

## TEN YEARS OF DEMOCRACY: ATTITUDES AND IDENTITY AMONG SOME SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CHILDREN

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*Ten years into South Africa's democracy, how do school children feel about themselves as part of specific groups, and what is the role of language in their socio-cultural identities? This paper looks at the ways in which two groups of fourteen-year-old Xhosa-speaking and mixed-race 'Coloured' South African secondary school learners in a new housing area near Cape Town negotiate their identities through language in a context of rapid social change. It analyses their beliefs and attitudes about the languages and speech communities to which they are exposed.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the decade since the end of apartheid, South African society has been working its way through major changes. To investigate identity negotiation through language among South African school children in this context of rapid social change, my research assistant and I spent four weeks of 2004 at a senior secondary school in Wesbank, one of greater Cape Town's new low-cost housing areas. Webb and Kembo-Sure (1999:11) rightly contend that the 'exact role of language as an element of socio-cultural identity in African communities has not yet been adequately investigated.' Our starting point was to collect data on the language attitudes of two groups of fourteen-year-old Xhosa and mixed-race 'Coloured'<sup>1</sup> South African secondary school learners in order to establish whether language attitudes could be linked to socio-cultural identity and behaviour, especially sub-cultural behaviour. Smit (1996:12) cited in Bekker (2003:64), contends that 'The two main structural criteria of any society are social identity and power. It is the complex relationship between language, social identity and power that explains why people have language attitudes.' Bekker (2003:62) also argues that language attitudes need to be understood and confirmed in the context of historical factors, which, at least in part, have had an impact on their development. I shall discuss some of these historical factors as part of my analysis of the learners' identity negotiation through language.

The study formed part of a broad-based multidisciplinary project based at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa, undertaken in partnership with researchers from the Flemish universities in Belgium, to investigate issues of social integrity. It must also be noted that the findings noted here can only be of a preliminary nature; they form the first part of a five-year longitudinal study, tracking learners from their entry year to their exit year at secondary school.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

As outlined in the introduction, this research was concerned with identity negotiation through language, and attempted to find links between language attitudes, identity and behaviour patterns. Moore (1994) contends that self-identity is established socially through a set of discourses that are both discursive and practical, and that identity therefore has both an individual and a collective dimension. With reference to the collective dimension of identity, Blommaert (1998:24) notes that group identities not only determine our opinions of and discourses about others, but also other forms of behaviour towards them including language behaviour, an aspect of language attitude studies.

Schiffman (1997:1) describes language attitude studies as studies of the population at large, or a segment of that population, to try to find out what people's attitudes are to:

- Language in general (Fishman, 1965; Baker, 1996);
- Motivation towards the learning of a first or second language (Gardner, 1985; Webb, 1992; Mawasha, 1996);
- The status of a language, or the status of its speakers, or the status of the variety (standard/non-standard) of the language, or its use in certain domains (Greenfield, 1970; Adegbija, 1994);
- Language shift within a particular community or in general (Fishman, 1990; Edwards, 1994); and
- Loyalty towards their own language or own non-standard dialect (Fishman, 1989; Hammond-Tooke, 1993).

Language attitude studies can be valid indicators of group identity, because language, an important aspect of a society's culture (Goodenough, 1957), is also often a symbol of group membership (Bekker, 2003:65). Thus a common language (or language variety) can be used to create positive social identity. As Hogg and Abrams (1988:57, cited in Bekker, 2003:66) note: '...ethnic groups which consider their language to be of crucial importance can bolster and enhance their social identity by accentuating their language – that is striving for positive ethno-linguistic distinctiveness.' It is well known that, in Africa, a former colonial language is normally used to foster nation building, as the diverse indigenous languages in each country are seen to create divisions by the ruling class. 'Social divisions and potential for conflict are often fuelled by language as a symbol of socio-cultural identity' (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 1999:11).

