to dump a lover or divorce a spouse)
<i>tlhayela</i>	(run short)
<i>tlhodlha</i>	(filtering or straining of African beer)
<i>tlhedlha</i>	(type of a horse run that precedes galloping)
<i>tlhaga</i>	(to suffer)
<i>tlhorisa</i>	(to ill-treat or abuse)
<i>tlhorhoroja</i>	(to poke)
<i>tlhatlhabeja</i>	(not to be thorough in doing a thing or work)

In the North Sotho language we find words like:

<i>tlhaka</i>	(stalk)
<i>tlhako</i>	(hoof)
<i>tlhotla</i>	(to filter) etc.

ts [ts’]

This sound is described by Ziervogel as “the voiceless ejective alveolar affricate which begins with *t* and ends with *s*”. (Ziervogel, 1967, 125). Of late, this sound has made an appearance in several words in the Nguni languages. Scholars however have difficulty in proving that this is an original Nguni sound. Mostly it comes as an adoptive from another language. For instance the term “tsotsi” is found in all four Nguni languages. Some scholars do however admit that this sound does not seem to be an original Nguni term. In isiNdebele it does occur but only in a few terms like:

<i>itsetse</i>	(a tick)
<i>utswiri</i>	(a small wild fruit shaped like a watermelon)
<i>itswayi</i>	(salt)
<i>utsotsi</i>	(a dangerous juvenile delinquent)
<i>itsikizi</i>	(some type of a domestic pest related to ticks)

In Pedi this sound is very popular. It occurs in a wide range of terms like:

<i>tseba</i>	(to know)
<i>tsebe</i>	(ear)
<i>tsela</i>	(path)

tsh [tsh]

Ziervogel describes this sound as “the aspirated equivalent of ts”(Ziervogel, 1967, 125). It is not found in the other Nguni languages. It should not be confused with the one found in Swati. The one found in Swati is the equivalent of the Nguni sound [th]. In isiNdebele it occurs in terms like:

tshwaya	(mark)
ilitsha	(a pond)
itshidzo	(a round smooth stone used for plastering)
itshele	(cruelty)
tshehla	(yellow)

Pedi has a long list of terms containing this sound. Among them we find the following:

tshepe	(iron)
tshepo	(hope)
tshwara	(to catch) etc.

rh [x]

This sound can be described as a voiced velar fricative. It is noticeable that Nguni languages, especially Swati and Zulu normally avoid pronouncing this type of sound. Instead they prefer a voiceless glottal fricative. It is Xhosa and isiNdebele that has instances of this sound. In Xhosa it is found in words like “irhafu” (*tax*), “urhulumente” (*government*). In isiNdebele it is found in terms like:

<i>rhurhuba</i>	(drag on the floor or ground)
<i>rhula</i>	(scratch esp. ground)
<i>rhaba</i>	(hurry)
<i>rhidla</i>	(hit with an object like a whip)
<i>rhorha</i>	(pull on the ground)
<i>umpherho</i>	(a place where blankets are hanged on the wall)
<i>isirhole</i>	(a disabled person)
<i>irhwaba</i>	(ice)

In Pedi this sound is found in terms like:

<i>gafa</i>	(be mentally disturbed)
<i>gafole</i>	(garden-fork)
<i>gauta</i>	(gold)

kg [kxk]

This sound is described by Ziervogel as “the voiceless aspirated velar affricate which begins with explosive velar [k] and ends with fricative velar [x] followed by aspiration”(Ziervogel, 1967, 126). IsiNdebele is the only Nguni language with this sound. The other three Nguni languages do not have it and their speakers find it very difficult to articulate. This sound is thus a strong Pedi influence. In IsiNdebele it is found in terms like:

<i>ikghuru</i>	(tortoise)
<i>kghama</i>	(throttle)
<i>kghurumeja</i>	(push)
<i>kghona</i>	(to be able to)
<i>umkghadi</i>	(cowhide blanket)

kghetsha	(to catch a person red-handed)
ikghokgho	(wall built out of sticks)

Pedi has terms like:

kgaba	(spoon)
kgahlisa	(to please)
kgasa	(to crawl) etc.

tjh [tʃh]

This sound can be described as the voiceless aspirated palato-alveolar affricate. Ndebele uses this sound as an equivalent of the sound **sh** found in Zulu, Xhosa and Swati. Xhosa does make use of this sound in a number of occasions in words like **tshaya** (to smoke). But Xhosa also uses the sound **sh** in words like **shukuma** (to move). Ndebele on the other hand never uses **sh**, instead the sound **tjh** is used in words like:

itjhada	(noise)
itjhum	(ten)
itjhatjhalazi	(plain piece of ground)
itjhoba	(brush)
tjhaphulula	(untie/set free)
-tjha	(burn)

This is very common sound in Pedi and is found in sounds like:

tjhefo	(poison)
tjhelete	(money)

tjhesa (be hot)

r [r]

Ziervogel describes this sound as a voiced medial vibrant continuant. It is a sound seldom found in the other three Nguni languages. The few words containing this sound are often borrowings from some other languages. Languages like Zulu and Swati almost avoid pronouncing this sound at all costs. They normally prefer to substitute it with the sound [ʔ]. Hence in Zulu we find words like **iloli** instead of **ilori**, **ilabha** instead of **irabha** etc.

On the other hand, the articulation of this sound does not pose not even slightest problem for the Ndebele speakers. In fact, Ndebele possesses a long list of words wherein this sound occurs:

raga	(proceed/drive)
rarha	(kick)
rara	(cause to wonder)
rabhela	(beg)
isirole	(a good-for-nothing dog or boy)
amarikiriki	(old torn clothes or blankets)
umremereme	(tall often weak person)

In trying to answer the question why Ndebele is the only one in this family of languages with this sound, no better answer can be found except for the fact that this sound came to the Ndebele as a

Pedi influence. In Pedi this sound is a very popular sound found in words like:

<i>raha</i>	(kick)
<i>rapela</i>	(beseech)
<i>rorisa</i>	(praise) etc.

3.2.1.2 Vocabulary with similar sound and meaning

A close scrutiny of the vocabulary of both isiNdebele and Pedi reveals that there exists close relationships in some terms both in sound and meaning of these terms.

Although it is true to say that languages belonging to the South - Eastern zone will share some linguistic properties which are common to all of them, it however leaves room for suspicion if isiNdebele will be found to be sharing linguistic properties with Pedi, linguistic properties which are not found in any of the Nguni languages. These linguistic relationships cover a wide variety of spectrum such as phonetical, phonological as well as grammatical ones. Msimang has already pioneered the way in the field of Phonology. (Msimang, 1989).

It does not look justifiable to call these terms mere borrowings. This is more so because, some of these concepts are ordinary everyday happenings and it does not make sense to think that

such a concept did not exist in Ndebele. The following list of terms will demonstrate this:

NDEBELE

PEDI

<i>bandamela</i>	<i>batamela</i>	(come closer)
<i>bulunga</i>	<i>boloka</i>	(bury/ save e.g.money)
<i>dobha</i>	<i>topa</i>	(pick up)
<i>hlathulula</i>	<i>hlalosa</i>	(explain)
<i>kgona</i>	<i>kgona</i>	(be able)
<i>nghwala (tlola)</i>	<i>ngwala</i>	(write)
<i>rarha</i>	<i>raga</i>	(kick)
<i>rhuga</i>	<i>kgowa(rumula)</i>	(tease/ scorn/ provoke)
<i>rhunyela</i>	<i>hunyela</i>	(shrink)
<i>rhurhuba</i>	<i>gogoba</i>	(crawl)
<i>rhwelela</i>	<i>goelela</i>	(shout)
<i>silinga</i>	<i>seleka</i>	(annoy)
<i>thoma</i>	<i>thoma</i>	(to start)
<i>tjhuguluka</i>	<i>sokologa</i>	(turn around)
<i>tlhaga</i>	<i>hlaka</i>	(suffer)
<i>tlhoga</i>	<i>hloka</i>	(not to have)
<i>hlongakala</i>	<i>hlokafala</i>	(to die)

The above examples are just but a few out of hundred others. This behaviour is not only found in verbs. Many nouns of Ndebele also "sound Pedish". It is however interesting to note that a noun in Ndebele, just like in Zulu, will have a prefix which most of the time consists of a pre-prefix and a real class prefix. This latter characteristic is a pure Nguni characteristic and it creates a strong link between Ndebele and

the other Nguni languages. With that in mind, consider the following nouns:

NDEBELE

PEDI

<i>isi-rhole</i>	<i>segole</i>	(a cripple)
<i>i- kguru</i>	<i>khudu</i>	(tortoise)
<i>i- kgabu</i>	<i>kgabo</i>	(ape)
<i>u- kgari</i>	<i>rakgadi</i>	(father's sister)
<i>um- rharibo</i>	<i>mogadibo</i>	(brother's wife)
<i>u- songhwana</i>	<i>rangwane</i>	(father's younger brother)
<i>u- mani</i>	<i>mmane</i>	(mother's younger sister)
<i>u- rhulu</i>	<i>mamogolo</i>	(wife to father's elder brother or mother's elder sister etc.)

