

**THE LINGUISTIC MARKERS
OF THE LANGUAGE VARIETY
SPOKEN BY GANG MEMBERS
ON THE CAPE FLATS,
ACCORDING TO THE FILM
*DOLLARS AND WHITE PIPES***

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Summary

The non-standard “way of speaking” associated with gang members on the Cape Flats is the focus of the present study. This thesis is not about gangsters and gang culture, neither is it an attempt to analyze their use of language. Rather, it is an investigation of the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats, according to the film *Dollars and White Pipes*. This film portrays the true story of Bernie Baatjies and is set in Hanover Park, an area on the Cape Flats characterized by a high level of unemployment and low levels of education. During the Apartheid years, people of colour all over Cape Town were displaced: they were forced to move to barren land and start rebuilding their lives all over again. The youth perceived their parents as cowards for not fighting back against the system. Their anger with their parents led to the formation of gangs on the Cape Flats. These gangs resort to violence, using it as a means of dominating others and showing power through claiming territory. Gang members establish in-group distinctiveness through speech divergence. In this thesis, the notion of establishing membership of a specific linguistic community, in this case gang membership, by means of vocabulary use is examined with reference to concepts such as slang, anti-language and social judgments based on linguistic aspects. It is shown that the linguistic repertoire of the Cape Flats gangsters as a speech community can broadly be categorised as non-standard Afrikaans, non-standard English and English-Afrikaans code switching. In order to examine the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats, utterances in the film that were judged non-standard were transcribed orthographically. The standard version of each utterance was also identified. Non-standard words and phrases were then grouped according to language and parts of speech. These non-standard words and phrases were in turn presented to real-life gangsters from the Cape Flats in order to obtain judgements on their authenticity. Research approaches and methods drawn on in the thesis are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Analysis (DA), both of which are briefly discussed.

Opsomming

Die nie-standaard “manier van praat” wat geassosieer word met bendes op die Kaapse Vlakte is die fokus van hierdie studie. Hierdie tesis handel nie oor bendes en die bendekultuur nie en is ook nie ’n poging om hul gebruik van taal te analiseer nie. Dit is eerder ’n beskrywing van die linguistiese merkers van die taalvariëteit wat deur bendes op die Kaapse Vlakte gepraat word, volgens die rolprent *Dollars and White Pipes*. Hierdie rolprent is die ware verhaal van Bernie Baatjies en speel af in Hanover Park, ’n area van die Kaapse Vlakte gekenmerk deur ’n hoë vlak van werkloosheid en lae vlakke van opvoeding. As gevolg van Apartheid is mense van kleur regoor Kaapstad verplaas: hulle is forseer om na dor land te verskuif en om hul lewens van oor af op te bou. Die jeug het hul ouers gesien as lafaards omdat hulle nie terug baklei het teen die stelsel nie. Hulle woede teenoor hulle ouers het gelei tot die vorming van bendes op die Kaapse Vlakte. Hierdie bendes het hulle gewend na geweld. Geweld is gebruik in ’n poging om andere te domineer en om mag ten toon te stel in die aanspraak op gebied. Bendelede bewerkstellig spraak uiteenloopenheid as ’n metode om in-groep onderskeibaarheid daar te stel. In hierdie tesis word die idee van bewerkstelling van lidmaatskap van ’n spesifieke linguistieke gemeenskap, in hierdie geval bendeledidmaatskap, by wyse van die woordeskat wat hulle verkies om te gebruik, bekyk met verwysing na konsepte soos groeptaal, anti-taal en sosiale oordeel gebaseer op linguistieke aspekte. Daar word gewys dat die linguistiese repetoire van die bendes van die Kaapse Vlakte as spraakgemeenskap, gekategoriseer kan word as nie-standaard Afrikaans, nie-standaard Engels en Afrikaans-Engels kodewisseling. Om die linguistiese merkers van die taalvariëteit wat deur bendes op die Kaapse Vlakte gepraat word te bekyk, is uitings in die rolprent wat nie-standaard ge-ag is, ortografies getranskribeer. Die standaard weergawe van die uitings is ook geïdentifiseer. Nie-standaard woorde en frases is gegroepeer volgens taal en woordsoorte. Hierdie nie-standaard woorde en frases is aan werklike bendelede van die Kaapse Vlakte voorgelê om betroubaarheidsoordele te verkry. Die navorsingsbenaderinge en metodes waarop gefokus is, is Kritiese Diskoers Analise (KDA) sowel as Diskoers Analise (DA), wat beide kortliks bespreek word.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The vocabulary of gangsters generally consists of a rich variety of phrases, argot and slang¹ that will be unintelligible to the unsuspecting entrant into their territory and will enchant the linguist. On the Cape Flats, it is no longer the case that school-going children merely understand the language of gangsters; these children have also become conversant in it. This thesis will not focus on gangs and gang culture per se, but will look at the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats. In order to do so, the film *Dollars and White Pipes*, which portrays the true story of Bernie Baatjies and is set in Hanover Park, will be used to highlight the factors that will be investigated.

The non-standard “way of speaking” associated with gang members on the Cape Flats – as depicted in the film *Dollars and White Pipes* – is the focus of the present study. I will establish what the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats are in the movie, and then determine how authentic this vocabulary use is according to real-life gang members. My research question is the following: what, according to the film *Dollars and White Pipes*, are the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats? My general aims are to understand how gangs use their language to communicate effectively, and to improve understanding of their use of language.

The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 will introduce the research design used in this study. Chapter 3 will concentrate on gangs in general and those on the Cape Flats in particular. Information on the Cape Flats will then be provided, with special attention to its geographic and linguistic profile. In addition, specific attention will be given to the language use of gang members from the Cape Flats. Hanover Park, which is the setting of the film, will also be discussed. Chapter 4 will focus on the theoretical framework of pointing out the notion of establishing membership of a specific linguistic community by means of vocabulary use. In the following Chapter, Chapter 5, the film *Dollars and White Pipes* will be discussed in detail. Chapter 6 will focus on the analysis of the vocabulary used in the film, specifically

¹ Argot – Special vocabulary, used e.g. by criminals, which is designedly unintelligible to outsiders.

Slang – Used especially of vocabulary specific e.g. to a particular generation of younger speakers; also, as in ordinary usage, specific to a group or profession (e.g. ‘army slang’), to colloquial style, etc.

that of the male characters. In this Chapter, the data obtained from the film will be ordered into various tables, and attention will be given to the authenticity of the vocabulary use, as judged by real-life gangsters. The data will be regarded in the light of the available literature on the topic of the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members. Chapter 7 will conclude with a summary of the study, a reflection on the limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Research design

As stated in Chapter 1, the research focuses on the film *Dollars and White Pipes*, specifically on the vocabulary used by the main characters. The research question for this thesis is: What, according to the movie *Dollars and White Pipes* are the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats? The following methodology was used to answer the research question:

First, every utterance in the film, which was judged non-standard in any way, was transcribed orthographically. The standard version of the utterance was then identified. Next, the non-standard words and phrases were grouped, firstly into English ones and Afrikaans ones (and ones which were not clearly classifiable as either English or Afrikaans), and secondly into words and phrases occurring in other varieties of English and Afrikaans and thirdly words and phrases considered to be unique to the Cape Flats. This allowed an overview of the non-standard vocabulary use as portrayed in the film.

These non-standard words and phrases were then presented to a group of real-life gangsters from the Cape Flats. The group consisted of four men who had all spent some time in prison. For reasons of personal safety (amongst others), the men were not consulted as individuals, but as a group. They were asked whether the non-standard words and phrases occurring in the film were authentic (as Cape Flats gangster speak) in their opinion, and, if not, whether they could suggest alternative words and phrases that the scriptwriters might have considered to use.

Research approaches and methods drawn on are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as well as Discourse Analysis (DA). CDA studies the relationship between discourse events and sociopolitical and cultural factors. In Verschueren, Östman, and Blommaert (1995:204), CDA is seen as occurring when texts and argumentations are deconstructed and their underlying meanings are consequently made explicit. CDA is interested in transparent relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as they are manifested in language. Social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted and legitimized by language use is brought to the fore by this approach. Language serves to legitimize relations of organized power,

accordingly, language is considered ideological. Concepts used within this framework are, amongst others, power, history and a belief system put forward by the group in power. CDA investigates language behavior in everyday situations of immediate and actual social relevance. It does not view language and the social as separate entities - on the contrary, discourse is seen as a social action. Meanings are the result of interaction between the speakers or writers of texts. Social and political practices are addressed. In the light hereof, CDA is deemed an appropriate research approach for this study, given the relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control present in gangs.

DA is concerned with the contexts in which and the processes through which we use oral and written language with specific audiences, for specific purposes, in specific settings. It assumes that, in order to understand language fully, we need to look at language use. Language does not only consist of symbols but it is seen as a mode of doing, being and becoming. He (2003:429) states that DA asks why we use language the way we do and how we live our lives linguistically. The context of language use is important. He goes as far as to say that “a given utterance has no meaning unless it is accompanied by ethnographic analysis of situations within which interaction takes place” (He 2003:432). Context is represented in terms of three dimensions, namely the field of social action in which the discourse is embedded, the set of role relations among the relevant participants, and the role of the language in the interaction. Focus is on how everyday activities are accomplished linguistically. Language use in the socialization of individuals is established by looking at norms and values. Through the language that you choose, part of your identity is manifested. DA therefore seeks to describe and explain linguistic phenomena in terms of the affective, cognitive, situational and cultural contexts of their use and to identify linguistic resources through which we (re)construct our lives. Essentially, DA asks why we use language the way that we do. DA is deemed a suitable complementary approach to CDA in this study, as it makes it possible to investigate how gang members and members of the underworld use their language as a “mode of doing, being and becoming” in the film.