When starting out with this study, we believed that factors like group identity and language attitudes in post-democratic South Africa would present in particularly interesting ways in one of the country's new, post-apartheid townships, where there was no single established community, but rather a collection of diverse groups migrating from different areas in desperate need of housing. It was the complex interaction of these 'relative strangers' that would indicate how identity was being negotiated in this new environment. Would entrenched attitudes from the past emerge as an automatic form of behaviour, or would we find evidence of shifting identities, particularly among young adolescents? And what would be the role of the different languages in this new community?

We selected the community of Wesbank, a five-year-old township near Cape Town. One of the key platforms of the South African government since 1994 has been the provision of low-

cost housing to the landless and the poor as part of its Reconstruction and Development (RDP) Programme (FCR, 2002:2). The community of Wesbank (population 25 000) developed out of a large squatter community that became established on the west bank of the Kuils River in the Oostenberg Section of Greater Cape Town. These squatters were variously former farmworkers, poor people from other low-income areas in the Western Cape and a smaller Xhosa migrant community who had moved to the Western Cape from the Eastern Cape in the early 1990s and who currently comprise approximately 25% of the total population. The majority of the population of Wesbank speak Afrikaans as their first language, or are bilingual speakers of English and Afrikaans. This majority group was classified 'Coloured' (mixed race) in terms of *apartheid* legislation. The Western Cape was formerly designated as a 'Coloured Labour Preference Area', and Blacks needed special permission to live and work in the area. By and large, the two groups, the Xhosa-speaking people and the 'Coloureds', co-exist peacefully, but tensions emerged during national elections, with the Xhosa group mainly voting for the ruling African National Congress, while many of the 'Coloureds' voted for opposition parties.

Substantial numbers of Xhosa speakers have moved to the Western Cape from the Eastern Cape since 1994. In the Eastern Cape, the Xhosa are a particular group of Nguni clans who have lived in the region from at least the sixteenth century. Their culture and language have managed to survive the periods of colonization and apartheid. However, there is some evidence emerging of a language shift towards English, particularly among the young, well-educated urban sectors of the community (Ridge, 2000:1). Many of the 'Cape Coloureds' are descendants of South Africa's earliest inhabitants, the San and the Khoe, as well as unions of members of these tribes with European settlers and people from Asia (e.g. India and Indonesia) and other parts of Africa (e.g. Mozambique) who were brought to South Africa as political prisoners and slaves by the Dutch and English colonists. The effects of colonization, including a smallpox epidemic caused by the settlers, largely destroyed the culture and language of the San and Khoe (Traill, 1995), although remnants still survive in the Northern Cape, Namibia and Botswana (Crawhall, 1999:234).

Most 'Coloured' people in the Western Cape now speak Afrikaans as their mother tongue, although there are also signs of a language shift to English among the younger generation of the 'Coloured' middle class and elite (Anthonissen and George, 2003). When a language no longer occupies particular domains of use (e.g. the language/s used at home, at work and in education), especially the domains of necessity, it can be said to be in a state of decline brought about by language shift, which is characterized by the increased functions of one language and the decreased functions of the other language. (Edwards, 1994:110). The 'Coloured' people have adopted a largely Westernised lifestyle, and have maintained few, if any, of the cultural practices of the past. Many members of this group find it difficult to define their historical identity and culture, and some sociologists would argue that this problem lies at the root of the gangsterism, violence and the abuse of women and children that are so endemic in poor, working-class 'Coloured' areas (Battersby 2003:123).

The Wesbank community emerged in 1999 as an RDP housing project. Despite the provision of housing and basic services, the community is characterised by poverty and deprivation. Gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse are rife, as are illiteracy and child abuse. A survey conducted in 2001 put the unemployment figure at 61%, and there are indications that this has increased (Foundation for Contemporary Research 2002:13). According to the Foundation for Contemporary Research's socio-economic profile of the Wesbank Area (2002:12) the main causal factors can be attributed to 'low incomes for those who have work,

huge skills deficits that stem from the historically low levels of education, and a lack of opportunities for those who are unemployed but are seeking work.’