3.2.1.3 Initiation school praise poems

Initiation school is practised both by the Nguni people as well as the Pedi people. It is not clear who were the first to observe this practice. History has it that this practice was very seriously observed by the Zulu people before and during the earlier stages of king Shaka's period of reigning. Shortly thereafter it was discontinued by Shaka among the Zulu people. It was however continued by the other nationalities. It is therefore not surprising that this practice is taken so seriously by the Southern Ndebele as well as the Xhosa people amongst the Nguni speaking groups. It is equally very seriously observed by the other ethnic groups of our country such as the Pedi people for instance. Of late it has become so serious among the Ndebele people to the extent that cases

are known where young men just left their places of employment without notice and responded to the call for initiation. Students are also known to have forsaken their studies at a very precarious time, before and during examinations, for instance, and responded to the call which in the Ndebele language is normally known as "Ikosi ithabile" - the king is happy.

The point being emphasised here is that when these young men return home from the mountain, a process known as "ukugoduka" is performed (which means "returning home"). They arrive home with new names. It becomes compulsory for everyone, except the elderly people, to call them using these new names. What is mostly noticeable is that a number of these new names sound more Pedi-like rather than Nguni. Even more important, some of them are almost the same as the names of some of the previous Sotho kings.

	<u>Ndebele</u>		<u>Pedi</u>
e.g.	<i>Sigwadi</i>	<i>vs</i>	<i>Sekwati</i>
	<i>Musweswe</i>	<i>vs</i>	<i>Moshoeshoe</i>
	<i>Nompuru</i>	<i>vs</i>	<i>Mampuru etc.</i>

What is even more interesting is the fact that when the newly initiates (amasokana) arrive from the "mountain", each one of them has a long praise poem to recite together with his new name. Such poems are not an uncommon phenomenon in Nguni. To this day such poems are found among the Nguni young men known as "izibongo zezinsizwa". Something close to what is called "a curriculum vitae" in the academic field.

But what is important in this context is that these poems are in the Pedi language and never in the Ndebele language. For instance we have something like:

e.g. ***Ke nna Musweswe ke ya swaila,
Ga ke swaile ke ya tatampela,
Setimela ga ke se namele ka pele,
Ke se namela ka morago,
Ka pele ke tshaba ditshipi tsa makgowa go fisa.***

*"I am Musweswe who walks swiftly,
I am not only a swift walker but also careful,
I do not board a train in front,
I climb from the back,
In front I fear the whiteman's hot irons*

This next extract is particularly very strange to come from a Ndebele person:

***Ke Tsheletshele ke ya selekega,
Ke hlaketse le bananyana ba Matebele
Ka sekoting sa koa Mahlokolo
Ba rwetsi bjala kamamagalase
Ka re ke ya bo kgopela ba gana le bona
Ka bo raga bja re phashaa!***

*"I am Tsheletshele: the one who gets easily annoyed
I came upon Ndebele young girls
In the Mahlokolo valley*

*Carrying beer in glass containers
I asked for a sip and they refused
I kicked it and it gave a sound phashaa!*

The above examples and others elsewhere in this chapter, show that it is true to say that isiNdebele is a Nguni language. It is however very important that scholars studying this language should equally understand the Sociolinguistic circumstances that have over the years affected the language. The results are that isiNdebele turned and assimilated many other linguistic characteristics which are not of its group but of the group of languages surrounding it.

3.3 Borrowing and adaptation from “prestigious” languages

It is a known fact that the practice by the previous South African government was to regard languages spoken by white people as “better” languages, and those spoken by black people as somewhat backward languages. This situation was further worsened by the fact that the government cared for the white languages and the black languages were simply ignored. This had some negative consequences not only to the disadvantaged languages themselves but also to the speakers of these languages. It was observed that black people lost confidence in their languages and treated their own languages as third class languages. The tendency was to look up to the languages of the whites as the languages that were a symbol of correct structure and purity. This consequently ushered a one sided flow of influence. Black people came to regard it as fashionable to borrow terms from English and Afrikaans. These languages were regarded as “prestigious” languages and everyone

wanted in one way or another to be associated with the language of the “master”.

3.3.1 Borrowings from Afrikaans

History has it that the Ndebele people, after having been defeated at eKgolweni, spent most of their lives attached to Afrikaner farms as farm labourers. They were subservient to the Afrikaner and regarded Afrikaner life and culture as the “appropriate style” to be copied. Because of this type of situation, the employer was most of the time not prepared to learn a language he regarded as a barbaric language. This heralded a period of vocabulary borrowing and adaptation that was uncontrolled and unchecked. Most Ndebele people inadvertently found themselves forsaking a big bulk of their terminology in favour of the language that was regarded as the “better” language.

A number of reasons may be enumerated why one language borrows from another. A language is likely to borrow from another once:

- One of the languages existing side by side with it comes to be regarded as a somewhat prestigious language and is thought to be of a higher class than the less developed language next to it.
- There are new concepts in the language regarded as the “lower” i.e. language for which there is no terminology.

- The speakers of the less developed language undermine their own language so much to the extent that they develop a feeling that their own terminology is not accurate or clear enough.

In an ordinary Ndebele speech, one is amazed by the enormous usage of loan words that are of Afrikaans origin. The borrowed terminology is of such a colossal size to such an extent that some people find it doubtful to picture the Ndebele language existing without the support from borrowings.

The method of borrowing among African languages was found to be following a somewhat definite pattern. Ngcongwane (1972) studied borrowings in some of the Nguni languages, Xhosa included, and confirmed the findings of other scholars in this field, namely, that this process followed three vital steps. These steps have been found to be occurring in a fairly consistent manner. (Ngcongwane, 1972, 6):

The prefix system:

African languages have come to be popularly referred to as 'prefix forming languages'. This is so because it was discovered that these languages always have their nouns start with a prefix. It was further discovered that the prefix plays the most important role when a word forms a plural form. A word borrowed from Afrikaans will therefore be fitted with a prefix first before it gains admission into the Ndebele vocabulary.

umuntu (person)

<i>umsana</i>	(boy)
<i>umntazana</i>	(girl)
<i>umsegwabo</i>	(lad)
<i>umfundisi</i>	(pastor or teacher)
<i>umtjhumayeli</i>	(preacher)
<i>umlamuleli</i>	(mediator)

Open ended syllables:

Ngcongwane argues that the pattern of writing a word in the Nguni languages is a **CVCVCV** combination of phones and never a **CVCVC**. This means that each syllable in a word will always consist of a consonant and a vowel. This also means that syllables always end up with a vowel. He continues to say that even if a word consists of only one syllable, it has to end in a vowel, and the pattern is therefore known as “closed” (Ngcongwane, 1972, 7). Therefore all words from Afrikaans or English always receive an extra vowel so as to make them conform to this pattern. This is also true with the Ndebele word morphology. It is for this reason that we get borrowed words like:

<u>Ndebele</u>		<u>Afrikaans</u>	
<i>ibhontjisi</i>	<	<i>boontjie</i>	<i>(bean)</i>
<i>idamu</i>	<	<i>dam</i>	<i>(dam)</i>
<i>iforo</i>	<	<i>voor</i>	<i>(furrow)</i>
<i>ikani</i>	<	<i>kan</i>	<i>(can)</i>
<i>ikari</i>	<	<i>kar</i>	<i>(car)</i>

<i>ikesi</i>	<	<i>kers</i>	(canddle)
<i>ikopi</i>	<	<i>koppie</i>	(cup)
<i>ilebhula</i>	<	<i>lepel</i>	(spoon)
<i>isibha</i>	<	<i>seep</i>	(soap)
<i>isipikiri</i>	<	<i>spuiker</i>	(nail)
<i>itafula</i>	<	<i>tafel</i>	(table)
<i>itapula</i>	<	<i>aartappel</i>	(potatoe)
<i>itelefomu</i>	<	<i>telefoon</i>	(telephone)
<i>iyembe</i>	<	<i>hemp</i>	(shirt)

3.3.2 Borrowings from English

Whilst the Afrikaans language seem to be the main supplier of loan words into the Ndebele vocabulary, English on the other hand is not such a big supplier. The reason for this is to be found in history. During the time of colonisation the Cape was used as a point of arrival by all whites who came to South Africa. Soon the Afrikaans-speaking settlers in the Cape were dissatisfied with British rule. This resulted into an action never to be forgotten in the history of the Afrikaners called the "Great Trek" wherein the Afrikaners decided to move as far North as possible so as to escape British rule. By so doing they found themselves in the Transvaal where the Ndebele people lived. Contact with the English only came very late. This is also reflected in the Ndebele language which has a very small collection of loan words from English. To this day, Afrikaans is like a second language to a Ndebele child. It is learned at home and perfected at school. Most Ndebele children among the older generation only met English for the first time at school. (Skhosana, 1988, 117).

English was nonetheless regarded as a prestigious language because it was spoken by the white man. Later it came to represent “class” because it was the language of the educated, a title it holds to this day. It was perhaps for this reason that loan words from English found their way into Ndebele:

<u>Ndebele</u>		<u>English</u>
<i>ibhasikili</i>	<	<i>bicycle</i>
<i>igramafomu</i>	<	<i>gramophone</i>
<i>ilori</i>	<	<i>lorry</i>
<i>iphepha</i>	<	<i>paper</i>
<i>isikerde</i>	<	<i>skirt</i>
<i>isitimela</i>	<	<i>steam engine</i>
<i>isitolo</i>	<	<i>store</i>
<i>itayi</i>	<	<i>tie</i>
<i>itjhukela</i>	<	<i>sugar</i>
<i>iwatjhi</i>	<	<i>wrist watch</i>

Loan words from English may be of a smaller scale compared to Afrikaans, but the ever-growing technological vocabulary may be another factor the Ndebele language still has to reckon with. My guess is, within a few years, loan words from English shall have reached quite a considerable volume.