As stated in Chapter 1, the film *Dollars and White Pipes* is partly set in the Cape Flats. In the next Chapter, information will be provided on this geographical area.

Chapter 3: The Cape Flats

In this Chapter, the history and geography of the Cape Flats are briefly discussed. In sub-section 3.2 information is provided on Hanover Park, which is the part of the Cape Flats where the main character in the film grew up. Sub-section 3.3 looks at the gang culture on the Cape Flats. Sub-section 3.4 focuses on the language landscape of the Cape Flats, after which so-called “gangster-speak” is discussed.

3.1 History and geography of the Cape Flats

As its name denotes, the Cape Flats are flat, as well as being barren and windswept. It is a low plain, which was once under the sea. The flats became a shifting of sand dunes and it falls within the Cape, Wynberg and Bellville Magisterial districts. In early title deeds, the governors referred to it as “De Groote Woeste Vlakte” (The Great Wild Plain). Truck farmers from Germany made the Flats a cultivated area of intensive market gardening. This occurred especially around the Philippi area (Potgieter 1971:31).

The *Group Areas Act* brought with it the forced removal of people. In 1966, P.W.Botha, who was then Minister of Community Development, declared District Six a White Group Area (Pinchuck and McCrea 2000:71). According to Pinchuck and McCrea, District Six is situated south of the castle and in the shadow of Devil’s Peak. On maps, it is referred to as the suburb of Zonnebloem (2000:71). Non-white residents of District Six were forcibly removed to the Cape Flats. The latter is considered the racial dumping ground and the legacy established by the apartheid era.

Today, about two million of the Western Cape’s poorest people live on the Cape Flats. This makes the Cape Flats Cape Town’s largest residential area. Even though the majority of people residing on the Flats comprise so-called Coloured (henceforth referred to as Coloured) people, a mix of cultures and traditions exists here. Even so, Africans and Coloureds had their separate areas. African townships were set up as dormitories to provide labour for white Cape Town. They were not places to build a life. No facilities existed here. Men-only hostels were another relic of the apartheid era. It contributed to the area’s social problems. Women could

not seek work in the city, and men were forbidden to bring their wives along. The law could not prevent the influx of migrant workers and, where they could not find accommodation, they built squatter camps. In the 1970s and 1980s, the government tried to eradicate these squatter camps by demolishing them. However, as soon as the police left, the people started rebuilding their homes. The government soon realized that they were fighting a losing battle. The squatter camps are now a permanent feature of the Cape Flats. The best known of South Africa's squatter camps is Crossroads, whereas Langa (meaning "the sun") is the oldest and most central township (Pinchuck and McCrea 2000:107).

3.2 Hanover Park

Hanover Park was named after a street in District Six. This in itself seems a mockery: the residents of Hanover Park mostly struggle to survive, but the name is a stark reminder of good times and days gone by before their lifestyle was completely altered by apartheid rulings. Hanover Park falls under the jurisdiction of Cape Town City Council and it is in close proximity to the suburbs of Lansdowne and Athlone. Lansdowne Industrial area is within walking distance for the inhabitants of Hanover Park. The area is well serviced with a transport network to ferry commuters to their places of work.

Hanover Park was established in 1969 to provide housing for those evicted from areas like Newlands, Claremont, Bishop's Court, and District Six. Its establishment was a direct result of the apartheid policy. Residents were forced into an area that was foreign to them and that was deprived. The area was economically depressed and people could often not make ends meet. People had to travel further to their place of work, which became an added financial burden. Educational and cultural facilities are still lacking in this suburb. For the Coloureds, the forced removals brought tragic loss when they had to vacate family homes. One of the symptoms of this forced relocation is the violent gangs that exist on the Cape Flats.

According to the City of Cape Town's census of 2001 for the Hanover Park area, Coloureds make up 97% of the inhabitants in the area. Concerning age, 29% of the residents are 18-34 years old. Grade 8-11 constitutes 48% of the educational level of adults 20 years and older. As far as the language in Hanover Park is concerned, Afrikaans is reported to be the home

language of 67% of the residents. Of the residents in the age group 15 to 65, 66% are economically active, and 34% unemployed. However, 57% of employed people in this area earn a meager salary of less than R1 600 per month.

3.3 Gang culture on the Cape Flats

According to Kinnes (2000:1), the growth of the gang subculture in the Western Cape is a result of a combination of various factors, which include social factors such as unemployment and poverty, with its deep-rooted nature in the Western Cape, cultural persuasions, and the globalization of gang culture. Members of organized crime receive support from communities. For those under the age of 30, the unemployment rate on the Cape Flats is as high as 61%. Standing (2003:2) is of the opinion that the Cape Flats is home to a vast number of people and families who exist outside the formal economy. Depressing social features are found here. Ill health, stress, the adverse effects of drug dependency, family fragmentation, school truancy, and exceptionally high levels of interpersonal conflict – especially domestic violence and assaults involving knives and guns – are the order of the day. According to Kinnes (2000:5), the youth may make a “conscious” choice to go in the direction of criminality because of their frustration with the status quo. One of the reasons why gangs are formed is stark poverty in an equally impoverished environment. Pinnock states, “ganging is primarily a survival technique, and it is obvious that as long as the city is part of a socio-economic system which reproduces this poverty, no amount of policing will stop gangsters” (1984:99).

On the Cape Flats, the gang members see their fights for territory as them triumphing over their parents who just gave up and did not fight back when the government relocated them through the *Group Areas Act* in 1966. Their skill is violence and it has an economic value to the gangs (Pinnock 1984:54). Henner Hess (1973) compared the model of the criminal economy on the Cape Flats to that of the Sicilian Mafioso. Stories of how gang leaders rose to prominence are rife with excessive violence. They are, however, also seen as men of special intellect, even though few have finished school. Moreover, they are able to run their operations like businesses. Most of them have spent time in prison and are members of the prison gangs, although they do not hold high-ranking positions in these gangs (Standing

2003:3). Wealth and power on the outside of prison do not secure them power on the inside. Already in 1984, the number of gang members on the Cape Flats was estimated to be 100 000 (Standing 2003:4).

Gangs on the Cape Flats consist of all age groups even though older members may be less active. The threat of conflict and economic survival are of utmost importance to gangs. The loyalty to the gang is tested when members need to stand united during fights. However, not all members are involved when fighting takes place because the gangs have too many members to make the involvement of all feasible. *The Americans* are considered the biggest gang on the Cape Flats. The gang's unity and self-identity is achieved by a shared culture (members share specific tattoos, dress codes, and slang), an animosity to outsiders, and collective memories of the gang's past stories of gang fights and the histories of their leaders (Standing 2003:4).

3.4 The language landscape of the Cape Flats

As stated above, the dominant language spoken in Hanover Park, where the film *Dollars and White Pipes* takes place, is Afrikaans – as is the case for the rest of the Cape Flats. More specifically, a non-standard variety of Afrikaans is spoken here. This variety of Afrikaans is often referred to as “Kaaps” or “Kombuistaal”. Gang members on the Cape Flats use non-standard Afrikaans and slang.

According to McCormick (2002:49), it is the flexibility and creativity that is being displayed in the Cape Flats vernacular, which has sustained it for so long. Language mixing and code switching, which involves English and Afrikaans, form part of the linguistic repertoire of residents of the Cape Flats. The Afrikaans lexicon of the Cape Flats draws on English (McCormick 2002:95). Lexical borrowings occur frequently. Afrikaans loanwords do not play such a major role in English as the latter plays in the Afrikaans vernacular of the gang members. These English loanwords have displaced Afrikaans words or co-exist with them (McCormick 2002:95). When talking in English, the interlocutor will use an Afrikaans word to express strong emotion, anger, or disgust. According to McCormick (2002:225), these Afrikaans terms have “stronger emotional colouring”. The “proper” way of speaking to others

on the Cape Flats is to mix and switch languages. A distinction needs to be made between code switching and code mixing. Code switching entails switching from one language, dialect, etc. to another. This is done because the nature or the subject of the conversation changes. Code mixing refers to speakers switching back and forth, for no specific external reason, at frequent intervals.

The language used by gang members needs to be seen in the context of where Afrikaans originated and what brought about this way of speaking. The White Afrikaans speakers have tried since 1870 to keep “their” Afrikaans dialect standard. Here, politics come into play. At the time, the British abolished the slave trade. English was seen as the language of the oppressor because the British spoke English, and speaking Afrikaans was seen as a sign of belonging to the “volk” who claimed that they owned South Africa. Because they were marginalized, the working class Coloured communities rejected these values. McCormick is of the opinion that “mixing and switching are consonant with a rejection of concern for racial, ethnic, or linguistic purity, and with a concomitant acceptance of heterogeneous roots” (2002:96). Working class Coloureds “played around” with what the dominant power held sacred and this can be seen as a way of deliberately causing frustration (McCormick 2002:96).

Some speakers on the Cape Flats who dissociate themselves from Afrikaans do so for political reasons: they view Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor. During the Apartheid era, the ruling party spoke Afrikaans. Others will reject standard Afrikaans because of the above-mentioned reason, but will speak non-standard Afrikaans. Then there are those who are proud of Afrikaans and see it as truly a distinctive South African language. These individuals will tend to speak only standard or “suiwer” (“pure”) Afrikaans (McCormick 2002:98).

One reason provided for the use of English words in the language spoken on the Cape Flats is the function of “filling gaps in the vocabulary” (McCormick 2002:100). In bilingual dialogue, English words are also used for stylistic purposes. Other reasons are that English words are used as a matter of convenience and an expression of identity. Users of Afrikaans from the Cape Flats perceive their language as needing English words and not vice versa. When speaking English, individuals do not use many Afrikaans words; they rather switch to Afrikaans syntax and vocabulary (McCormick 2002:100).