The area now has three primary schools, and one senior secondary school. The senior secondary school is a dual-medium (English and Afrikaans) one, and Xhosa is offered as an additional language. Owing to the absence of a community centre, these schools are used for a range of community activities, such as literacy and entrepreneurship projects. Children from other poor townships also attend the schools in Wesbank, leading to problems like overcrowding and a lack of discipline. Even now, ten years since the first democratic elections were held in South Africa in 1994, education for many ‘Coloured’ and Black children in the poorer communities is frequently characterised by problems such as a lack of resources, under-qualified staff, frequently vandalised schools and inadequate parental and community support. This will explain in part why children from poorer communities will travel long distances to what are perceived as better schools in other areas that were previously designated as being for White or ‘Coloured’ use only. According to a study conducted by SDU/PRAESA in 2002 (Plüddemann, Braam, Extra & October, 2004:33), a third of all the Xhosa-speaking children in the Western Cape are enrolled in schools that were previously reserved for White or ‘Coloured’ children only.

But there is another problem affecting education in South Africa. While White and ‘Coloured’ children can expect to be educated in their mother tongues up to the end of their secondary school education and beyond, Black children are still required to switch to English after the first four years of schooling. Mother-tongue based bilingual education, which has already been accepted in principle by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED, 2002), is still far from becoming a reality for these children.

Wesbank Senior Secondary School, where our research took place, has many children from the other black townships in Cape Town, and all of them are placed in the English First Language (English L1) stream, even though they often have an extremely limited command of the language. This is often with the strong support of the parents, who believe that English holds the key to the future success of their children. They are not concerned about the possible impact this might have on the survival of the mother tongue. As de Klerk (2004:5) puts it: ‘These parents see English as vital for their child’s future, and we are witnessing a drift to English-medium schools among the elite ... some even forbid the use of the mother tongue at home ... they see no future in their own languages.’ In addition, English is frequently referred to as the only safe, ‘neutral’ language in South Africa, which can be used as the common language by all. Indeed, at Wesbank High, it served as the common language between the two main speech communities and was the language used most frequently at assemblies and in staff meetings. However, we observed that on the playgrounds, and as soon as the learners left the school, they reverted to their mother tongues and tended not to mix with members of the other speech community.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As stated previously, the study population consisted of mainly 14-year-old grade eights (first year of secondary school) drawn from four classes at Wesbank Senior Secondary School. 90 English L1 and 100 Afrikaans L1 learners were part of the project. Of the 90 English L1 learners, 80.5% were speakers of Xhosa, and 19% were speakers of Afrikaans, or bilingual speakers of English and Afrikaans.

Permission to work with the learners was obtained from the school principal, the school governing body and the relevant class teachers. We were not initially introduced to the learners as researchers, but as assistants working with the class teachers two days a week for a period of four weeks. We used a range of activities to elicit the required data from the learners. These included:

- Classroom conversations
- Free writing on the importance of English, Afrikaans and Xhosa to them
- Creating mind maps to show how bi/multilingual they were and in which domains they spoke particular languages, and
- Creative writing, such as constructing a poem about one's positive and negative characteristics.

Two Afrikaans-speaking learners, identified as 'problem cases' and 'potential gangsters' by their class teacher, were also interviewed separately, as well as two Xhosa-speaking learners and two bilingual 'Coloured' learners from the English L1 classes. With the assistance of one of the Xhosa-speaking teachers, the interviews were conducted in the mother tongue of the interviewees. Groupings and community formation were also observed in classes and on the playground. Particular attention was paid to the languages used in these groups. I also kept a diary of my experiences in teaching the learners. In the English L1 classes, we experienced very few disciplinary problems, and the learners were generally neat, attentive and co-operative. This contrasted sharply with the poor discipline of the Afrikaans L1 classes. We wondered whether this signalled that those who were placed in English classes (Xhosa and 'Coloured' learners) had a better self-image, which was coupled to a desire for upward mobility via English. The Afrikaans classes were generally restless, fidgety and disobedient – a reflection, perhaps, of the often violent, gangster-infested environment in which they lived.