It must however be mentioned that there is quite a collection of loan words where it is not so easy to say whether or not the original language is Afrikaans or English:

e.g.	<u>Ndebele</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>English</u>
	<i>ibhayibheli</i>	<i>bybel</i>	<i>bible</i>
	<i>isegerede</i>	<i>sigaret</i>	<i>cigarette</i>
	<i>itamati</i>	<i>tamatie</i>	<i>tomato</i>
	<i>isibha</i>	<i>seep</i>	<i>soap</i>
	<i>ikari</i>	<i>kar</i>	<i>car</i>
	<i>isibhedlela</i>	<i>hospitaal</i>	<i>hospital</i>
	<i>ibhodlelo</i>	<i>botel</i>	<i>bottle</i>
	<i>ikama</i>	<i>kam</i>	<i>comb</i>
	<i>ipholisa</i>	<i>polisie-man</i>	<i>police</i>
	<i>i-oli</i>	<i>olie</i>	<i>oil e.t.c.</i>

3.3.3 Borrowings from Pedi

Although it cannot be said with certainty that the Ndebele people at any stage regarded the Pedi language as a “prestigious” language but the influx of Pedi loan words is quite obvious to any Ndebele speaker. Here it seems that a different factor was at play. Sometimes when two languages are in close proximity there develops a new relationship between them of free-giving-and-accepting. Once such a relationship develops, it is very common for one of the languages to either accept more than the other one or to be mean in accepting new words. Ndebele in this case seem to be the one that was freely accepting. Hence we have a large collection of vocabulary which originates from Pedi. The terminology with Pedi origin is so voluminous to the extent that some people tend to look at Ndebele as ‘a bad Pedi dialect’. Some popular Ndebele terms are from Pedi:

<u>Ndebele</u>		<u>Pedi</u>	
<i>guga</i>	<	<i>kuka</i>	(lift up)
<i>isidlhayela</i>	<	<i>setlaela</i>	(fool)
<i>isikgudlhu</i>	<	<i>sekgutlwana</i>	(corner)
<i>isirhwerhwe</i>	<	<i>segwagwa</i>	(frog)
<i>isitjhaba</i>	<	<i>setjhaba</i>	(nation)
<i>thaba</i>	<	<i>thaba</i>	(be glad)
<i>tlhogomela</i>	<	<i>hlokomela</i>	(be careful)
<i>umbadi</i>	<	<i>lebadi</i>	(door)
<i>umrhoru</i>	<	<i>mohodu</i>	(paunch)

Conclusion:

This chapter therefore reiterates the sociolinguistic fact that any language left alienated and surrounded by foreign languages, will borrow terms as well as adopt linguistic styles of the surrounding languages. IsiNdebele language, which is a Nguni language, has because of historical circumstances been surrounded by a Pedi speaking community. As a result, some linguistic features, which are foreign to Nguni, are found in IsiNdebele, features that are traceable to the Pedi language. These linguistic features are found mostly in the isiNdebele vocabulary. This is so because Ndebele has a tendency of sharing vocabulary with Pedi - vocabulary which is not found in the other Nguni sister languages. Even some other Ndebele practices, such as initiation school poem recitals, which should otherwise be rendered in pure Ndebele language, are for no apparent reason performed in pure Pedi language by the South Ndebele people themselves.

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# CHAPTER 4

## 4.0 NDEBELE DIALECTS

### 4.1 Introduction

**I**t is common knowledge that once a language is spoken over a vast area it ends up developing into various dialects. Dialects are styles of speaking one and the same language normally recognisable in the language stylistics such as word formation, tone, sentence formation and a variety of other linguistic aspects within the same language.

Dialects are caused by a variety of factors. Among the most common ones are those that are caused by geographical factors such as high mountains and wide often impassable rivers.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned reasons, research shows that Ndebele dialects are based on the history and the origin of the Ndebele people. According to Skhosana the Ndebele language developed into dialects following chief Mafana's sons who after their father's death were engaged in a bitter struggle for chieftainship. Each of the five sons ended up by choosing his own location where he established himself as king. As a direct result thereof, new varieties of speech developed. (Skhosana, 1996, 6ff).

## 4.2 The Ndzunza and the Manala dialects

The Ndzundza and the Manala dialects comprise what is commonly referred to as South Ndebele. These two varieties are very closely related. Some minor phonetic and phonemic differences are found between them. The name “Manala” perhaps says it all. Here we find that in most cases the Ndzundza sound “**na**” becomes “**la**” in the Manala, hence the name “Manala”. A closer scrutiny shows that it is actually the sound “**n**” which is often substituted for “**l**”. It should be pointed out here that the substitution is not indiscriminate. It seems there are underlying linguistic rules which govern this substitution in that there are some “**n**” sounds that do not change. It has been observed that the substitution will always take place if the initial “**n**” is that of an Absolute Pronoun, third person, plural. The following example sentences illustrate this:

**Ndzunza:** Nina **n**ikhamba **n**iqale lokhu okuphasi kodwa.

**Manala:** Lina likhamba liqale lokhu okuphasi kodwa.

*(You walk about minding only the ones on the ground)*

**Ndzunza:** Ningabi bafundisi **n**oke **n**izakwemukeliswa ukulahlwa.

**Manala:** Lingabi bafundisi loke **l**izakwemukeliswa ukulahlwa.

*(Do not all become teachers you will receive condemnation)*

**Ndzunza:** Nani **n**izambona **n**ize naye **n**ithabile.

**Manala:** Nani **l**izambona **l**ize naye **l**ithabile.

*(You will see him/her and come with him/her)*

Terminology between these dialects is mostly the same. There are however terms that are not common between the two:

**Ndzundza**

*umgade*

*ukudla*

*ihlabathi*

*iqabazi*

*isiphila*

*yendlala*

*umrabhu*

**Manala**

*ithanga* (*pumpkin*)

*ukugoma* (*to eat*)

*iqulwani* (*sand*)

*itatawula* (*ground or yard*)

*umumbu* (*maize*)

*chisa* (*spread*) (*of blanket*)

*ipande* (*root*)

It is amazing to see that there are terms with direct opposite meanings:

**Ndzundza:** *yenyuka* (*move uphill*)

**Manala:** *yenyuka* (*move downhill*)

Except for the minor differences referred to above there exists no major variations between the Ndzundza and the Manala. It was just very fortunate for the Ndzundza version to be selected as the version to be standardised. This will unavoidably make it gain an upper hand over the Manala.

#### **4.3 The Northern Ndebele**

The Ndebele have another variety referred to as Northern Ndebele. Sometimes it is referred to as AbakwaMgombane or Mokopane. This is one dialect that differs so much from the Ndzundza and Manala that it warrants a more detailed comparison. The most obvious feature of this

dialect is its affinity with North Sotho with some touches of Swati. It would appear as if it draws most of its terminology from North Sotho. The following few examples illustrate this:

| <u>North Ndebele</u> | <u>North Sotho</u> | <u>Ndzundza</u>  |               |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| <i>sithunya</i>      | <i>sethonya</i>    | <i>isigidi</i>   | (gun)         |
| <i>mugekule</i>      | <i>mukgekule</i>   | <i>isilukazi</i> | (old woman)   |
| <i>mukgalabi</i>     | <i>mokgalabi</i>   | <i>iqhegu</i>    | (old man)     |
| <i>khombela</i>      | <i>kgopela</i>     | <i>bawa</i>      | (ask/request) |
| <i>marirha</i>       | <i>marega</i>      | <i>ubusika</i>   | (winter)      |
| <i>lirhedla</i>      | <i>legetla</i>     | <i>ihlombe</i>   | (shoulder)    |
| <i>mullo</i>         | <i>mollo</i>       | <i>umlilo</i>    | (fire)        |
| <i>riba</i>          | <i>ripa</i>        | <i>qunta</i>     | (cut)         |
| <i>kgetha</i>        | <i>kgetha</i>      | <i>khetha</i>    | (choose)      |

#### 4.4 Phonetic differences

According to most scholars, such as Doke (1954), van Wyk (1966) and Ziervogel (1969), both the South Ndebele and the North Ndebele fall under the Nguni group of languages. For this reason they share linguistic qualities with the rest of the Nguni group.

#### 4.4.1 Vowels

Linguists who study isiNtu languages generally agree that the vowels of this group of languages are best described using the hypothetical language called Proto-Bantu or Ur-Bantu.

A close study of isiNdebele vowels reveals that all the isiNdebele dialects use the same set of vowels. A scientific categorisation shows that there are seven allophones that can be used in phonetic script namely [a], [e], [i], [o], [u], [ɛ] and [ɔ]. The naked ear however hears only five vowels. These are the ones used in the practical orthography of these dialects and these are **a, e, i, o** and **u**. Research shows that all Ndebele varieties use the same set of vowels and none has shown any sign of deviation. On the IPA vowel chart therefore, these vowels occupy the same positions and share the same phonetic description.

#### 4.4.2 Consonants

On the main both South Ndebele and North Ndebele varieties share the same set of consonants with a few differences. Ndebele consonants are characterised by sounds falling under the Zunda group.

The following sounds are found under both varieties and are articulated and described in a similar manner:

[g]    **g**        : Devoiced prevelar explosive.