The English spoken on the Cape Flats by gang members is often regarded as “broken English” and considered sub-standard. When these gang members meet someone who speaks the standard version of English, they are very aware of their lack of proficiency in standard English and will avoid communication or will only speak when they are extremely comfortable with the individual. Yet, English is viewed more favorably than Afrikaans. To be seen as “cool” and sophisticated, one has to be conversant in English. It is believed that, in order to obtain employment, one has to know English, which is regarded as the business language. At the time of the political turmoil that the country experienced during the apartheid years, many people emigrated. Many relatives of people currently living on the Cape Flats were able to do so because they could speak English. It is therefore seen as an international language.

English was thus branded the language of superiority. People from the Cape Flats who could converse in English used this to their advantage when in communication with Afrikaans-speaking people. English in the Coloured communities was linked to middle class, financially well-off individuals, as well as to well-known educational institutions. During the apartheid era, Coloureds who could speak English well (amongst other things) could register as Whites to escape being oppressed (McCormick 2002:102).

On the other hand, Afrikaans is seen as the language of neighborhood solidarity. When looking at McCormick’s research conducted on language in Cape Town’s District Six in 2002, it is evident that Afrikaans was a product of easy contact between different ethnic groups who lived there. This was contrary to what the apartheid government was trying to achieve, namely the separation of ethnic and racial groups. The analysis in the present study of the linguistic repertoire of the Cape Flats gangster speech community will draw from McCormick (1995:199).

The linguistic repertoire of the Cape Flats gangsters as a speech community can broadly be seen as non-standard Afrikaans, non-standard English and English-Afrikaans code switching. McCormick (1995:199) refers to this as the “vernacular”. Even though the degree of mixing the English and Afrikaans language is widespread on the Cape Flats (McCormick 2002:120),

it is important to note that not everyone has equal command of all of the codes. Members of the gangster community do also not distinguish between mixing and switching.

McCormick (1995:199) is of the opinion that non-standard Afrikaans should be seen as a mixed code, because it is not just a speaker strategy. She furthers her argument by saying that non-standard Afrikaans has been used for a very long time, and even though the lexicons change, the grammatical structure is seen as stable. McCormick (1995:200) makes a clear distinction between situational and conversational code switching. In situational code switching, the vernacular is seen as the mode in which a conversation is conducted between gang members on the Cape Flats. The vernacular is seen as warm, intimate, and a sign of membership in the community. Should you use standard dialects of English and Afrikaans, the inhabitants will frown upon you. In the instances of formal gatherings, standard English is used. In instances of heated debate, it is interesting to note that a change of code will mostly take place without the participants being aware of the switch. The vernacular will then be used.

Conversational code switching is seen to happen unconsciously in conversations. The characteristics of code switching are the transition that takes place from one to another language. Contrast, balance, and emphasis are achieved by making use of code switching. The speaker may use a word as a loanword in a sentence. Alternatively, this specific word can become the first word in the sentence, indicating a switch to the other language. Making the switch can be an indication of a change in focus. It also allows gang members to use phrases and idioms which express their emotions best (McCormick 1995:202). Emphasis is created by repeating words in the other language. Code switching has an identifiable effect on style. Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez assert that “code-switching is also a communicative skill, which speakers use as a verbal strategy in much the same way that skilful writers switch styles in a short story” (1972:98). On the Cape Flats, individuals hoping to obtain upward mobility are seen to code-switch to standard English and Afrikaans when conversing with strangers.

Not only English words but also Xhosa and Zulu words are influencing the local vernacular on the Cape Flats, being absorbed into it – especially, but not exclusively, by members of

prison gangs. Gangs outside of prison started to identify with particular prison gangs. Subsequently, in the early 1980s, the lexis of the prison gangs started emerging in the dialects of delinquent gangs outside of prison (Stone 1995:278). Speakers on the Cape Flats are entertained by “the metaphoric creativity, connotative wealth and wit of much of its lexis” (Stone 1995:280). They do this to signify their sociolinguistic competence.

A common view is that a non-standard language variety is an imperfect “copy” of the standard one. Labov (1969:3) states that a “doctrine of correctness” prevails towards spoken standard English. This attitude towards English is evident in individuals’ attitudes towards languages in their country. This statement can also be applied to the Afrikaans used by gang members on the Cape Flats. Interlocutors of higher social standing e.g. educated people would expect individuals to uphold standard Afrikaans when in settings removed from their usual environment (where the use of non-standard Afrikaans prevails). In this situation, the linguistic competence of gang members is usually rated as being poor.

The language used by gangsters on the Cape Flats can be considered urban lingua francas. Slang may enter the standard language. In general, there is greater tolerance when males use slang than when females use it. Teenagers are the age group using slang the most. Mesthrie (1992:14-17) states that slang cuts across ethnic boundaries. Subconsciously, slang may be used to abandon ethnic and class ties. Slang “augments the lexicon in certain areas to accommodate the needs of its speakers”, according to Bailey (1985:12). De Klerk (1995:275) is of the opinion that slang has contributed to change that is inevitable in a language. In addition, he mentions that the vitality of Afrikaans (as first and second language) is contributed, in part, to the use of slang. It is seen as the impetus that contributes to the diversity of Afrikaans in South Africa.

3.5 Gangster speak

As mentioned before, this thesis will not focus on gangs as such, but rather on the language that they use. Specifically, it will look at linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats. Gang members are part of the marginalized society and construct meaning from their surroundings through their use of language. They express their

beliefs, values and interests. It can be said that they are exploring possible worlds, claiming space and making their voices heard. Moje is of the opinion that “they are well aware that their use of language, physical characteristics and social affiliation go against the grain of society. They use their language as a meaning making, expressive and communicative tool” (2000:651). Their use of language can be seen as an unsanctioned mode of practice. By using language, they are transforming thought and experience. Gang members can code switch easily, depending on the context that they find themselves in. Moje (2000:656) states that the gang members’ identity is shaped as they move through different contexts. These identities can, however, conflict. According to her, “gang members use their literacy practices to express their fears and concerns, to construct identities and to position themselves in particular ways” (2000: 663). Their use of language is seen as deviant from or resistant against the order of the day. They express themselves crudely and the use of profanities often takes precedence. They regularly borrow words from other languages. Invention of terms and phrases takes place and the way words are pronounced are also occasionally different to the so-called standard pronunciation. Moje (2000:672) therefore claims that the language, literacy, and discourse practices are tools of power that allow gang members to negotiate and construct a particular social space.

Sornig states that “the vocabulary people use... is one of the things that characterize a group; it expresses their common fears, interests, aversions and preferences” (1981:49). Gang members have a distinctive vocabulary, amongst others, as a form of social solidarity. The vocabulary under investigation is the ever-changing and fashionable vocabulary of sociability that gang members use casually with one another, i.e., their slang. The lifespan of slang is much more short-lived than that of other words in the vocabulary. Slang is seen as the deviant vocabulary of marginalized groups and has in the past rarely been taken seriously as a scholarly subject, one that can contribute to the understanding of language use in general. Yet, as stated by Eble, objections to the use of slang are a matter of “social appropriateness and not grammar” (1996:21).

Slang is a set of colloquial words or phrases that individuals use to form a social identity or group cohesiveness. Dumas and Lighter (1978:14-16) are of the opinion that slang is

linguistically difficult to define. According to them, the following are criteria used to identify slang:

1. The use of slang lowers the dignity of formal speech or writing.
2. Using slang implies association with the referent or less responsible class of people who are familiar with the use of slang.
3. For people of higher social status or responsibility, slang is taboo.
4. Slang is used in place of the well-known synonym.

Slang, much like poetry, focuses on meaning. Body language and expressions are important when conveying the meaning of slang. Slang depends on the hearer's ability to make associations. It can therefore be seen as vocabulary related to the social side of human interaction.

The social context in which the slang is used is of chief importance. The slang lexicon to be analyzed for this thesis will come exclusively from the film *Dollars and White Pipes*. It is interesting to note that the majority of the characters in the film are men. Mainly (yet not exclusively) males use slang. Gang members have mastery of manipulating language and distinguishing the insiders from the outsiders. They learn their practices because they are born into the gang culture or their family members belong to a gang. Learning gang literacy is therefore community-based: the younger children learn by emulating their older brothers. Their perception is that the quicker they learn, the more power and respect they will gain in the community.

Gang members from Johannesburg will speak a different language variety than those from Cape Town. The language varieties of the two groups are, mutually intelligible but they also differ systematically. The Cape Flats language variety is often termed "gamtaal", a fast spoken mixture of Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, with innumerable variations in different areas (Pinnock 1984:102). This variety is a non-standard one².

² Note that non-standard does not mean "sub-standard" or "inferior". This is a perception held by many.

Stewart and Vaillette (2001:310) state that standard dialects are associated with individuals of power and social status. Non-standard dialects, on the other hand, are associated with low socio-economic classes. Non-standard varieties are seen as “bad” and “improper”, whereas standard varieties are seen as “good” or “proper”. It is important to note that such evaluations are linguistically unfounded. Stewart and Vaillette further develop their argument by stating that speakers who do not adapt to the standard are considered lazy, not ambitious, and uneducated. Speakers of non-standard varieties are told that the varieties they speak are “wrong” and “inferior”, and that they must speak the variety that they were taught in school. Some children make these adjustments and become bidialectal speakers, having a mastery of two dialects – one a standard variety and the other a non-standard one. Other children become marginally fluent in the standard variety and excel in the non-standard one. Yet others reject the standard variety and master the non-standard one only.

In many ways, non-standard varieties will persist, despite their stigmatized status. In the case of the Cape Flats gang members, their desire to belong to a particular group is the overriding factor in their choice of language variety. Here, language becomes a marker of group identification. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985:181) propose that we choose to speak the way we do based on how we identify ourselves and how we want to be identified. Language is more than a means of communication; it is seen as a “social badge.” However, how we speak is not entirely up to us, because linguistic exposure is also a major factor. Stewart and Vaillette state, “variation does not degrade a language or make it in some way imperfect. It is a natural part of every language to have different ways of expressing the same meanings. In addition, linguistically speaking, the relationship between standard and non-standard varieties is not one of good versus bad, right versus wrong. They are simply different ways of speaking” (2001:311).