From all the data collected, we wanted to see whether patterns emerged that indicated learners' beliefs about the value of particular languages and how this corresponded with their actual language use. We also wanted to know how learners negotiated their own as well as their group identity in the setting of the school and Wesbank.

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### ***Language Use, Preferences and Attitudes***

Learners were asked to construct mind-maps to indicate domains of use for the various languages they spoke. They also did some free writing on the relative importance of the three official languages of the Western Cape: Afrikaans, Xhosa and English, which we believed would indicate their attitudes to the three languages as well as to the speakers of those languages. While acknowledging the limitations of anecdotal commentary, we found it useful to use some of the comments made by the learners whom we interviewed to illustrate some of the findings from the mind-maps and free writing. Table 1 and Table 2 analyse the responses of the English L1 class and the Afrikaans L1 class respectively.

Domains of use N= 90	Xhosa only	English only	Afrikaans only	English and Afrik.	English and Xhosa	Xhosa and Afrik.	Xhosa and Zulu	Xhosa and Sotho	Eng, Xhosa and Afrik.
Home	51%		1%	20%	16%	2%	2%	1%	3%
Church/ Mosque	47%	4%	1%	12%	6%	1%			3%
School (in class)		100%							
School (Playground)	8%	78%	2%	3%	7%				2%
Shopping (Bellville area)	1%	18%	1%	7%	9%	1%			2%
Streets of Wesbank	16%	8%	17%	13%	7%	3%			4%
With friends	44%	6%	8%	11%	7%	1%	2%	1%	1%

*Note: Percentages are rounded off. Not all learners responded to each domain, so totals will not equal 100% in all domains.*

**Table 1: English L1 Learners (80.5% Xhosa speaking; 19% bilingual English-Afrikaans speaking; .5% Other)**

Table 1 is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, despite the fact that these learners were all placed in the English L1 classes, we noted that only small percentages use English for purposes other than at school and when shopping. One important factor here is the very low levels of proficiency in English<sup>2</sup> among the majority of these learners, which we observed during our work with these two classes. Another factor is that the figures for English include the 19% bilingual English-Afrikaans speaking ‘Coloured’ learners. Our study of the individual responses showed that some of these were the learners responsible for the ‘English only’ responses in the domains of ‘church/mosque’ and ‘with friends’. A more significant percentage of the same group of ‘Coloured’ learners reported using a mixture of English and Afrikaans in the same domains, but interestingly enough, only 1% reported using only Afrikaans at home and in church. This group may therefore suggest something of the shift towards English among bilingual ‘Coloureds’, as noted by Anthonissen and George (2003) and Plüddemann *et al.* (2004).

The figures for ‘Xhosa only’ also reveal interesting trends. While a majority of those who responded still used the language on its own in the intimate domains of home, church, and with friends, a significant number reported using Xhosa with English in those domains, while smaller percentages reported mixing the language with Afrikaans, Zulu and Sotho. Some used Xhosa with Afrikaans and English (at least three learners referred to the mixture of these languages as *Tsotsitaal* – the language used by black gangsters). Thus, while Xhosa remained reasonably entrenched in the intimate domains for these learners, there was some evidence here of a small shift towards bilingualism in Xhosa and English – a possible result of the choice of school made by the parents.

Despite the continued economic power of Afrikaans in this province (Dyers, 2003:62), only 1% of all the learners reported using this when shopping in Bellville, the nearest major shopping centre, which has in recent years been transformed from a mainly Afrikaans-speaking business environment to a more multilingual one. A mixture of English and

Afrikaans, or English and Xhosa, followed the significant preference for English in this domain. It was only on the streets of Wesbank that a significant number of the learners reported using Afrikaans only, but almost the same number preferred mixing Afrikaans with English and/or Xhosa. For the learners placed in the English L1 classes, Afrikaans was clearly of less importance than English or Xhosa.