**[k'] k** : Ejective velar explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kukala** [guk'ala] (to weigh)

South Ndebele: **ikabi** [ik'abi] (an ox)

**[kh] kh** : Aspirated velar explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kukhamba** [gukhamba] (to walk)

South Ndebele: **khamba** [khamba] (go)

**[th] th** : Aspirated alveolar explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kuthetha** [guthetha] (to discuss)

South Ndebele: **thatha** [thatha] (take)

**[p'] p** : Bilabial ejective explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kupana** [gup'ana] (to inspan)

South Ndebele: **upopi** [up'op'i] (doll)

**[ph] ph** : Bilabial aspirated explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kuphuma** [guphuma] (to go out)

South Ndebele: **phuma** [phuma] (go out)

**[d] d** : Semi-voiced alveolar explosive, also occurs in combination with the nasal **[n]**.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kududa** [guɖuɖa] (to swim)  
                           **ndoda** [ndɔɔɖa] (man)  
 South Ndebele: **ukududa** [ukuɖuɖa] (to swim)  
                           **indoda** [indɔɔɖa] (man)

[b]    **b**        : Voiced bilabial explosive which occurs only with the nasal [m].

e.g. North Ndebele: **mbuti**    [mbut'i] (duiker)  
 South Ndebele: **imbuzi**    [imbuzi] (goat)

[t]    **hl**        : Voiceless alveolar lateral fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kuhlala** [guɬala] (to sit down)  
 South Ndebele: **ukuhlala** [ukuɬala] (to sit down)

[h]    **hh**        : Voiced glottal fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele: **lihhashi** [liɦaɦi] (horse)  
 South Ndebele: **ihholo**    [ihɦɔɦɔ] (hall)

[ɸ]    **dl**        : Voiced lateral-alveolar fricative

e.g. North Ndebele: **kudla** [guɸa] (to eat)  
 South Ndebele: **ukudla** [ukuɸa] (to eat)

[s]    **s**        : Voiceless alveolar fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kusala** [gusala] (to stay behind)  
 South Ndebele: **kusasa** [kusasa] (tomorrow)

[z]    **z**        : Voiced alveolar fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **mzala**        [mzala]        (cousin)  
                              South Ndebele:    **mzala**        [mzala]        (cousin)

[x]    **x**        : Voiceless velar fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **kuxuga**        [guxuga]        (to court)  
                              South Ndebele:    **rhuga**        [xuga]        (tease)

[v]    **v**        : Voiced dentilabial fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **kuvala**        [guvala]        (to close)  
                              South Ndebele:    **ukuvala**        [ukuvala]        (to close)

[f]    **f**        : Voiceless dentilabial fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **kufa**        [gufa]        (to die)  
                              South Ndebele:    **ukufa**        [ukufa]        (death)

[tʰ]    **tʰ**        : Aspirated lateral alveolar affricative.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **mutʰhago**        [mutʰhago]        (poverty)  
                              South Ndebele:    **tʰhaga**        [tʰhaga]        (suffer)

Here it is noted that although this sound is articulated in a similar manner in both languages there is however some differences in their phonetic transcriptions.

**[tɬ'] tɬ** : Ejective alveolar lateral affricate.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kutlinya** [gutɬ'ina] (to throttle)

South Ndebele: **ukutlinya** [ukutɬ'ina] (to fasten tightly)

**[dʒ] j** : Semi-voiced palatal affricate which becomes voiced in nasal [ɲ] compounds.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kujama** [guɖʒama] (to stand)

South Ndebele: **ukujama** [ukuɖʒama] (to stand)

North Ndebele: **nja** [ɲɖʒa] (a dog)

South Ndebele: **inja** [iɲɖʒa] (a dog)

**[tʃh] tʃh** : Aspirated voiceless alveolar affricate.

e.g. North Ndebele: **litshega** [litʃ'hɛga] (a bracelet)

South Ndebele: **itshega** [itʃ'hɛga] (a bracelet)

**[dz] dz** : Voiced alveolar affricate.

e.g. North Ndebele: **mdzingitane** [mdziŋgitane] (grass type)

South Ndebele: **idzila** [idzila] (brass bracelet)

[l]    l        : Voiced alveolar lateral consonant.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **kulala**        [gulala]        (to sleep)  
                         South Ndebele: **lala**            [lala]            (fall asleep)

[r]    r        : Voiced alveolar vibrant.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **nro**    [nrə]        (thing)  
                         South Ndebele:    **raga** [raga]        (drive)

In North Ndebele there are several cases where the sound **r** is preceded by the alveolar nasal **n**. This combination is never found in South Ndebele.

[j]    y        : Prepalatal semi-vowel.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **kuya**        [guja]        (to go)  
                         South Ndebele:    **ukuya**        [ukuja]        (to go)

[w]    w        : Bilabial semi-vowel.

e.g. North Ndebele:    **kuwa**        [guwa]        (to fall)  
                         South Ndebele:    **ukuwa**        [ukuwa]        (to fall)

[n]    n        : Alveolar nasal.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kunona** [gunɔna]    (to become fat)  
                         South Ndebele: **ukunona** [ukunɔna] (to become fat)

[m]    m        : Bilabial nasal.

|                     |                |                  |           |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------|
| e.g. North Ndebele: | <b>kumila</b>  | <b>[gumila]</b>  | (to grow) |
| South Ndebele:      | <b>ukumila</b> | <b>[ukumila]</b> | (to grow) |

**[ŋ] n** : Velar nasal.

|                     |                 |                   |          |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|
| e.g. North Ndebele: | <b>kulinga</b>  | <b>[guliŋga]</b>  | (to try) |
| South Ndebele:      | <b>ukulinga</b> | <b>[ukuliŋga]</b> | (to try) |

**[ɲ] ny** : Palatal nasal.

|                     |               |                |        |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| e.g. North Ndebele: | <b>nnyama</b> | <b>[ɲɲama]</b> | (meat) |
| South Ndebele:      | <b>inyama</b> | <b>[iɲama]</b> | (meat) |

**[ɱ] m** : Dentilabial nasal.

|                     |              |                 |          |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|
| e.g. North Ndebele: | <b>mfene</b> | <b>[ɱɸfɛnɛ]</b> | (baboon) |
| South Ndebele:      | <b>ifene</b> | <b>[ifɛnɛ]</b>  | (baboon) |

The following sounds display some differences. Some of these sounds are found in Northern Ndebele only and others in South Ndebele only. The most common difference is that one of languages sharing the same sounds but with different phonetic symbols assigned to it:

**[β] b** : Bilabial voiced fricative.

|                     |               |                 |                  |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|
| e.g. North Ndebele: | <b>kubaba</b> | <b>[guβaβa]</b> | (to become sour) |
| South Ndebele:      | <b>ubaba</b>  | <b>[uβaba]</b>  | (father)         |

The difference in pronunciation between the two languages is very minor and hardly audible. In North Ndebele the articulation is fricative whilst in South Ndebele it is implosive.

**[b]**   **bh**   : Bilabial devoiced explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: **bhabha** [b̥aɓa] (father)

South Ndebele: **ibhayi** [ib̥aji] (blanket)

In North Ndebele this sound can also occur in combination with **m** and retain its devoiced quality.

e.g. North Ndebele: **endebembhili** [ɛndɛbɛmb̥ili] bilabial

In South Ndebele once it is preceded by the nasal **m** it becomes deaspirated.

**[g]**   **k**   : Voiced velar explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele:     **kumila**     [gumila]     (to grow)

South Ndebele: **ukumila**     [ukumila]     (to grow)

According to the North Ndebele spelling rules the phonetic sign **[g]** has been assigned for this sound. The pronunciation between the two languages is exactly the same.

**[h]**   **h**   : Voiceless prepalatal fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele: lehumo [lihumɔ] (wealth)

South Ndebele: This sound does not exist in South Ndebele. Instead of this sound South Ndebele uses the sound [x], described as the voiceless glottal fricative and written as **rh** in practical orthography.

e.g. South Ndebele: rhuhla [xuʔa] (to scrape)

[kxh] **kxh** : Aspirated velar affricate.

This sound is found in both Ndebele dialects. Although its pronunciation is the same, different phonetic sounds have been assigned.

e.g. North Ndebele: nkxhokhxokhxo [ŋkxhɔkxɔkxɔ] velum

South Ndebele: ukhari [ukxari] (aunt)

[kxʰ] **kx** : Ejective velar affricative.

This sound is found in North Ndebele only and never in South Ndebele.

e.g. North Ndebele: nkxomo [ŋkxɔmɔ] (beast)

[ʃ] **sh** : Voiceless palatal fricative.

e.g. North Ndebele: sheba [ʃɛβa] (soup)

South Ndebele: Instead of this sound South Ndebele uses the sound **[ch]**, described as the voiceless palatal affricative and written as **tjh** in practical orthography.

e.g. South Ndebele: **itjhumi** **[ichumi]** (ten)

**[tʰ]** **t** : Interdental ejective explosive.

e.g. North Ndebele: mmanti **[manti]** (water)

South Ndebele: This sound does not occur in South Ndebele because the moment **-n-** is placed before **-t-** a retroflex sound occurs and becomes **-nr-**.

**[tʃh]** **tjh** : Voiceless palatal affricate.

e.g. North Ndebele: **kutjha** **[gutjha]** (to burn)

South Ndebele: **ukutjha** **[ukucha]** (to burn)

Here once more we have a sound which is articulated in a similar manner in both languages but differs in phonetic transcription.

**[tʃʰ]** **tj** : Ejective palatal affricate

e.g. North Ndebele: **mtjekelo** **[mtʃʰɛkʰɛlɔ]** (a cloth)

South Ndebele: **utjani** **[ucʰani]** (grass)

In this particular sound, the sound articulation is the same as well as the practical orthography but the phonetic script is different.