“Different ways of speaking” can be used to gain membership to a particular community. In the next Chapter, the notion of membership of a specific linguistic community by means of vocabulary choice is examined. This is done to set the theoretical framework in which the non-standard “way of speaking” associated with gang members on the Cape Flats – as depicted in the film *Dollars and White Pipes* – will be analyzed.

Chapter 4: Membership of a specific linguistic community by means of vocabulary choice

The vocabulary that gang members use can be seen as a social marker, because they identify themselves as belonging to a certain group. They use lexical items, which are known as “belonging” to them, because it occurs almost exclusively in their speech. Of importance is that even though their vocabulary items are considered “fashionable”, it is ephemeral. This Chapter will focus on slang in sub-section 4.1, anti-language in sub-section 4.2 and social judgments based on linguistic aspects in sub-section 4.3.

4.1 Slang

Of note is the intention of gang members when they use slang. Sledd argues that:

when a teacher warns his students against slang, he re-affirms his allegiance to the social order that created him. Typically, slang is a para-code, a system of substitutes for statusful expressions, which are used by people who lack conventional status and do not conduct the important affairs of established communities. Slang flourishes in the semantic areas of sex, drinking, narcotics, racing, athletics, popular music and other crimes- a “liberal” language of things done as ends in themselves by gentlemen who are not gentlemen and dislike gentility. Genteel pedagogues must naturally oppose it, precisely because slang serves the outs as a weapon against the ins. To use slang is to deny allegiance to the existing order, either jokingly or in earnest by refusing even the words, which represent convention and signal status; and those who are paid to preserve the status quo are prompted to repress any other symbol of potential revolution. (1965:699)

As stated in the previous chapter, slang is difficult to define. Many users do not know the exact meaning of the slang words that they use. Slang is verbal and the spellings of these words are idiosyncratic and problematic. As stated by Sledd above, many words refer to aspects in life that are taboo and where secrecy is appreciated. Linguistic use of slang is

coloured by the social, cultural, and geographical context of the user. De Klerk (2006:407) is of the opinion that slang flourishes in intimate sub-cultures. The social functions of slang refer to membership of the group, creativity, fun and fashion, the exclusion of non-members, and the labeling of “the other”.

Gang members’ vocabulary is motivated in part because it is taboo. They seem to enjoy playing with the language. By making use of language, there is a certain effect that the gang member wants to impress upon the interlocutor. Sornig (1981:20) sees slang as a lexicon in the making. He is of the opinion that it is a language to experiment with. It should be noted that even though it is considered ephemeral, some words have survived due to its connotative and denotative status. Slang has the tendency to create a lexicon of its own (Sornig 1981:22). By making use of the lexicon, gang members are allowed freedom. Schuchardt states, “it is the variability and ephemerality which man becomes aware of in himself and in his environment that actually creates language” (1922:209).

Gang members from the Cape Flats use slang mostly to denote that they belong to a particular sub-culture. It is important to note that slang will thrive in this set-up, because group membership and solidarity are extremely important to gangs. In the same way that clothes and hairstyles are used to distinguish fashion, their words – specifically their vocabulary – act as badges of their group membership. Because they are removed from mass social intercommunication, there will be a higher prevalence of deviation from formal standard language among gang members and factory workers, for instance.

Slang is especially used by adolescents. They are the individuals who spend this period of their lives wanting to belong. For them, slang forms part of a shared linguistic code, where they share knowledge and interests and, more importantly, the sense of belonging (Hudson 1983). Briefly, “the chief use of slang is to show that you’re one of the gang” (Crystal 1987:53). The attraction for teenagers towards slang and swear words is the exclusion and bonding that it brings. Slang terms have one thing in common according to Freud: “the psyche of the masses is just as well capable of ingenious acts of creativeness, as can be demonstrated from language itself...” (1923:24).

Interestingly, as stated above, not everyone using slang terms knows their meaning. A contextualized restricted code with implicit connotations will leave the prospective “wannabe” red-faced, having to admit incompetence as far as the knowledge of the exact meaning of these terms is concerned. These “wannabes” and new gang members acquire the slang through careful observation. Sornig (1981:1) states that the main reason for slang words’ very existence lies in their connotations. This vagueness and adaptability of words make them even more interesting to use in their vocabulary. The fashionable, easy-going and laid-back attitude is what attracts adolescents to slang. In looking at the creative, fun and fashion aspect of slang, its witty and humorous effect sustains it. De Klerk sees slang as “an expressive, almost poetic medium, evidenced by the amount of rhyme, alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia, and other linguistic devices it draws on” (2006:408).

Slang is often localized and topical and will have a regional flavor. In addition, the words that gang members use tend to die a “natural death”. This will be due to either excessive use or limited circulation. The media is often blamed for the overuse of slang, because they bring to the knowledge of the public the words that would otherwise have remained the “property” of the sub-culture. Under-use occurs when these words continue to be used only by specific members, or when group members stop using the words. It is said that nothing reveals one’s age quicker than using outdated slang words. Some slang words will age and will not become standard, whereas others will join the standard fold and enter the domain of respectability (De Klerk 2006:408).

Very often new slang is just the recycling of words that appear to be new to new users. Force of habit and peer pressure to actually conform restrict linguistic choices that adolescents have. For many, as they go through this phase, slang will become boring and only a few will have a wide repertoire in this register (De Klerk 2006:408).

Slang originates from a context. Its intention is to be ambiguous and to cause misunderstanding to outsiders. The motivating factor is not lack of vocabulary, but rather the need to develop an identity that is specific to a social group. Gang members are in conflict with the dominant culture. Demonstrating disrespect to authority and rebelliousness are gang members’ reasons for using slang. The disapproving and abusive side of slang is predominant

in the gang sub-culture. It is used to break norms, to shock, and to challenge the authority of respect. Slang has generated negative attitudes towards it, because of its use to ridicule, mock and hurt other individuals (De Klerk 2006:410).

Cultural stereotypes regarding the use of slang also exist. One is that adolescents tend to use slang exclusively. The second one is that slang, especially when social taboo words are used, is the exclusive domain of males. However, not all teenagers will use slang, because not all will conform to peer pressure. Some will assert their individualism by demonstrating their intellect and personalities in another way. As for the second view, gender differences are becoming less (Holmes 1984). De Klerk (2006:411) states that, even though men might know more slang words and use them more often than women; ironically, it might not be because they want to. His view is that society expects men to use slang. It is the individual's prerogative to establish whether he wants to make use of slang or not, and if it suits his image or not.

Current social circumstances will affect the user's linguistic choices. For instance, in the global market, the use of standard language holds more power and prestige. Conversely, in the local marketplace non-standard slang will be important. Slang pays dividends in the local marketplace. Higher value is therefore placed on it in adolescent years. However, social class and education tend to cause linguistic values to shift in later years. Standard forms tend to be prevalent amongst the 30-55 age groups. Nevertheless, exceptions occur where the individual does not have social and economic power. These individuals (of which gang members are prime examples) will continue to use slang so that they fit in with their sub-culture. Interestingly, those individuals who are now successful and who previously made use of slang, often tend to fervently advocate the taboos of its use.

The social use of vocabulary has evolved using technological advances. It used to be linked to sub-cultures in communities and seen as almost exclusively oral. However, nowadays slang is used in writing across linguistic and cultural boundaries through means of e-mails, chat rooms, and websites. Diffusion of slang words has also taken place: slang may be used in an American television series or movie today and heard amongst teenagers in Cape Town tomorrow.

As stated above, the purpose of slang is used to bind members together and to bring about shared knowledge. Gang members use words and phrases casually, but they tend not to write as they speak. In addition, they do not speak in such a casual fashion when they have to interact with strangers or in important instances. Their “clever” use of vocabulary sets them apart from others in the community and is a sign of solidarity with others like them. Their slang vocabulary is an identification marker for the activity or behavior that links them to the rest of the gang. Gang members’ slang is also often termed “argot”, because they operate on the outskirts of society and of what it considers respectable. Gang members’ argot, which is often obscure, separates them and their activities from outsiders. By continuously creating new terms, gang members use slang to keep others out and to identify the group members.

4.2 Anti-language

Eble (2006:414) considers the tone of slang to be negative. Gang members generally develop an “anti-language” due to the fact that they, much like prison gangs, are far removed from the language society ascribes to. Halliday (1976:570) also referred to the language of gang members as an anti-language. He states the following about anti-languages:

At certain times and places we come across special forms of language generated by some kind of anti-society; these we may call “anti-languages.” An anti-language serves to create and maintain social structure through conversation, just as an everyday language does; but the social structure is of a particular kind, in which certain elements are strongly foregrounded. This gives to the anti-language a special character in which metaphorical modes of expression are the norm; patterns of this kind appear at all levels, phonological, lexicogrammatical, and semantic. The study of anti-languages offers further insights into the relation between language and social structure, and into the way in which text functions in the realization of social contexts. (1976:570)

Social values tend to stand out in anti-language. When the question is posed as to why anti-language is used, the need for secrecy as well as verbal art becomes known. Gang members

make use of teamwork to exchange meanings. The meanings of these words are unknown to the victims against whom the slang is targeted, in order to keep them in the dark as far as the meaning of the words is concerned. Gang members are never to “sell out” their language to the police, for instance. Although secrecy is one of the reasons why they use slang vocabulary, this does not determine the existence of the language (Halliday 1976:572).