In the free writing, where the learners had to rate the importance of the three official languages of the Western Cape Province (Afrikaans, Xhosa and English), 62% of the learners expressed the view that all three languages were important. It was interesting to note that the 'Coloured' learners in these classes, as well as those interviewed, were at pains to stress the importance of all three languages. We can only at this stage surmise that their daily exposure to their Xhosa-speaking classmates may have had something to do with this positive attitude, as well as the fact that several of them were learning Xhosa as an additional language at the school. Some of the main reasons given for rating all three languages as important included the arguments that:

- English is: a world language and therefore important for international communication, especially in the world of business, an official language and serves as a bridge between the different language groups in South Africa, and necessary for employment
- Afrikaans is: very important in the Western Cape and for historical reasons, employment, filling in application forms and also easy to learn
- Xhosa is important as: a mother tongue, a link to the ancestors; a national language; a home language that is important to speak with the family and the older generation; and one that is also spoken by the president of South Africa.

Thus in terms of scale (Blommaert and Slembrouck, 2004:25), the linguistic resources of these learners were 'clearly demarcated and hierarchically ordered, one being appropriate for a particular set of activities at one, low scale, and another on another, higher scale'. For these mainly Xhosa-speaking learners, English was important at world level, Afrikaans at regional level, and Xhosa at home level.

However, a sizeable 31% of the learners in the English L1 classes felt that English was far more important than the other two languages, and these learners were fairly dismissive of Afrikaans and Xhosa. They felt that English was the most important language in their education. It was more important than the other two in the job market and was essential for communicating with foreigners. Several learners felt that Afrikaans 'was not used much' (except in rural areas), and that Xhosa 'was difficult to learn and lots of people are not interested to learn it'.

For the Xhosa-speaking learners who formed the majority of this group, it appeared that Xhosa had, to some extent, retained its cultural and identity values. It is also worth noting that many of them chose to learn Xhosa as an additional language, but not as a first language, at the school. They were proud to be identified as Xhosa, especially as the president of the country was himself a Xhosa. One of the learners interviewed said:

*Xhosa sibakulekile ngoba sinabantu abakulu, abafa na Thabo Mbeki, sinabantu abaculaya abafan Zola. (Xhosa is very important, because we have the likes of Thabo Mbeki and the artists like Zola).*

This quotation highlights the positive influence on language attitudes when there are strong role models who use the indigenous languages. It is however also possible that, in an environment like Wesbank where the Xhosa learners were largely outnumbered and may occasionally have felt unsafe, they could have been emphasizing their ethno-linguistic identity as a natural reaction to being a minority.

While English appeared to be of growing importance to all the Xhosa learners, most indicated largely instrumental motivations for learning English (a better job, communication with foreigners, for study purposes). They attributed far less importance to Afrikaans. In fact, the two Xhosa learners interviewed said that Afrikaans was only important for them on the streets of Wesbank.

In contrast with the apparent growing identification with English among the bilingual Afrikaans-English speaking 'Coloured' learners in these two classes, the findings here seemed to indicate that the Xhosa-speaking learners did not in fact identify strongly with English, except for instrumental reasons, and still revealed a relatively strong attachment to their mother tongue. Bekker provides the following reason for this continued attachment to the mother tongue: '...English has become the language of the middle class and social mobility involves the acquisition of and identification with some variety of this language. Strong integrative attachment towards the L1 is to some degree becoming the province of the lower classes and given the limited access to social mobility that currently characterises South African society it is therefore hardly surprising that some degree of allegiance towards the L1 is still prevalent' (2003:75).