#### **4.5 Phonological differences**

It is not a safe assumption to assume that because the two dialects are related there will therefore be no phonetic differences. Both dialects need a thorough checking for differences or similarities.

The most common phonological processes found in African languages are Nasalisation, Palatalisation, Elision and Coalescence.

##### **4.5.1 Nasalisation**

Nasalisation is defined by Crystal as "...sounds produced while the soft PALATE is lowered to allow an audible escape of air through the nose." (Crystal, 1985, 203):

Nasalisation in Ndebele, just like in most African languages, is caused by the homorganic nasal **-N-**. This nasal causes nasalisation in some sounds which are otherwise not nasal in nature. It fuses with the given sound to produce a sound which is a compromise by bearing the qualities found in both sounds.

Nasalisation in South Ndebele occurs when the homorganic nasal **-N-** precedes a stop consonant and thus causing the new sound to be nasalised. In the examples below the sounds **t** and **d** become **nt** and **nd** respectively. It is noticed here that in the case of dental sounds instead of dropping the nasal as per usual practice, the sound is articulated with a retroflex to sound as a **nr** and **ndr** respectively:

**-n- + -d- > in- + -doda**                      >     **indoda**     (man)  
**-n- + -t- > in- + -thanda**                      >     **intando**     (will)

In the rest of the other stop consonants the nasal is dropped especially before deaspiration takes place:

**-n- + -k- > in- + -khuluma**                      >     **ikulumo**     (speech)  
**-n- + -p- > in- + -phila**                      >     **ipilo**     (life)

The effect of the homorganic nasal is felt and noticed when the plural form is created. Here the word re-employs the services of the homorganic nasal and retains it in all plural forms:

**iinkulumo** (talks/speeches)  
**iimpilo**     (lives)  
**iinkhande** (shields)  
**imbokotho**(grinding stones) etc

Assimilation takes place frequently in Northern Ndebele. The homorganic nasal before an alveolar sound will always produce a retroflex sound.

*n- + t- : n-+thenga* > *nrengo* (price)  
*n- + l- : n-+ lobola* > *ndobolo* (bride-price)  
*n-+b-: n-+ bita* > *mbidzo* (meeting) etc.

Nasalisation is very conspicuous in Northern Ndebele most probably because of two reasons. Firstly, the class 9 prefix does not contain an initial vowel as is with all other prefixes. It therefore starts directly with a homorganic nasal:

*nkxomo* (beast)  
*nkxabi* (ox)  
*mbuti* (goat)  
*ndaba* (affair) etc. (Ziervogel, 1958, 30)

Secondly, in a sentence, the first person singular is indicated by the homorganic nasal only:

*ntile* (I have come)  
*nkhambile* (I have travelled)  
*nthanda* (I like)  
*mbonile* (I have seen)

#### 4.5.2 Palatalisation

This is a common phonological process found in Nguni. It is a process wherein the proximity of two sounds, which are by nature articulated at different points of articulation, causes them to fuse into a new sound which is now articulated at the palate. Palatalisation is described by Crystal as:

***A term used in the PHONETIC classification of speech sounds on the basis of their PLACE OF ARTICULATION: it refers to a sound made when the FRONT of the TONGUE is in contact with or approaches the hard PALATE. (Crystal, 1985, 219).***

The importance of this process is the fact that the tongue from its original point of articulation ends up brushing against the palate.

Palatalisation in Northern Ndebele is encountered with diminutives and passive verbs. The following changes take place:

|                  |             |                   |                               |             |                              |
|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| <b><i>ph</i></b> | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>tjh</i></b> | <b><i>mbuphu</i></b> (meal)   | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>mbutjhana</i></b>      |
| <b><i>b</i></b>  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>ny</i></b>  | <b><i>mlambo</i></b> (river)  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>mlanjana</i></b>       |
| <b><i>m</i></b>  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>ny</i></b>  | <b><i>mulomo</i></b> (mouth)  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>mulonyana</i></b>      |
| <b><i>l</i></b>  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>dl</i></b>  | <b><i>nrwala</i></b> (louse)  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>nrwadlana</i></b>      |
| <b><i>t</i></b>  | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>tjh</i></b> | <b><i>nrethe</i></b> (locust) | <b>&gt;</b> | <b><i>nretjhana</i></b> etc. |

also

|                       |   |                                |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>-bopha</b> (bind)  | > | <b>-botjhwa</b> (be bound)     |
| <b>-khamba</b> (walk) | > | <b>-khanjwa</b> (be walked on) |

There is also a second palatalisation wherein **g** is palatalised before **i**:

|                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>begyile</b> | (put down)                        |
| <b>gye</b>     | (if)                              |
| <b>gyithi</b>  | (it is we) (Ziervogel, 1958, 36). |

Innumerable examples of this nature are found in the South Ndebele language all differing in the original point of articulation:

|                         |   |                                        |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------------------------|
| <b>ikabi</b> (ox)       | > | <b>ikatjana</b> (small ox)             |
| <b>-bopha</b> (tie up)  | > | <b>-botjhwa</b> (to be tied up)        |
| <b>isigubhe</b> (drum)  | > | <b>isigujana</b> (small drum)          |
| <b>umlomo</b> (mouth)   | > | <b>umlonyana</b> (small mouth)         |
| <b>-bamba</b> (catch)   | > | <b>-banjwa</b> (be caught)             |
| <b>isikhathi</b> (time) | > | <b>isikhatjhana</b> (little time)      |
| <b>incwadi</b> (letter) | > | <b>incwajana</b> (a short letter) etc. |

#### 4.5.3 Elision

This is another phonological process which is frequently found in Nguni languages. It occurs when a speaker because of one reason or another decides to leave out a word or part of a word. This omission does not affect the meaning of the sentence. Crystal describes elision as:

***A term used in PHONETICS and PHONOLOGY to refer to the omission of sounds in CONNECTED SPEECH. Both CONSONANTS and VOWELS may be affected, and sometimes whole SYLLABLES may be elided. (Crystal, 1985, 107).***

In isiNdebele, just like in Zulu, elision occurs both in vowels and in consonants. We find both compulsory as well as voluntary elisions.

Compulsory elision is prescribed by grammar. In this instance the speaker is forced to elide a sound whether he likes or not:

***Heyi wena msana!*** (Hey you boy!)

and not

***Heyi wena umsana!***

Grammatical rules in isiNdebele govern that all nouns must have a prefix. However in the noun “msana” above the prefix has been left out. The inclusion of the prefix “u-” which normally accompanies the noun “msana” will in this case render the sentence ungrammatical if it were to be included.

There are cases where the speaker can at will skip a word or part of a word in a sentence. This normally happens at fast speech:

e.g. ***Angiboni zinja lapha.*** (I see no dogs here)

and not  
***Angiboni izinja lapha.***

In Northern Ndebele the elision process is found in vowels. Ziervogel (1958, 35) is of the view that a vowel in Northern Ndebele will be elided when it occurs between two l's and the vowel being **e**, **i** or **u**:

|                       |   |                      |                |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>lilanga</i></b> | > | <b><i>llanga</i></b> | (sun)          |
| <b><i>velile</i></b>  | > | <b><i>velle</i></b>  | (has appeared) |

The retention of two vowels in juxtaposition takes place in deliberate speech only. Normally one of the vowels is elided:

|                            |   |                           |                 |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b><i>*naomkhulu</i></b>   | > | <b><i>nomkhulu</i></b>    | (and a big one) |
| <b><i>*gaesibayeni</i></b> | > | <b><i>gyesibayeni</i></b> | (in the kraal)  |

#### **4.5.4 Coalescence**

This is another very popular phonological process found in Nguni languages and it takes place mostly in vowels. It refers to the fusion of vowels when in juxtaposition. It has strict pre-requisites. The first vowel must be "**a**" followed by either another "**a**", "**i**" or "**u**" and the results are **a**, **e** and **o** respectively. Crystal refers to it as, "... the coming together of linguistic units which were originally distinguishable." (Crystal, 1985, 52).

In isiNdebele this process is found in different aspects of the language:

|                      |   |                 |                  |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|------------------|
| <i>wa-+amadoda</i>   | > | <i>wamadoda</i> | (of men)         |
| <i>ya- + indlu</i>   | > | <i>yendlu</i>   | (of the house)   |
| <i>wa- + omkhulu</i> | > | <i>womkhulu</i> | (of the big one) |

In isiNdebele the phonetic rule behind this is that the vowel of the concord merges with the initial vowel of the prefix.

Ziervogel (1958, 35) found that there is a limited occurrence of the process of vowel coalescence in Northern Ndebele. In the case of Northern Ndebele Ziervogel is of the view that the earlier language did contain an initial vowel:

|                        |                    |   |                 |        |
|------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------|--------|
| <i>a + i &gt; e:</i>   | <i>wa-+ikhethu</i> | > | <i>wekhethu</i> | (ours) |
| <i>la + u &gt; lo:</i> | (this one)         |   |                 |        |

## 4.6 Some Grammatical features

Although the Ndzundza and the Manala dialects are closely related, there are however significant differences found between these two versions of isiNdebele.

### 4.6.1 Class prefixes

Regarding class prefixes, the other three members of the Nguni group of languages display a class prefix which consists of the prefix only, and two items in some cases, namely the pre-prefix

and the real class prefix. Of these, it is only Swati which has some class prefixes with the prefix only and in some cases, the pre-prefix and the real class prefix.