An anti-society is set up as an alternative to the existing society. It can be considered as a symbol of resistance. Anti-language is generated by an anti-society and a special register is used. Old words are exchanged with new ones. Technical elements are over-lexicalized. An example for this will be the fact that for the word drugs, narcotics can also be used. This re-lexicalization is associated with criminal counter-culture, which is an accurate description of gang culture. In this way, the language of gangs can become an anti-language.

In his book *Second life*, Podgórecki (1973) states, “the social structure is acted out and brings forth an alternative reality”. “Second life” refers to how an individual will reconstruct him/herself in society (Halliday 1976:573). In the context of gang members specifically, “second life” could refer to the efforts of gang members to maintain identity while being faced with its destruction. For this reason, they create alternative identities.

Berger and Luckmann state the following:

The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual’s everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality. Conversation means mainly, of course, that people speak with one another. This does not deny the rich aura of non-verbal communication that surrounds speech. Nevertheless, speech retains a privileged position in the total conversational apparatus. It is important to stress, however that the greater part of reality-maintenance in conversation is implicit, not explicit. Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is silently taken for granted. Thus an exchange such as, “Well, it’s time for me to get to the station,” and “Fine, darling, have a good day at the office,” implies an entire

world *within which* these apparently simple propositions make sense. By virtue of this implication, the exchange confirms the subjective reality of this world. If this is understood, one will readily see that the great part, if not all, of everyday conversation maintains subjective reality. Indeed, its massivity is achieved by the accumulation and consistency of casual conversation-conversation that can *afford to be* casual precisely because it refers to the routine of a taken-for-granted world. The loss of casualness signals a break in the routines and, at least potentially, a threat to the taken-for-granted reality. Thus, one may imagine the effect and casualness of an exchange like this: “Well, it’s time for me to get to the station.” “Fine, darling, don’t forget to take along your gun.” At the same time that the conversational apparatus ongoingly maintains reality, it ongoingly modifies it. Items are dropped and added, weakening some sectors of what is still being taken for granted and reinforcing others. Thus, the subjective reality of something that is never talked about comes to be shaky. It is one thing to engage in an embarrassing sexual act. It is quite another to talk about it beforehand or afterwards. Conversely, conversation gives firm contours to items previously apprehended in a fleeting and unclear manner. One may have doubts about one’s religion: these doubts become real in a quite different way as one discusses them. One then “talks oneself into” these doubts: they are objectified as reality within one’s own consciousness. The conversational apparatus maintains reality by “talking through” various elements of experience and allocating them a definite place in the real world. This reality-generating potency of conversation is already given in the fact of linguistic objectification. We have seen how language objectifies the world, transforming the *panta rhei* of experience into a cohesive order. In the establishment of this order, language *realizes* a world, in the double sense of apprehending and producing it. Conversation is the actualizing of this realizing efficacy of language in the face-to-face situation of individual consciousness. Thus, the fundamental reality-maintaining fact is the continuing use of the same language to objectify unfolding biographical experience. In the widest sense, all who employ the same language are reality maintaining others. The significance of this can be further differentiated in terms of what is meant by a “common language” from the group- idiosyncratic language of primary groups to regional or class dialects to the national community that defines itself in terms of language. (1966:172-173)

Gang member's subjective reality is created in their mixing with others in society. Interacting with others especially means using verbal language. There is a search for originality by gang members. In this regard, their slang can also be seen as an indicator of verbal competition and display.

Turning to the question as to why an anti-language exists, it is interesting to note that it is considered the vehicle that drives resocialization. An alternative reality is created through reconstruction. The gang member undergoes some form of transformation. When referring to an anti-language, the alternative reality or counter-reality is in opposition to the established norm. There is no distance, but there is definitively tension between the two realities. There is thus a switching back and forth between society and anti-society. Everyday language is a metaphor for anti-language. Anti-society can thus be seen as a metaphor for society. The level of social system is where their linking will transpire. Anti-language can be seen as the metaphor for language. Social semiotic will be the point of amalgamation (Halliday 1976:578).

A current trend is that even schoolchildren are using the vocabulary of gang members. This can be contributed to the fact that the youth can be seen as different and in opposition to the establishment. They can do this without having actual membership to any gang. They are borrowing from a group with lower prestige in society. These children, as they are growing up and learning to speak, are exposed to the language of the gang members. Youths share their social world with others and, by using slang, show their acquaintance with each other. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz maintain, "social identity and ethnicity are in large part established and maintained through language" (1982:7).

4.3 Social judgments based on linguistic aspects

Languages are created by the poor, who go on renewing them forever. The rich crystallize them in order to put on the spot anybody who speaks in a different way. Or in order to make him fail exams.

(Letter to a teacher, by the school of Barbiana, as cited in Macaulay (1994:73))

The way gang members speak, allows others to make judgments about them. These social judgments will be made on their grammar and pronunciation. What is considered grammatical and taken up as standard language, the dominant elite have put in place. The educational system and the media have contributed to this entrenchment. Their use is considered correct. Other forms from other groups are therefore considered as incorrect. Macaulay (1994:88) states that nobody “speaks English” or any other language. They do not understand the totality of the language. We only know and use that part of the language that assists us in bringing our message across and for others to understand us. Register is the one part of language development that will continue throughout an individual’s life.

The variation and flexibility of language enables it to cope with reality that is forever changing. Because of this transient nature of reality, “anybody who has a command of nothing more than the so-called standard norm of usage is not adequately equipped, socially and/or linguistically, for active participation in community life” (Sornig 1981:62).

When gang members are competing with another gang, group solidarity amongst its members increase. According to Doise (1978:112), it becomes more clearly defined or is adapted to circumstances. When integration of the psychological and sociological takes place, it leads to linguistic behavior. The linguistic behavior will have its own set of rules and thus responds to the situation. It is renewed in every social situation (Doise 1978:191).

In meeting people for the first time, we tend not to react only to the person as a human being. Their profession, ethnic group, gender, and social class will also influence their behavior and our response. Stone (1995), in his analysis of discourse and dialects, states that middle class Coloureds will discourage their children from using “the vernacular.” Likewise, people from rural origin see the language of urban Cape Peninsula Coloureds as a “mess” (Stone 1995:280). However, on the Cape Flats, communities view their vernacular as a marker of communal membership, and it is considered a vehicle of intimacy and love. According to Stone, these communities make a division based on lexicogrammatical codes. Community members are afforded one of four separate identities, namely those of ‘respectable’, ‘disreputable’, ‘delinquent’, and ‘outcast’, based on the language codes they use.

As can be seen from the above discussion, language choice, including vocabulary choice, can serve as a linguistic identity marker. This study aimed to establish exactly which vocabulary items were used to serve as identity markers for the main characters in the film *Dollars and White Pipes*. In the next Chapter, the film itself is discussed.

Chapter 5: The film *Dollars and White Pipes*

Bernie Baatjies aged approximately eighteen, the main character in the film, is from Hanover Park. His father is a preacher who has a favorite saying, namely “you never leave Hanover Park except in a coffin or with a Bible in your hand”. His father seems more concerned about the welfare of his congregation than about that of his own family. His mother works all day to support the family. Baatjies is well aware that she is disappointed in him. He drops out of school and works in a shop for a short time. Money and drugs (dollars and white pipes) are the only things that are important to him and his friend Angelo. Like a ritual, Bernie watches *Dallas* every Tuesday evening. He dreams of climbing the staircase to material gain and stardom like the character J.R. Ewing from the television series.

In the film, three gangs feature predominantly in Hanover Park. They are *The Mongrels*, *Mommy’s Boys*, and *The Americans*. One day, thinking that he witnessed the gang-related death of Angelo, Baatjies decides to leave Hanover Park. His mother tells him not to return, because there is nothing for him in Hanover Park. He goes to Cape Town and that evening he drinks spirits with the “bergies” (homeless). They steal his shoes, clothes, and other meager belongings. He meets Cecil, a mentally challenged man, on the train. He cons Cecil out of his shoes by telling him that shoes make your feet soft and that he should go without shoes for a week. Cecil tells Baatjies that he landed a job at *Club Bliss* in Cape Town. Baatjies goes in search of the club, and lies by saying that his cousin Cecil fell ill and that he is there to replace him. On Baatjies’s first day of employment at *Club Bliss*, a Mr. Kuysier and his bodyguards enter the club. Baatjies sees him as the Coloured equivalent of J.R. Ewing.

Baatjies is very observant. He has a plan to progress from bar-back to barman, manager, and owner, and then into the top position of Mr. Kuysier. When he asks the manager if he can train as a barman, the answer is no – it is a White club and the clientele apparently prefers being served by Whites. However, the manager starts teaching Baatjies everything about the business. In this way, Baatjies progresses to manager and he moves into his own flat.

After the owner shoots a drug dealer in his club, he has to flee, leaving Baatjies in control. After some time, Baatjies buys over the club and names it “Dallas”. His inner sanctuary he

calls “Southfork”, named after the ranch where the Ewing’s lived. Mr. Kuyser then comes to the club. He tells Baatjies that he is responsible for protecting all the clubs in Cape Town. In a very subtle way, he threatens Baatjies, who declines the offer of protection. The next evening “Bulletproof” Hussein and members of the *Moroccan* gang destroy the club. Baatjies is forced to return to Kuyser, asking for help and money.

Kuyser now owns a 20% share in the club and he starts dealing drugs in the club. At first, Baatjies tries to resist this, but then he buys drugs for a friend from the dealer in his club. Kuyser and his men beat up an innocent man to prove a point to Baatjies. When it is Baatjies’ turn to beat the man, he refuses. Kuyser hits Baatjies, because he says Baatjies disappointed him. According to him, Baatjies has neither trust nor courage. When ordered later by Kuyser to kill the previous owner of the club, Baatjies again cannot do it and the drug dealer in the club does so in his stead. However, when Baatjes finds out that Cecil (whom he has befriended in the meantime) is in danger of being killed by one of Kuyser’s henchmen, Baatjies steps in and kills the henchman to protect Cecil’s life. After this, he throws the gun at Kuyser’s feet and informs him that he is done with doing things Kuyser’s way. He briefly returns to Hanover Park with Cecil. Bernie Baatjies eventually leaves Cape Town to open a restaurant in Norwood, Johannesburg.