Domains of use N= 70	Afrikaans only	English only	English and Afrikaans	English and Xhosa	Xhosa and Afrikaans	Afrikaans and Arabic
Home	80%		14%		3%	3%
Church/Mosque	37%	9%	20%	6%	3%	3%
School (in class)	100% (Communication with classmates)		69% (Communication with educators)			
School (Playground)	80%		17%		3%	
Shopping (Bellville area)	80%	6%	6%		3%	
Streets of Wesbank	80%		17%		3%	
With friends	88%		9%		3%	

*Note: Although we worked in two classes with a total of 100 learners, only 70 learners actually completed the mind-maps, but everyone completed the free writing. Percentages are rounded off. Not all learners responded to each domain, so totals will not equal 100% in each domain.*

**Table 2: Afrikaans L1 learners**

While there was much less variation in the patterns of use reported here than in the table for the English L1 classes, some interesting patterns also emerged here. Afrikaans remained the dominant language in all domains for these learners, although a degree of bilingualism in English and Afrikaans was also present, particularly in places of worship, at school when



communicating with educators, on the school playground and on the streets of Wesbank. Far less bilingualism emerged in the domain of shopping in Bellville, where one might have expected it to be more prevalent, and it was clear that these learners experienced no difficulty in being served in their mother tongue. A few learners also indicated the use of slang terms (*skollietaal*) used in the *shebeens* and *yards* (informal drinking places), and by the gangsters in the area.

If there was any shift to English here, it was of no great significance as yet, at least as reported by these learners. However, our observations and analysis of their written work showed a large degree of code mixing with English, and poor skills in standard Afrikaans. Webb (1992) feels that this mainly one-directional mixing of Afrikaans with English is another indicator of the social relationships between the languages concerned, and therefore of language attitudes. While these learners may hold overtly positive attitudes towards their mother tongue, Afrikaans, they may also hold strong covert positive attitudes towards English, because of their awareness of its powerful position in South Africa.

However, what stood out in the free writing was that all these learners were very positive, indeed passionate, about Afrikaans – or, at least, the Afrikaans they used daily, as their main exposure to standard Afrikaans was at school and possibly in places of worship. While they acknowledged English as an important language, especially for finding work, they were unconvinced about the importance of Xhosa in their lives. Some reported taking pleasure in using Afrikaans to insult people who could not understand the language. Here is a typical sample of the sentiments that dominated in the free writing (note the code mixing in sentence 5):

1. *Om Afrikaans te praat is lekker.* (To speak Afrikaans is nice).
2. *Daar is min mense wat Engels kan praat.* (Few people speak English).
3. *As ek miskien nou net in 'n Xhosa plek kom dan sal ek Afrikaans praat. Dan verstaan hulle nie.* (If I find myself in a Xhosa place, I will (deliberately) speak Afrikaans. Then they won't be able to understand me).
4. *Daar is groot Engelse woorde wat ons nie verstaan nie. As hulle dit in Afrikaans sê dan sal ons dit verstaan.* (There are big words in English that we don't understand. If they said it in Afrikaans we would understand).
5. *Die Bybel name is nie Engels nie, dit is Afrikaans, want baie van die Afrikaners gaan kerk. Die engels se Bybel, dit is bybels wat vertaal word in engels, dit is nie die (original) nie.* (The names in the Bible are not English, but Afrikaans, because many Afrikaners go to church. The English Bible is a bible that is translated into English, it is not the original).

As with the Xhosa learners' positive attitudes to English, we found that the proficiency levels of these learners in standard, written Afrikaans did not match their strong positive attitudes to the language. Only about 15 of the 100 learners used reasonably good standard Afrikaans. Webb and Kembo-Sure (1999:17) comment on the alienation between formal standard Afrikaans and colloquial Afrikaans, which has '... had serious educational consequences for children who grew up in 'Coloured' working-class families, as the language they grew up with in the intimacy of their homes and friendships is not the same as the rigidly standardized 'white' language insisted upon in schools.' Future research at this school could include a study of attitudes to the diglossic situation of Afrikaans in Wesbank in order to see whether this tension between the formal (high) variety and the informal (low) variety (cf. Ferguson's definition of diglossia, 1959) is also prevalent here.