An examination of the North Ndebele dialect indicates that this dialect never makes use of the pre-prefix. All nouns start with the real class prefix as will be seen in the table below:

| <u>Class</u> | <u>North Ndebele</u>           | <u>South Ndebele</u> |            |
|--------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1            | <b>munru</b>                   | <b>umuntu</b>        | (person)   |
| 2            | <b>banru</b>                   | <b>abantu</b>        | (people)   |
| 3            | <b>sihlahla</b>                | <b>isihlahla</b>     | (tree)     |
| 4            | <b>tihlahla</b>                | <b>izihlahla</b>     | (trees)    |
| 5            | <b>liye</b>                    | <b>ilitje</b>        | (stone)    |
| 6            | <b>maye</b>                    | <b>amatje</b>        | (stones)   |
| 7            | <b>sisu</b>                    | <b>isisu</b>         | (stomach)  |
| 8            | <b>tisu</b>                    | <b>izisu</b>         | (stomachs) |
| 9            | <b>ntja</b>                    | <b>inja</b>          | (dog)      |
| 10           | <b>tintja</b>                  | <b>izitinja</b>      | (dogs)     |
| 11           | No words falling in this class |                      |            |
| 12           | No words falling in this class |                      |            |
| 13           | No words falling in this class |                      |            |
| 14           | <b>buhle</b>                   | <b>ubuhle</b>        | (beauty)   |
| 15           | <b>kufa</b>                    | <b>ukufa</b>         | (death)    |

Although the differences indicated above may seem very minute, they nevertheless constitute a very important distinctive feature in the eye and ear of the speakers of these dialects.

#### 4.6.2 Diminutives

One can say it with almost some measure of certainty that diminutives are a grammatical feature of all languages of the world. In all languages it becomes every now and then necessary to form diminutives. In isiNdebele, just like in most Nguni languages, diminutives are formed by suffixation of either **-ana** or **-wana**. The golden rule governing this process says that all nouns ending with the vowel **-a**, **-e** or **-i** will take **-ana** whilst all nouns ending with either **-o** or **-u** will take **-wana** as a suffix:

|                   |   |                           |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------|
| e.g. indoda (man) | > | indojana (small man)      |
| umlenze (leg)     | > | umlenzana (small leg)     |
| ibhesi (bus)      | > | ibhesana (small bus)      |
| ilihlo (eye)      | > | ilihlwana (small eye)     |
| umSuthu (Sotho)   | > | umSutjhwana (small Sotho) |

In rare occasions where the morphology of a word looks as if it is already in the diminutive form, the suffix **-anyana** is employed:

|                   |   |                       |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| e.g. umsana (boy) | > | umsanyana (small boy) |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|

To formulate diminutives Northern Ndebele follows the same rules of **-ana** and **-wana** and sometime **-nyana** to imply contempt:

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i><b><u>mufatana</u></b></i>      | (small woman) |
| <i><b><u>muhlankanyana</u></b></i> | (small boy)   |
| <i><b>sandlana</b></i>             | (small hand)  |
| <i><b>moletana</b></i>             | (small leg)   |

|                                   |                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b><i>mutjhana/muthinyana</i></b> | (small tree)      |
| <b><i>seetwana</i></b>            | (small gesture)   |
| <b><i>munrwana</i></b>            | (small person)    |
| <b><i>mufatanyana</i></b>         | (worthless woman) |
| <b><i>ndodanyana</i></b>          | (worthless man)   |

#### 4.7 Syntactic aspects

Structural analysis of Nguni syntax indicates that Nguni sentences tend to follow one pattern. Just by looking at the structure of the sentence one can tell whether it is a Nguni or an English sentence without having to look at the contents of the sentence. A typical English favourite sentence in its simplest form will always consist of a pronoun plus a verb:

e.g. ***He walks.***

or

***She walks***

In the examples above, one notices at once that in an English sentence once a pronoun is used, if the pronoun refers to a person, the sentence is bound to disclose the sex gender of the subject. It is not the case in isiNdebele and the rest of the other Nguni languages. There are no pronouns corresponding to the sex gender of individual. In both South Ndebele and Northern Ndebele the simplest favourite sentence consists of the subjectival concord plus a verb:

e.g. ***Uyakhamba.*** (He/She walks)

In the example above the “**u-**” is a concord corresponding to a class 1 noun which is the subject of this sentence, the subject which has been elided. There is also no way of knowing the sex gender of the subject.

Concords thus play a vital role in the structure of a Ndebele sentence. In the (Nominal Phrase) NP the concords keep the related words tightly together into a unit known in syntax as a constituent:

e.g. **U**malume **om**khulu **u**Mjanyelwa **u**yakhamba.

Although Northern Ndebele nouns do not have initial prefixes, they do however have a system of concords. So that the above sentence will be as follows:

Malume **om**khulu **M**janyelwa **u**yakhamba.

This togetherness which holds the phrase “Malume omkhulu Mjanyelwa” is called congruency.

The intention of comparing the data referred to in this chapter was to show the close relatedness of the various Ndebele dialects. This comparison did not cover all aspects of the language. Only a selected few were chosen for the sake of this comparison. Many more can still be accommodated under this section.

It is also worth noticing that although Northern Ndebele has received so much pollution from Pedi and Swati, it nevertheless remains a Nguni language and must be regarded as such. There are far too many

characteristics binding Northern Ndebele to Nguni than those binding it to non-Nguni languages like sePedi.

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CHAPTER 5

5.0 EVALUATION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 General evaluation

For the Ndebele language to qualify to be referred to and accepted as a modern language, it has to fulfil all requirements which are normally met by modern languages. Among other things, the Ndebele language has to be able to name and describe all modern concepts, ideas, objects and systems. Speakers of Ndebele should without any difficulty be able to describe scientific processes and events. In the economic field the language should not be found to be wanting. It should further be able to keep pace with modern technology. It should be able to discuss and describe with precision all monetary matters, calculations and analyses found in this field.

Experts in the study of African languages already agree that there is a vast difference between African languages and the languages of the Western world in so far as language development is concerned. The last mentioned seem to be spearheading the way whilst the former are lagging far behind. Among those African languages lagging far behind is the Ndebele language. Most African languages, Ndebele included, can only take an active part in traditional narratives such as folktales, myths, rituals, riddles and so on, without any difficulty whatsoever. But when it comes to the world of commerce, science and modern technology they struggle immensely. It is for reasons such as these that some

African languages are regarded by speakers of other languages as less developed or as some sort of “dwarfs”.

When is a language said to be undeveloped? Sometimes it is not so clear what is understood by an “undeveloped” language. In a collection of Sociolinguistics essays edited by Pride and Holmes, Haugen explains that an undeveloped language is a language that:

... has not been employed in all the functions that a language can perform in a society larger than that of the local tribe or peasant village. The history of languages demonstrates convincingly that there is no such thing as an inherently handicapped language. All the great languages of today were once undeveloped.

Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication, a ‘vernacular’ or a ‘dialect’, but a fully developed language. Anything less marks it as underdeveloped. (Pride and Holmes, 1972, 103).

The isiNdebele language falls under the group of languages known as “undeveloped” and needless to say that rigorous improvement is still necessary in this language. The quotation above somehow gives us hope. It assures us that the state of development that the isiNdebele language finds itself today is not an uncommon one. It is just but a bridge which all developing languages have to cross. The only difference is that all languages regarded as developed languages of the world crossed this bridge quite early.

Section 6 of the constitution of South Africa identifies eleven South African languages as official languages with isiNdebele as one of them. It further stresses the importance of the equality of all South African languages before the law. To ensure that all official languages of this country enjoy equal treatment before the law, the South African parliament, in terms of the same act, Act 108 of 1996 established a body called the Pan South African Language Board (Pansalb). The duty of this board is to see to it that the provisions of this act are implemented and respected.

Superficially this arrangement appears to be fair enough. It should however be remembered that at the time when this act was passed, South African languages had not been on an equal footing regarding development. The languages of the minority groups had suffered profound neglect at the hands of the previous government. If Pansalb were to divide resources as though all languages were at the same stage of development when the new government took over, that would be a gross negligence and an incorrect move. It does however appear as if Pansalb is aware of this fact. In a small publication by Pansalb we find these words:

Some languages, (isiNdebele, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Sign language and Khoe and San languages) are more marginalised than others and require additional planning and programmes in order to promote them. (Pansalb, 2001, 10).

It is clear that Pansalb has made a thorough investigation of all official languages of South Africa and has established which of these languages are better developed than others and which are less developed. In an

attempt to level up the plain field, for those languages that are less developed, a new strategy has been engaged called “operation fast track”. This is a move which attempts to bring even those less developed languages to be at par with their counterparts.

What does it mean for isiNdebele to be referred to as an official language? This means that the isiNdebele language has now acquired a new and a better status. This means that it is now a language that can be used in topmost institutions of the country, institutions such as parliament, courts of law and other such places. This research has shown that the Ndebele language will have difficulty when it comes to describing statutes, acts of parliament, bills and laws. It will therefore be somehow ridiculous to refer to it as an official language whilst it is in this stage. This therefore means that the Ndebele language will have to be worked on so as to elevate its dignity and performance.

In the foregoing chapters of this study analyses of the Ndebele language have been made. Practical problems have been pointed out and substantiated. Arguments have been made and were followed to their logical conclusions. On the strength of this, the researcher is convinced that the isiNdebele language, just like all other languages, has to be taken care of by its speakers. If a language is not taken care of it does not grow. While all the other languages around it grow to touch the skies, it remains a “baby” throughout. It may even end up dying a natural death. To keep a language alive, some constant maintenance job is necessary.