As can be seen from the brief synopsis, the film is dominated by male characters who are involved in gang related or underworld activities. The language use (specifically the vocabulary) of these males and of Baatjies in particular forms the focus of this study.

Chapter 6: Results and discussion

As stated in Chapter 2, in order to provide an overview of the language used by Cape Flats gang members as portrayed in the film *Dollars and White Pipes*, every utterance in the film, which was judged non-standard, was transcribed orthographically, and the standard version of the utterance was identified. Next, the data were analyzed in two main ways, firstly, according to the language of the non-standard words and, secondly, according to parts of speech. In this Chapter, this data analysis is presented and discussed.

6.1 Non-standard items presented according to the language to which they belong

In Table 1, the non-standard Afrikaans words and their standard translations are given. Table 2 contains the non-standard English words and their standard translations. As can be seen from comparing the number of entries in these two tables, more non-standard English words were used than non-standard Afrikaans ones. This could possibly be explained in the light of the target audience of the film. The producers of the film probably wanted the film to be reasonably comprehensible to non-mother-tongue speakers of Afrikaans, and therefore limited the amount of Afrikaans spoken. In the film, Afrikaans is mostly used to express anger, disgust or strong emotion. Language mixing and code switching occur. Code switching happens unconsciously in conversations, as exemplified in *I'll try to run a move, but I can't promise niks nie*, uttered by Baatjies.

Table 1. All non-standard Afrikaans lexical items or phrases occurring in the movie

Afrikaans words	Word in context	Translation
Duidelike	You're a duidelike bra	You're a good comrade
Eina	Going to be very eina, nê	It is going to be sore,hey
En klaar	Finish en klaar	Over en done with
Het jy my?	Het jy my?	Do you understand me?
Ja	About tyd ja	It is about time
Jags	Is hy dan jags!	Is he lustful!
Jinnie	Jinnie I'm tired sien jy	Gee-whiz I'm tired
Kak	Gat vanaand bietjie kak soek	Going to look for trouble tonight
Kakka	They kakka	They are not suited
Korrekte nommer	Jy's bymekaar met 'n korrekte nommer	You are involved with the right things
Moere	A high, a moere of a high staircase	A very high staircase
My broer	Check die place, my broer	Look at the place, my friend
My broer man	You lost your job today, my broer man	You lost your job today, my friend
Naaiers	Julle naaiers!	You scoundrels!
Niks	I can't promise niks nie	I cannot promise anything
Pyp	I remember this fokken pyp	I remember this gun
Regte poes	Die ding is mos 'n regte poes	He is a fool
So ja	So ja, as it turned out	Yes, as it turned out
So 'n ou	Ek is mos nie nog so 'n ou nie	I am not a guy like that
Steek	Steek ons hulle fucked up	We are going to kill them
Swak	Ek was swak	I was financially in a bad spot
Verstaan jy?	Ons is broers, verstaan jy?	We are brothers, do you understand?
Waentjie	Take the waentjie back home	Take the train home

Of note is that some words, which are standard Afrikaans ones, were pronounced in a non-standard manner. These include *hier's* (“*here is*”) which is pronounced as [his], *sommer* (“*just*”) as [sɔmə] and *maar* (“*but*”) as [ma:]. Such sound omissions commonly occur in non-standard Afrikaans. *Weet* (“*know*”) was pronounced as [vit]. Vowel heightening is also a common phonological process in non-standard Afrikaans (cf. Hendricks 1996:8 for further examples). Furthermore, *gaan* (“*go*”) was pronounced as *gat* and *daardie* (“*that*”) as *daai*, pronunciations which occur in informal speech in many varieties of Afrikaans.

Table 2. All non-standard English lexical items or phrases occurring in the movie

English words	Word in context	Translation
Blade	Bring a blade	Bring a knife
Booze	Sold the booze	Sold the liquor
Bucks	100 bucks or so	100 rand or so
Check	Check the place, my broer	Look at the place, my friend
Check you	Check you, Angelo	See you again, Angelo
Checking	I've been checking everything out	I've been looking at everything
Cheeky	Fokken cheeky of you	Very daring of you
Cool	You ouens are welcome, cool?	You people are welcome, okay?
Do-I-do	Not his do-I-do	Not his second in command
Dollars and white pipes	Dollars and white pipes	Money and mandrax pipes
Finish	Finish en klaar	Over and done with
Fucked up	Steek ons hulle fucked up	We are going to kill them
Fuckin bullshit	Look like a fuckin bullshit excuse	Look like a stupid excuse
Fuss	Didn't fuss me that I had nothing	Didn't bother me that I had nothing
Go check	Go check	Impressive
Grand	Thirty grand	Thirty thousand rand
Howzit	Hey, howzit, I'm Bernie	Hi, hello, I'm Bernie
Kind	What kind?	What is wrong? / How are you?
Mapped out	You're life was mapped out	You're life was set out

Mind	Julle mind mos nie	You will not care
No pluck	No pluck poes you are!	Fool you are with no bravery
Paralytic	As paralytic gerook as possible	Smoked as drunk as possible
Pumping	The bar was pumping	The bar was very busy
Quality	When people get quality	When people get good service
Run a move	I'll try to run a move	I'll try to make a plan
Scam	I got a scam going	I have a swindle going
Schemed	Schemed they must be infamous	Thought they must be infamous
Stock	Hy het die stock	He has the merchandise
Straight	Skiet jy hom straight	Shoot him dead
Suck up	Time to suck up	Time to do and say things so that they like / approve of what you do

Apart from the non-standard Afrikaans and English words presented above, some non-standard words occurred which could not be classified as either English or Afrikaans. These words and their standard translations are given in Table 3. From the information in Tables 1 to 3, it appears that, according to the film *Dollars and White Pipes*, one of the characteristics of the language use of gang members on the Cape Flats is that they use mostly English, but also Afrikaans and some words that are difficult to classify as either English or Afrikaans.

Table 3. Non-standard words which could not be classified as clearly either Afrikaans or English

Word not clear	Word in context	Translation
Bra	Met onse Moroccan bra	With our Moroccan comrade
Brasse	Ons is mos brasse	We are comrades
Chlora	The cleverest chlora	The cleverest Coloured
Dala	You come here to dala	You come here to fight / die
Foilie	Enough for a foilie	Ten mandrax tablets wrapped in silver paper
Gazie	Awhe, gazie	Hi / hello, friend
Hosh	Hosh, is jy 'n Mongrel?	Hello, are you a Mongrel

Jip ja	Jip ja	Hello
Laained	I heard you laained	I heard you left
Lam	Can I lam over there by you?	Can I stay over there at your place?
Naai	Naai vanaand	Okay tonight
Plak	Where's you're fuckin plak?	Where is your damn courage?
Twala	You don't come here to twala	You do not come here to talk
Yo	Yo, I thought you did not drink	Hi, I thought you did not drink
Zip	Zip guns sold to gangs	Type of gun easily made and sold to gangs

The scriptwriters also made use of lexical borrowings (from Afrikaans into English and vice versa) in the language use of the characters. These borrowings and the utterances in which they occurred are presented in Table 4. Only two borrowings were not from either Afrikaans or English. These were the words *twala* and *dala*, both used in an otherwise English utterance. Both of these words occur in Zulu, with the second also occurring in Xhosa. However, the standard meaning of the first is “carry” whereas its meaning in the film is clearly “talk”, and the standard meaning of the second is “create” whereas it means “fight” or “die” in the film. Stone (1995:278) is also of the opinion that Xhosa and Zulu words are influencing gang argot; this was barely evident in the film. Seeing that the characters are from the Cape Flats, it makes more sense for them to make use of the prevalent languages namely English and Afrikaans rather than Xhosa or Zulu. Using the dialects of English and, to a lesser extent, Afrikaans spoken on the Cape Flats means that they gain acceptance and are seen as part of the community.

Table 4. Lexical borrowings from Afrikaans into English and from English into Afrikaans

	Word in context	Translation
Afrikaans borrowed words		
Alles	Cause I already know alles	Because I already knew everything
Duidelike	You're a duidelike bra	You are a good comrade to have
Eina	Going to be very eina nê	Going to be very sore hey

Ge-	Ge-earth for a week	Stoned for a week
Kak	Got a kak job	Got a unsatisfying job
Klaar	Finish en klaar	Over and done with
Lekker	We've got a lekker vibe going	A nice atmosphere prevailing
Maar	Can I maar see?	Is it ok for me to have a look?
Maar	We're maar a small place	We are just a small club
Maar	Can I maar go?	Is it ok for me to leave?
Moere	A moere of a high staircase	A very high staircase
My broer	Check the place my broer	Look at the place my friend
Nê	You know what nê?	Do you know what hey?
Ouens	These ouens could not be more more different	These guys could not be more different
Ouens	Me and the ouens	Me and the guys
Pyp	I remember this fokken pyp	I remember this damn gun
Somme	I sommer get lost in it	I will get lost in it
Sommer	I sommer know how it works	I know how everything works
Waentjie	Take the waentjie back home	Take the train back home
English borrowed words		
About	About tyd ja	About time that it happens
Chance	Hier's my chance	Here is my opportunity
Fucked up	Steek ons hulle fucked up	Then we'll kill them
Meet	Meet ons vanaand	Meet us tonight
Mind	Julle mind mos nie	You will not mind / care
Paralytic	As paralytic gerook as possible	Smoked very drunk
Stock	Hy het die stock	He has the merchandise
Straight	Dan skiet jy hom straight	Then you shoot him dead
Xhosa/Zulu-based borrowed words		
Dala	You come here to dala	You come here to fight / die
Twala	You do not come here to twala	You do not come here to talk

Another characteristic of the language use of gang members on the Cape Flats, according to the film, would then be that they not only code switch, but also borrow from one language into another frequently. English words were used for stylistic purposes, convenience and for their expression of identity when speaking Afrikaans. In the film, the Afrikaans lexicon draws on English (which is the case in reality as well; cf. McCormick 2002:95). English loanwords play a large role in Afrikaans. The English loanwords co-exist with the Afrikaans words in the film; with characters sometimes using the English term and at other times the Afrikaans one. An example of this is that Bernie sometimes uses *guys* when speaking English (as in *My apologies, guys, I am sorry to disturb*) and sometimes *ouens* (as in *Sorry, ouens, sorry to disturb*).