The Afrikaans L1 learners either did not say much about Xhosa, or revealed some prejudice towards speakers of Xhosa in classroom discussions and interviews. One interviewee said, '*Xhosa mense likes oorvat ... ja, hulle's orig juffrou*' (Xhosa people like to take over .. yes, they are forward, miss). This latter sentiment, as well as the pleasure some of them took in deliberately using Afrikaans in the presence of Xhosa-speakers, could indicate a desire in this group to hang on to some form of superiority and exclusiveness as well as a fear of being ruled by a group previously treated as inferior to the 'Coloureds' in South Africa during the *apartheid* era. Despite the more conciliatory attitudes adopted by the small minority of 'Coloured' learners in the English L1 classes, the attitudes of many of the learners in the Afrikaans L1 classes provide support for Battersby's contention that: 'In South Africa at present the racial tensions between Coloureds and blacks are not being reduced to any degree' (2003:125).

## CONCLUSIONS

In terms of language attitudes as indicators of group identity, this initial study has revealed certain emerging patterns among three distinct groups of learners in Wesbank Senior Secondary School. The first group of learners are the minority 'Coloured' learners in the English L1 classes. These learners, who appeared to be in a state of language shift towards English, also seemed more positively disposed towards Xhosa as a language as well as to the speakers of Xhosa. They did not (overtly) reveal any of the petty racism of the Afrikaans L1 learners, and appeared to have been influenced by their daily contact with their Xhosa classmates as well as their study of Xhosa as an additional language.

In stark contrast to them were the attitudes of many of the Afrikaans L1 learners, who appeared to be reacting to the presence of large numbers of Xhosa speakers in what they saw as 'their' space, with racist attitudes and a determination to hang on to Afrikaans as a positive marker of exclusiveness and power. Some might argue that white Afrikaner resistance to the influence of English had been carried over to the Afrikaans-speaking working class 'Coloureds'. But there are other, more compelling reasons. Many 'Coloured' working class people feel more marginalized in the new South Africa than previously, and some feel threatened by the increasing numbers of Xhosa speakers in their traditional living and working areas. Confronted also by the strong culture and identity of the Xhosa, as well as the shift in political power, many 'Coloureds' may also feel inferior precisely as a result of this lack of a clear culture and identity. To them it must seem as if a 'Coloured' identity is synonymous with crime, alcoholism and gangs. One of the few positive forms of identity for working class 'Coloureds' may therefore be their mother tongue, Afrikaans, and they may accentuate the language to enhance their 'ethno-linguistic distinctiveness' (cf. Hogg and Abrams, cited earlier). This strong identification with Afrikaans noted among the Wesbank L1 learners, contrasts with the shift towards English noted among young, middle-class 'Coloureds'.

In terms of language as a marker of identity, the Xhosa learners did not apparently feel concerned about preferring English to their mother tongue in many domains, as they saw the language as being a common language in South Africa, and as having largely instrumental purposes in their lives. Xhosa remained closely related to their sense of themselves and their culture and traditions, and some of them were prepared to acknowledge the importance of Afrikaans in the Western Cape. At the same time, they could also have been affected by the clear messages sent out by government ministers and other black role models, viz. that

English is the language of people who have ‘made it’. As Marlin-Curiel (2003:72) puts it: ‘The globalisation-conscious South African government favours English much as the Black Consciousness revolutionaries did during the fight against apartheid, as a language of power’. In contrast to Afrikaans, and with the exception of some singers and entertainers, there are simply too few role models who stand out as constant users of Xhosa in all domains, and this has serious implications for the status of the language.

As it is the intention of the longitudinal study to track the same groups of learners until they exit secondary school, particular attention will continue to be paid to these three groupings. But the second year will also need to take account of the impact on some of the Xhosa-speaking learners of being moved to English L2 classes, where they will no longer form a majority group. And, as noted earlier, more attention will be paid to the diglossic situation of Afrikaans, as well as to Afrikaans L1 learners’ more covert attitudes to English.

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### **END NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>The term ‘Coloured’ remains problematic because it is fundamentally perjorative. On the other hand it is a firmly entrenched term, In this article inverted commas and a capital letter are used to indicate the dilemma of researchers. In the interests of consistency capital letters are used for Black and White as well.)

<sup>2</sup>In the second term of 2004, many of these learners were moved to English L2 classes as they simply could not cope with the L1 curriculum.

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