5.2 Recommendations

For the Ndebele language to attain the required development and status and find its place among the giant languages of this country there is a need for a proper and strategic planning of the growth of this language. To ensure that this does actually take place there must be a close co-operation between all stakeholders of isiNdebele language in general, the speakers of isiNdebele in particular and government. The Ndebele people have a responsibility of ensuring that there is progress and prosperity in their language. They have to uphold their language as a precious commodity with the understanding that nobody will or can do that better than the Ndebele people themselves. They have a further duty of ensuring that the language remains alive and that it should not die in their hands.

The government on the other hand must act as a willing partner and participant. It has to implement and defend the provisions of the constitution of the country in so far as language development and language equality is concerned. The following two measures can assist a great deal in achieving this:

5.2.1 Official language

Officialising an indigenous language is one of the topmost ingredients which can be used in making sure that a language does develop. The South African government has already taken noticeable strides in this direction regarding isiNdebele language. If the language of any group of people is officialised, that in itself

helps the speakers of that language to walk tall when it comes to matters touching their language. It also helps the language by giving it the necessary dignity it deserves as a tool for communication. It further gives its speakers a reason good enough for forging ahead with the development of the language.

After attaining this level of development, a language can only grow and become better and better by the day. Even better still, this status enables the language to enjoy protection under the law. No person may willingly despise or degrade the language. If that were to happen, speakers of the language would have a right to seek legal recourse against such an individual.

5.2.2 Medium of instruction

This is one area in which isiNdebele has suffered profoundly for the greater part of the last century. This can be singled out as one setback which has helped stifle the Ndebele language and retarded its growth immensely. The Ndebele language suffered a double tragedy in that it was not taught as a subject in class, nor was it used as a medium of instruction.

If a language is used as a medium of instruction its image is boosted tremendously. This gives the speakers of the language a good reason to study it with all the seriousness. It enlarges the readership of that community in that both matured and budding writers employ the language in all seriousness in their writings.

It is in its use in different disciplines that the language comes to wrestle with the modern ideologies and terminology. This then affords linguists in this field the opportunity to find relevant or equivalent terms for those ideas. In this sense the dignity of the language is restored and this in turn promotes the fast development of the language.

5.3 Internationally recognised measures

The above-mentioned measures are not the only ones which can help promote the development of a language. Internationally three ways are recognised whereby a language development can be measured. These measures are also recognised as the most scientific and reliable measures. These are graphization, standardization and modernisation. Each of the last mentioned has been proven to be an important dimension in modern linguistics which can be regarded as a yardstick which measures the progress of any language.

5.3.1 Graphization

Graphization refers to a scientific study done on a language which culminates with the codification of the language as well as with the laying down of correct rules for spelling and grammar. In a collection of linguistic essays edited by Giglioli (1972, 55), Fishman stresses that the progress of a language “depends to a large extent upon sufficiently advanced literacy.” According to him this literacy plays a pivotal role on the progress of any language. Put in Fishman’s own words he says:

...such literacy is often impossible because writing systems as such have not yet been devised for the languages spoken natively in various larger and smaller communities throughout the world. (Giglioli, 1972, 55).

This therefore points out the importance of graphization in the development of a language. This necessitates a clear system of representing a language in a written form. This system must be so clear that every phonetic sound articulated must receive a graph which is a discrete segment of writing or print allocated specially for that particular sound. Sometimes the term graphology is used to describe the minimal contrastive units found in language.

This is a study done by experts in linguistics who have a deep knowledge of Phonetics, Phonology and Morphology and other related aspects of language. These experts, after a careful study of the language will then be able to choose with precision the suitable orthography of a language. Fortunately for Ndebele, being a latecomer member of the Nguni languages, when time was ripe for it to be written down it turned to its sister languages for help. In so doing it also inherited even the shortcomings found in its sister languages. Ndebele linguists must still find and eliminate all such irregularities. One such example is the one that has already been resolved in the isiZulu language but still persists in the isiNdebele language. This is noticed in the writing of the demonstrative and the possessive. The two happen to be homophones but occupy different slots in a sentence because they have different functions. In the Zulu language the problem was resolved by writing the demonstrative disjunctively and the

possessive conjunctively. In Ndebele both are written conjunctively and thus create confusion:

e.g. **Lekomo inonile** (This cattle is fat)

vs

Ilihlo lekomo libovu (The eye of the cattle is red)

In both example sentences above we find the word “lekomo”. Structurally the two words seem the same. They however do not mean the same thing. In the first sentence it means “this cattle” whilst in the second sentence it means “of the cattle”. When articulated or written in isolation it would be difficult to tell which of the two is being referred to. It becomes necessary that the whole sentence has to be articulated before one can attach the correct meaning. This should not be the case in a sufficiently developed language. The graphic substances of the two words must be physically distinctive and therefore enabling the speaker to know the exact meaning referred to without having to use it in a sentence.

Even giant languages of the world like English have not as yet totally resolved this problem. One needs only to think about sentences such as the ones below to realise the enormous task still awaiting linguists:

e.g. **Apply force to open the door.**

Apply this lotion on your sore.

Apply to become a student of this institution.

In all the above examples the term “apply” has been used. Used in isolation it would be difficult to tell which meaning to attach. This should not have been the case. In modern societies, language and orthography are conceived as components of one and the same thing. Most people normally cannot think of language as existing without orthography. The truth however is that these are different processes and in many cases even unrelated processes. The spoken language is by far the oldest of the two. It can almost be said with some measure of accuracy that the spoken language is as old as man himself. Studies in graphology have already shown that the Greek were the first people to reduce spoken speech into a written form. This has progressed slowly from one nation to another as this form of civilization spread slowly over the whole globe. Unfortunately languages in Africa have been some of the last ones to receive this boon. It is regrettable indeed to mention that up to the end of the nineteenth century some languages in South Africa had not been written down as yet. IsiNdebele is one good example of such languages.

It has been discovered by scholars that orthography is but an arbitrary attempt of representing speech, and a poor one for that matter, but what we have at the moment seems to see us through from day to day. We must however admit that we are by far from having the perfect thing. One writer once aptly pointed out that one language feature which up to the present moment has defied speech is whistling. Whistling forms in most cases an integral part of speech to such an extent that when it is removed, part of the semantics is lost which cannot be substituted by anything else except whistling itself. It is therefore important for all languages to

have both the spoken form as well as the written form so as to record down all known linguistic forms of speech. Graphization is therefore strongly recommended for the Ndebele language. This will make it possible to record down as close as possible the language as it is spoken by its speakers. This has some profound important roles:

- ◆ Firstly, it will serve as a permanent record of the history of the language and show the stages of development the language has passed through.
- ◆ Secondly, it will be a true tangible record upon which future linguists can base their studies of historical linguistics in this language.
- ◆ Thirdly, a written form of speech serves as a unifying factor amongst the speakers of the language. It also ensures that a more or less the same version of the language is spoken by every individual in that community, a measure which can never be achieved in the absence of a written form of a language. Written material such as books, readers, newspapers etc. are carriers and keepers of language.

In the early 80's, most Ndebele people as well as scholars and linguists of African linguistics became convinced ultimately of the fact that isiNdebele is a language in its own right. The importance of preserving this language in a written form was

therefore of utmost importance. The big task was then facing the now defunct body which was known as the Ndebele Language Board to formulate the grammatical and spelling rules of the Ndebele language. After a series of meetings the work of this body culminated in the publication in the year 2000 of the isiNdebele Terminology and Orthography No.1. This document is a valuable source of information available to all scholars of isiNdebele.

5.3.2 Standardization

For the isiNdebele language to perform and thrive well it is recommended that it must have a carefully selected body of scholars whose sole task would be to standardise terminology. Individuals forming this committee must be linguists themselves and be well knowledgeable on this subject as well as speaking the language fluently.

What are we to understand by standardisation? By standardisation is referred to:

... a prestige variety of language used within a speech community. Standard languages ...cut across regional differences, providing a unified means of communication, and thus an institutionalised norm which can be used in the mass-media, in teaching the language to foreigners, and so on. (Crystal, 1985, 286).

For standardisation to proceed efficiently a standardising committee is of utmost importance. Without such a committee

planning and maintaining a language would be a nightmare. This is so because new terms come into circulation all the time. People in the street do not wait for any permission before they start using a term. Many such terms more often than not find their way into official documents and official discourse even before the speakers realise that these terms have not as yet been standardised.

In the execution of their duty the standardising committee will have to compare the different dialects of isiNdebele and choose one. To do this efficiently it is always a wise idea to conduct a general survey among all stakeholders of the language. Normally the socially favoured variety of the language often based on the speech of the educated is the one selected. The speech of the educated is usually imitated and used by speakers of the other social dialects for the purpose of formal discourse and also for teaching the language to foreigners. If the survey indicates that the greater portion of the Ndebele speakers are in favour of this variety, standardising it will therefore be the next move. This will then mark the official acceptance of this version by all Ndebele people. This committee will then formalise the rules for grammar, orthography and vocabulary.

This then agrees with what is stipulated in "The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics", when it says:

Any vernacular may be standardized by being given a uniform and consistent norm of writing that is widely accepted by its speakers. It may then be referred to as a standard language...

The same book further states that:

Standard is a prestige variety of language used within a speech community, providing and an institutionalised norm for such purposes as the media and language teaching. Standardisation is the natural development of a standard language in a speech.