Pinnock (1984:102) stated that a mixture of Afrikaans, English and Xhosa influenced the language on the Cape Flats. The English spoken by some of the characters in the film is clearly not standard. The fact that English is considered more favorably than Afrikaans is evident from the amount of English versus Afrikaans used in the film. The linguistic repertoire of the Cape Flats gangsters as a speech community can broadly be seen as non-standard Afrikaans, non-standard English and English-Afrikaans code switching. Some of them can also speak a standard variety of one of these languages. In the film, Baatjies using standard English when he is in the car dealership accurately portrays this.

6.2 Non-standard items presented according to their part of speech

Non-standard items were grouped into one of the following parts of speech: noun phrases, verb phrases, adjectives, and adverbs. Greetings, swear words and a miscellaneous group of lexical items were also identified. Each of these groups is presented separately below. (Afrikaans and English are not separated here since this was already dealt with in the previous section.)

Table 5 contains the non-standard nouns (or noun phrases) occurring in this movie, and Table 6 the non-standard verbs (or verb phrases). As can be seen from these two tables, a comparable number of non-standard noun phrases and verb phrases can be found in the film.

Table 5. Non-standard nouns / noun phrases

Nouns/Noun phrases	Word in context	Translation
Blade	Bring a blade	Bring a knife
Booze	Sold the booze	Sold the liquor
Bra	Met onse Moroccan bra	With our Moroccan comrade
Bra	As a bra jou vir 'n poes vat	If a comrade takes you for a fool
Brasse	Ons is mos brasse	We are comrades
Broer	You lost your job today, my broer	You lost your job today, my friend
Brothers	We was brothers	We were friends
Bucks	100 or so bucks a week	100 or so rand a week
Bullshit	No more fuckin bullshit	No more nonsense
Chlora	Plus I'm a chlora	Plus I'm a Coloured
Do-I-do	Epecially not his do-I-do	Epecially not his second in command
Dollars	Can I get the dollars for the gun?	Can I get the money for the gun?
Foilie	Enough for a foilie	Enough for ten mandrax tablets wrapped in silver paper
Fokall	Me in a train with fokall	Me in a train with nothing
Gat	I was coming right up his gat	I was right behind him
Gazie	Awhe, gazie	Hello, friend
Grand	Thirty grand became twenty grand	R30 000 became R20 000
Kak	Causing kak in all our clubs	Causing trouble in all our clubs
Kind	What kind?	What is wrong / How are you?
Man	You lost your job today, man	You really lost your job today
Move	I'll try to run a move	I'll try to organize something
My broer	You lost your job today, my broer	You lost your job today, my friend
Naaiers	Julle naaiers!	You scoundrels!
Nommer	Jy's bymekaar met 'n korrekte nommer	You are involved with the right things
Plak	Where's you're fuckin plak?	Where is your damn courage?
Pyp	I remember this fokken pyp	I remember this damn gun

Quality	When people get quality	When people get good customer service
Scam	I got a scam going	I have a swindle going
Scammer	I scammed the scammer	I defrauded the fraudster
Skarrel	Still doing my everyday skarrel	Still doing my everyday run-around
Stars	Stars and stripes	Stars representing 50 states in the flag of America
Stock	Hy het die stock	He has the merchandise
Stripes	Stars and stripes	Flag of America representing the thirteen colonies
Top dog	Who does not want to be top dog?	Who does not want to be the boss?
Vibe	A lekker vibe going	A nice atmosphere that prevails
White pipes	Dollars and white pipes	Mandrax and dagga smoked in the neck of a bottle
Zip guns	Zip guns sold to the gangs	Type of gun easily made and sold to gangs

Table 6. Non-standard verbs/ verb phrases

Verbs/ verb phrases	Word in context	Translation
Check	Check the place, my broer	Look at the place, my friend
Checking	I've been checking everything out	I've been looking through everything
Dala	You come here to dala	You come here to fight / die
Drop	Drop it!	Stop talking about it!
Dropped out	You dropped out of school	You left school
Fuss	Didn't fuss me that I had nothing	Didn't bother me that I had nothing
Ge-earth	Ge-earth for a week	Stoned for a week
Go check	Go check 100 or so bucks a week	R100 or so a week
Het jy my?	Het jy my?	Do you understand me?

Hooked up	Hooked up with	Got involved with
Laained	I heard you laained	I heard that you left
Lam	Can I lam over there by you?	Can I stay over there at your place?
Mapped out	You're life was mapped out	You're life was set out
Pumping	The bar was pumping	The bar was busy
Run	I'll try to run a move	I'll try to organize something
Schemed	I schemed I am the cleverest chlora	I thought / was under the impression that I was the cleverest Coloured
Schemed	I schemed I was flying up that staircase	I thought / was under the impression that I that I was flying up that staircase
Suck up	Time to suck up	Time to do and say things so that they like / approve of what you do
Twala	You don't come here to twala	You don't come here to talk
Uitsteek	Môre gaan ons vir jou uitsteek	Tomorrow we will come looking for you
Split	Could have split on me	Could have told on me

Non-standard adjectives and adverbs also occurred in the language used in the movie, but to a far lesser extent than non-standard noun and verb phrases. The adjectives and adverbs are presented in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

Table 7. Non-standard adjectives

Adjectives	Words in context	Translation
Cheeky	Fokken cheeky of you	Quite daring of you
Duidelike	You're a duidelike bra	You are a good comrade to have
Finish	Finish en klaar	Over and done with
Fuckin	Look like a fuckin bullshit excuse	Looks like a stupid excuse
Ge-earth	Ge-earth for a week	Stoned for a week
Kak	Got a kak job	Got an unsatisfying job
Korrekte	Jy's bymekaar met 'n korrekte	You are involved with the right

	nommer	things
Moere	A moere of a high staircase	A very high staircase
No pluck	What a no pluck poes you are!	What a fool without bravery you are!
Paralytic	As paralytic gerook as possible	Smoked very drunk
Bulletproof	Don't you know I'm bulletproof?	Don't you know that I cannot die?
Eina	Going to be very eina	Going to be very sore
Jags	Is hy dan jags?	Is he lustful?
Kakka	They kakka	They are not right / ideal
Swak	Ek was swak	I was financially in a bad spot

Table 8. Non-standard adverbs

Adverbs	Words in context	Translation
Absolutely positively	Absolutely positively no more drugs	Definitively no more drugs
Finish en klaar	Finish and klaar	Over and done with
Fucked up	Vanaand steek on hulle fucked up	Tonight we kill them
Straight	Dan skiet jy hom straight	Then you shoot him dead

Apart from the four parts of speech discussed above, items that constitute greetings and swear words also occurred in the film. These are presented in Tables 9 and 10, respectively. The factor of the characters playing around with the language to suit their linguistic needs can also be seen in the film. An example is that they use profanities to establish their resistance against the prevailing order. It is also their intention to shock.

Table 9. Words used as greetings in the movie

Greetings	Words in context	Translation
Awhe	Awhe	Greeting / term of agreement
Hosh	Hosh, is jy 'n Mongrel?	Hello, are you a Mongrel?

Howzit	Hey, howzit?	Hi, how are you?
Jip ja	Jip ja	Hi / hello
Salute	Salute	Greeting / term of agreement

Table 10. Swear words occurring in the movie

Swear words	Word in context	Translation
Fokall	Me in a train with fokall	Me in a train with nothing
Fuck	What the fuck do you think you're doing?	What do you think you are doing?
Fucked up	Steek ons hulle fucked up	Stab them dead
Fucken bullshit	It would look like a fucken bullshit excuse	It would look like a stupid excuse
Gat	I was coming right up his gat	I was coming up behind him
Jags	Is hy dan jags?	Is he lustful?
Jirre	Jirre	Gee-whiz
Kak	Causing kak in all our clubs	Causing trouble in all our clubs
Moere	A moere of a high staircase	A very high staircase
Naaiers	Julle naaiers!	You scoundrels!
Poes	Jou ma se poes	Expressing anger or disapproval

Then there were also words which belonged to categories other than the six discussed above. These words are grouped together, for the sake of convenience, in Table 11.

Table 11. Other non-standard words occurring in the film

Other	Word in context	Translation
Cause	Cause I already know alles	Because I already knew the important things
Cool	You ouens are welcome, cool?	You people are welcome, okay?
Jinnie	Jinnie I'm tired sien jy	Gee-whiz I'm tired
Maar	We're maar a small place	We are just a small club
Naai	Naai, I like it, I like it	No, I definitively like it
So ja	So ja, as it turned out	Yes, as it turned out
Yo	Yo, I thought you did not drink	Hi / oh / wow, I thought you did not drink

The meaning of some of the non-standard words used in the film depends on the context in which they are used. For example, *duidelik* can refer to something being clearly so or it can be used as a term of agreement (more or less equivalent to *exactly so*). Similarly, *salute* is either a greeting or a term of agreement. The two Xhosa borrowings also have multiple meanings: *dala* means “fight”, but it can also mean “did it /doing it / will do it” as well as “die”, whereas *twala* means either “talk” or “drink wine”.