Standard language can therefore be summed up as the codified form of a language, which is accepted by and serving as a model to a larger speech community. It is the direct and deliberate intervention of linguists and scholars into a language with the sole aim of improving the language.

Standardisation will solve many linguistic problems in the Ndebele language. This will mean uniformity in pronunciation, grammar, orthography and vocabulary. Several methods are followed when standardising a language. Ngcongwane suggested the following stages as cardinal points in standardising a language:

5.3.2.1 Selection:

This is the root where it all begins. This means the selection of one of the Ndebele dialects as the variety which will be developed into a standard language. The standardising committee will have to proceed with caution at this stage. The speakers of the dialects which were not chosen must not feel that their language was not chosen because it is

being despised. Normally the variety chosen is chosen because of an extra advantage over the others. For instance it may be a variety which is already enjoying usage in political or economic circles. This causes the variety to gain prestige and the people who speak it also share this prestige.

5.3.2.2 Codification:

This refers to a process wherein the selected variety is reduced into a written form. There must be some agencies or academies who will write and publish dictionaries, grammar books as well as literature books. This will ensure that only one version of isiNdebele language is being developed.

5.3.2.3 Elaboration:

Once the Ndebele language has gained a better status such as the one described above, pressure from all spheres of the society will grow. There will be an enormous pressure for the Ndebele language to perform better. The language will be stretched to its ultimate limits so as to be at par with the other languages around it. It is at this stage that the process known as elaboration is introduced. This is a direct response to the pressure described above. This is when it will become necessary for the isiNdebele language to

undergo drastic improvements in vocabulary so that it can be easy for people to use it in functions associated with the central government as well as in all forms of writing.

5.3.2.4 Acceptance:

The last stage will be the one where the newly selected variety has to be accepted by the community at large as the variety representing a standard language. More often than not the speakers of a language frown upon the new image of their language. Because of the many new features it shall have adopted, they fail to recognise it. It is at this stage that care must be exercised for the community to go through a gradual orientation. After acceptance the language will serve as a symbol of pride for the whole community. It is at this stage that the language normally assumes three important functions:

- unifying function
- prestige function and
- frame of reference function.

It has already been pointed out in the previous chapters, that isiNdebele, like most languages of the world also has dialects. Studies in Dialectology reveals that with some communities of the world, dialects just cannot be avoided despite graphization as discussed above. Standardisation is therefore an attempt at forming one version of speech which ideally should be followed by most speakers of that

language. It should be pointed out that standardising a language does not mean a formulation of an altogether new language. This is an academic language which in most cases is "made" around the table. Standardisation means the official acceptance of a particular version of dialect to be used as an official medium to be used in schools and other official places. With many communities the standardised language coincides with the official language, but Sociolinguistically it is not necessarily so. Standardisation further aims at attaining minimal variation in the spoken language principally by setting down a prescribed language code in a written form.

Standardization of isiNdebele itself will have a number of advantages. It will improve communication by eliminating unnecessary dialectical variants. It will promote uniformity by retaining what is useful and also impeding and discouraging dialectical versions. It will also stabilise the isiNdebele language and retard language dynamism.

Standardization can also be said to be a facilitator of learning. In teaching institutions it decreases chances of misunderstandings and promotes a uniform discourse.

At times standardization may unfortunately be regarded as a disadvantage by the speakers of the less important dialects because it is viewed as a suppresser of the other dialects. It may be seen as promoting the favoured dialect at the expense of the minor dialects.

5.3.3 Modernisation

Modernisation can be defined as a move by a language towards becoming a medium of communication which equals any other developed language. This process is not a new thing. It is a process that has been undergone by many languages throughout the ages. This is one process which can be likened to a mirage, its finality is never reached. There is almost no time where speakers of any language can claim to have achieved everything there is to achieve about a language. The main reason for this is because languages keep on growing without reaching any finality.

There are two aspects involved in the modernisation of a language. Firstly, the expansion of the lexicon of that particular language by way of gaining new words and expressions. Secondly, the development and new styles and forms of discourse.

5.3.3.1 Lexical expansion

On lexical expansion Ferguson has this to say:

Lexical expansion is required in order to treat new topics, and this seems to take place most effectively when the tempo of change is on too fast, the practitioners who need vocabulary are involved in this creation, and there are sufficient lines of communication among users of the new terminology to achieve consistency. (Ferguson, 1962, 10).

IsiNdebele is faced with the necessity to fulfil the above-mentioned condition. This became clear the moment the first thought came to mind that the language should be reduced to a written form. The language needs to undergo an extensive process of modernisation so as to qualify to be used as a medium of instruction in schools. In a learning situation, the users of the language will be faced with subjects and concepts which are foreign to the Ndebele language and teachers will be required to impart education across to their learners. This will require that the foreign concepts and terminology be translated into isiNdebele. This will definitely need a new set of vocabulary. Such vocabularies normally expand the language in an attempt to keep pace with other modern languages. Another fact to be reckoned with is the fact that isiNdebele exists within a multilingual society where it is being influenced by other languages like English, Afrikaans and other African languages.

The technological and technical development of the world is further going to put pressure on the language. New institutions, diseases, changes in lifestyles emerge for which no or little Ndebele vocabulary exists. Therefore, Ndebele has to find Ndebele terminology for English words like library, HIV-Aids, clinic to name but a few.

5.3.3.2 The development of new styles and forms of discourse

In an attempt to match the other languages surrounding it, development of new styles and other forms is going to be necessary. This is particularly going to be found in instances where translations are going to be necessary. Often styles are going to be found whose equivalents do not exist in isiNdebele. English example such as these will be found:

...by hook or crooks...

...to be head over heels...

...from pillar to post...

There are also Afrikaans styles such as:

...dwarsdeur die middel...

...buig of bars...

...dapper en stapper...

If and when linguistic styles such as these need translation and the language does not have them, it is going to be imperative for the language speaker to coin a close equivalent. Such coinages in due course will enrich the language if well accepted by the majority of the community.

New styles of discourse are going to be necessary. In the traditional Ndebele setting there was no institution called parliament or court of law. Therefore, the type of language and language styles used in parliament is an unfamiliar style in isiNdebele. The manner in which a member of parliament addresses the Speaker of parliament is totally a new concept in isiNdebele. The manner in which a motion is phrased and tabled in parliament must be in accordance with certain procedures where language plays a major part. Proceedings in a court of law follow a definite pattern where language stylistics play a pivotal role. The form of address engaged in by the judge, the prosecutor and the lawyers uses a particular language style. This therefore means that a lot of modernisation still has to take place in the Ndebele language.

It is perhaps for this very reason that Fishman argues that:

The sociology of language has applied significance for all of the topics normally considered within the field of applied linguistics: native language teaching, second language teaching, translation, the creation and revision of writing systems, language policy decisions, and language planning as a whole. In connection with each of these topics successful 'application' depends not only on competent linguistic analysis of the languages being taught, used or developed but also (and, perhaps, even primarily) upon the social circumstances surrounding all applied efforts in connection with these languages. (Giglioli, 1972, 54-55).

The above quotation shows clearly that all factors surrounding the language have to be taken into consideration when improvements in a language are made. All faculties of the language must receive some special attention so that the language can grow in all directions in a balanced manner.

5.4 Conclusion

An attempt to discuss everything there is to say about the isiNdebele language would not have been a good idea. However, those aspects of the language which were focused on have received quite a number of interesting observations about the language itself. To understand well this line of analysing a language one has to take into account its historical background. Many linguistic features found in the language are historic. For instance, while it is understandable why isiNdebele has stop consonants, bilabial sounds, lateral sounds and so on, it is not understandable why it has sounds which are not found in the Nguni group of languages like **ts**, **kgh**, **rh**, **tjh** etc. It is only in analysing the isiNdebele language history like it was done in chapter 3 that one realises the influence of the Pedi language. This explains the nature of the structure of some words and their behaviour in the language.

Pressure on the isiNdebele language brought about by technological advancements as well as industrial developments which seek languages to satisfy its needs became evident very early. It therefore became obvious that the isiNdebele language had to follow the same route through which all major languages of the world went. It was unfortunate on the side of isiNdebele because it is one of the last languages to be

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Pressure on the isiNdebele language brought about by technological advancements as well as industrial developments which seek languages to satisfy its needs became evident very early. It therefore became obvious that the isiNdebele language had to follow the same route through which all major languages of the world went. It was unfortunate on the side of isiNdebele because it is one of the last languages to be

considered for development. Reasons for this were historical, political and in some cases pure negligence. They were historical because after the Ndebele people were defeated by the Boers at KwaNomtjherhelo, they had no wish for another war of any kind. All they needed was peace and tranquillity. For them, to be farm labourers was not an option. It was political because the South African apartheid government had no respect for the languages of the Africans. Having all languages taught in schools would be an unnecessary burden on the government of the day because at the end of the day the government was expected to foot the bill for schools. Negligence came in when isiNdebele language was taken to be just another dialect of isiZulu which was not favoured by the majority of the community.

Comparison between isiNdebele and the other Nguni languages has revealed that Ndebele is a language in its own right. All linguistic features found in isiNdebele that are related to the other Nguni languages can be accounted for by using the family tree theory. This theory shows beyond any reasonable doubt that languages with a common origin will always share close linguistic affinities. Their syntactic structure is also the same. It is thus most of the time possible to draw a table of comparisons based on one or two member languages and thereafter make an accurate general assumption.

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