As stated before, there is hardly any evidence of the influence of Xhosa or Zulu in the linguistic markers found in the film. The non-standard items analyzed above were presented to a group of men who used to be members of prisons gangs. According to these informants, their language was used in order to conceal the meaning of their conversations from those in power; they view their language as removed from the language that society uses. Halliday’s (1976:570) reference to an anti-language comes to mind here. In addition, Xhosa and Zulu influence the language they use. These informants viewed the linguistic markers as portrayed in the film as “outsider slang”, i.e., as non-authentic for gangsters. According to them, the language spoken by the characters in the film is that spoken by “krutze” (which is probably derived from *recruits*, i.e., “nie vollende” gang members) or new members. According to the informants, the script writers could easily have included any of the terms presented and translated in Table 12 to make the language of the gang members in the film more credible, seeing that at least some of the characters, such as Mr. Kuyser and Zane, were definitely well-established gang members and not new recruits. As can be seen from Table 12, most of these suggestions draw on African languages.

Table 12. Non-standard prison argot suggested for use in the movie by ex-members of prison gangs resident on the Cape Flats

Prison terminology	Standard English translation
Bombela	where you work
Deep level	foot soldiers
Frans	not a gang member
Isulêka	when I return
Kwadlapanz	to discuss number

Ndoda	gang member that went through ritual
Ngampela	agree / it is well
Nkilikijan	head of the 27-prison gang
Nkinjanie	where do you come from
Nkitini	head of the 26-prison gang
Nongeloza	the head of the 28 prison gang
Nyangi	doctor
Nyangi 1	war
Nyangi 2	to build members
Nstalimbom	language used to confuse the wardens
Pagameza	become aware
Pigilela	train ride
Pumalanga	sunrise
Tambula	was made man of the gang
Umkandakanda	head to head to discuss
Vondela	to know about him
Zonalang	sunset
Die nommer staan moet die salute	all is well

It should be noted, however, that while including some of these terms in the script would have made the language in the film more similar to that spoken in reality by some Cape Flats gang members, particularly those who belonged to prison gangs, such inclusion would also have negatively affected the intelligibility of what was said for viewers with little or no knowledge of the language of Cape Flats and/or prison gangs. This would probably have limited the number of viewers who would understand the language of the film.

To summarize then, the following can be said of the language of Cape Flats gang members as portrayed in the film. Firstly, it appears that, whereas non-standard words and phrases are used, these (including the swear words) are mostly words and phrases which occur in other varieties of Afrikaans and English as well. Some words were, however, judged unique to the language found on the Cape Flats; these include items such as *salute* and a certain sense of *duidelik*.

Secondly, it appears that mostly English and Afrikaans are used, with – contrary to what is found in reality – little evidence of Zulu and Xhosa’s influence on the language used by the characters. Real gang members found this lack of Zulu and/or Xhosa words to be artificial.

In conclusion, the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats, according to the film *Dollars and White Pipes* are the following: (i) the use of more English than Afrikaans; (ii) code switching between these two languages; (iii) lexical borrowing from English into Afrikaans and vice versa, and to a very limited extent from Zulu/Xhosa; (iv) the use of non-standard English and Afrikaans nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and greetings – some of them not occurring in other varieties of Afrikaans and English; (v) the use of swear words, but none of these do not occur in other varieties of Afrikaans and English as well; (vi) the use of non-standard words which have multiple meanings, with the meaning having to be derived from the context. In general, however, the number of non-standard words and phrases found in the film is surprisingly low. Given the well-documented and characteristic features of Kaaps and Cape Flats English, one would have expected that the producers and scriptwriters would use linguistic means more effectively in order to establish group identity and define characters’ identity.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this thesis, the linguistic markers of the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats were examined based on how this variety is portrayed in the film *Dollars and White Pipes*. It was found that the script writers mostly made use of (i) code switching between Afrikaans and English, (ii) lexical borrowing from Afrikaans to English and vice versa, (iii) swear words (which also occur in other varieties of Afrikaans and English), and (iv) non-standard words as markers of this language variety. Real Cape Flats gang members, who are also ex-prisoners, judged these strategies as not entirely successful in the portrayal of the actual language (especially with regards to vocabulary choice) used by Cape Flats gang members. One of the points mentioned by the real gang members is that the language variety spoken by them contains more words derived from Zulu and Xhosa than is portrayed in the film.

Halliday poses the question as to why there exists an interest in anti-language, and he answers it by stating that anti-language casts light on the concept of 'social dialect' (1976: 580-81). He is of the opinion that anti-language is casual, used for verbal contest and display, and that it opposes the norms of the standard language. The same can be said of slang, which is sometimes seen as demonstrating laziness in thought and poverty in vocabulary. For instance, Millhauser is of the opinion that "slang is a kind of speech that belittles what it conveys. It is developed to express a few widely prevalent attitudes and therefore lacks precision and variety. You should avoid it because it is inadequate to critical thinking and because it imposes a cynical or flippant tone on your serious ideas" (1952:309). Sledd identified slang as being used "deliberately ... to flout a conventional social or semantic norm" (1965:698-703). From interviews conducted with students by Dumas and Lighter (1974:13), it became evident that there is uncertainty as to what constitutes slang. There is a difference between slang and jargon. With slang, the referent is characterized. With jargon and standard English, indication takes place. If speakers from the Cape Flats use a term that, for them, is merely indicative, someone from elsewhere may perceive it as slang (Dumas and Lighter 1974:13).

Language on the Cape Flats is used as a group identity marker. It is further used as a marker of ethnic groups. The individual's choice of accent, vocabulary use (including the use of

slang), and dialect adoption are conscious decisions. Gang members establish speech divergence as a means of establishing in-group distinctiveness. Even though non-standard speech varieties have low prestige, some of them are of value to gang members on the Cape Flats. Their speech variety persists because the gang members do not want to give it up. It is part of who they are and a method of creating solidarity and identification. If the Cape Flats gangsters perceive that their language is threatened, they will react by persisting to use it, highlighting its distinctiveness from the “preferred” style (Bouchard Ryan 1979:149).

Whorf was of the opinion that language does the same thing that science does. The sociologist C. Wright Mills made the following statement, which is another version of the position held by Whorf.

Language, socially built and maintained, embodies implicit exhortations and social evaluations. By acquiring the categories of a language, we acquire the “ways” of a group, and along with the language, the value-implicates of those “ways.” Our behavior and perception, our logic and thought, come within the control ambit of a system of language. Along with language, we acquire a set of social norms and values (Macaulay 1994:161).

The same applies to gang members on the Cape Flats. They acquire their language for solidarity purposes and in order to be associated as members of the speech community that shares their norms. The greatest changes in language occur in vocabulary. Words are borrowed from English, Afrikaans and Xhosa or Zulu, and new words are created. Social forces also affect the way an individual will speak. An individual aspiring towards upward mobility will speak differently to a gangster from the Cape Flats. The individual will emulate the speech of the person he/she wishes to aspire to. This often leads to the phenomenon of hypercorrection. Macaulay (1994:133) furthers his argument by stating that linguistic insecurity stems from the fact that language places a badge of identity on individuals. Languages and dialects also play a unifying and a separatist function. Division exists between “us” (speaking alike) and “them” (speaking differently), especially as far as the language of the Cape Flats gangster is concerned (Macaulay 1994:133). As stated by Macaulay “... with language there is no reason to believe that any single form will be suitable for all situations, which is why so many different forms can exist within a speech community. Such diversity is

to be welcomed and enjoyed rather than condemned or eradicated” (1994:77). The language variety spoken by gangsters on the Cape Flats can be seen to be part of the linguistic diversity of the nation. Ludwig Wittgenstein claimed, “the limits of my language are the limits of my world”, but it will all depend on how you interpret ‘my language’ (Macaulay 1994:163). The language of the gangster on the Cape Flats is his and it is clear that, as a communication vehicle, especially on the Cape Flats, it is here to stay. This language variety warrants the attention of linguists, amongst others for the following reason: the language variety spoken by gang members on the Cape Flats serves to create group cohesion and is seen as a sign of solidarity. It could be that this marker of “belonging” is part of what attracts new recruits to gangs. The language variety of these gangs could therefore influence decision-making by young potential members, and so have social implications. Thus, apart from Cape Flats gangster speak being a linguistically interesting field of study, it could also be said to be a socially important one.

This thesis attempted a broad overview of the factors affecting language choice (and specifically vocabulary choice) of a particular group on the Cape Flats. However, this study has several limitations. The first hereof is that the data analyzed were taken from a film, and so can be said to be unauthentic to start with. However, the focus of this study was not on linguistic markers of the language used by Cape Flats gang members per se, but on how these markers are portrayed in the film *Dollars and White Pipes* specifically. The thesis is of value to sociolinguists and any other researchers who are interested in language, and life, on the Cape Flats. A second limitation is that data from only one film were considered. In future studies, it would be advisable to analyze the language used in other films such as *The flyer* as well. Furthermore, it could be claimed that Baatjies was not a real gang member (he merely grew up in an area in which gangs were very active) and that his utterances can therefore not be taken as representative of those used by Cape Flats gang members. However, in the film, he is systematically drawn into the world of gangsters and constantly finds himself surrounded by them. A last point of criticism is that the real gang members who acted as informants in this study were interviewed informally and not by using a structured questionnaire. However, this group of men was not willing to be interviewed individually and in a structured, more formal setting. They preferred to be interviewed as a group, and it was found that the interaction in the group was such that lively debate took place and that

informants complemented each other in terms of the judgments and suggestions that they offered.

All of the abovementioned limitations could have had a negative impact on the validity of the findings of this study. Therefore, the reasons why and the conditions under which non-standard speech (such as Cape Flats gangster speak) is preferred, need to be looked at in more detail.

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